

# Xcp 12

cross cultural poetics



ON THE UNBEARABLE SLOWNESS OF BEING AN ANTHROPOLOGIST NOW  
(AN ESSAY BY GEORGE E. MARCUS)

NEW WRITING FROM MYUNG MI KIM, ADRIENNE RICH, KIRIN NARAYAN, & OTHERS

SOME DISCOURSES ON/OFF THE DIVIDED SELF: LYRIC, ETHNOGRAPHY  
AND LONELINESS (AN ESSAY BY MARIA DAMON)

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E. SAN JUAN JR.'S RACISM AND CULTURAL STUDIES:  
CRITIQUES OF MULTICULTURALIST IDEOLOGY AND THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE,  
HOA NGUYEN'S YOUR ANCIENT SEE THROUGH,  
BEYOND THE BARRICADES: NICARAGUA AND THE STRUGGLE FOR  
THE SANDINISTA PRESS, 1979-1998, & MUCH MORE





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*Xcp: Cross-Cultural Poetics*, 601 25th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN, 55454.

Email: [manowak@stkate.edu](mailto:manowak@stkate.edu)

Website Address: <http://bfm.org/~xcp/>

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**ETHNOGRAPHIC  
PAST(ICHE)**







**ON THE UNBEARABLE SLOWNESS  
OF BEING AN ANTHROPOLOGIST NOW:  
NOTES ON A CONTEMPORARY ANXIETY  
IN THE MAKING OF ETHNOGRAPHY**

George E. Marcus

In contradistinction to Plato's lawyer, or Cicourel's physician, we have all the time in the world, all our time, and this freedom from urgency, from necessity—which often takes the form of economic necessity, due to the convertibility of time into money—is made possible by an ensemble of social and economic conditions, by the existence of these supplies of free time that accumulated economic resources represent.

Pierre Bourdieu on "The Scholastic Point of View" (1990)

As every anthropologist knows, good ethnography takes all of the time in the (Western) world. This norm of patience and cumulative achievement in ethnography has held as long as what Johannes Fabian termed "the denial of co-evalness" (1983) has remained a powerful fiction of professional ideology shaping the practice and object of both fieldwork and ethnographic writing. That is, as long as the subjects of ethnography existed in their own time-space, outside the contemporaneity of the ethnography, anthropology could confidently insist on standards of research performance that valued deliberation, patience, and a stable scene and subject of study. The extent of the dependence of these standards by which anthropologists have judged each other as ethnographers on a certain regime of temporality cannot be underestimated. Control of another language, the effect of demonstrating depth of knowledge of another culture, the writing of ethnographies as if the author is telling less than he or she could—in short, all of the performative elements of demonstrating ethnographic authority—have depended on the valorization of a temporality of slowness. There have been a few anthropologists admired for what they could produce from short periods of fieldwork in diverse places (e.g., famously, Fredrik Barth), but very few indeed. Even the historicization of the ethnographic subject, which is now a commonplace, has been easily accommodated to this valorized temporality of research (the recent, favored postcolonial framework for historicizing mainstream ethnographic research has accommodated a deliberate, patient ethnography of the present by providing a meaningful long view to understand the present in the traditional regions of anthropological expertise).

Yet, while the norms of a temporality of patience are still formally in place, several factors and tendencies have conspired in recent years to undermine any semblance of conforming in practice to this temporality creating a veritable

symptom of anxiety in the way that much ethnography is produced today. The anthropology of contemporary change and transformation in both new topical arenas of research as well as older domains of area-based studies has indeed become pervasive. Still in the name of longstanding ideals in the practice of fieldwork and ethnographic writing, contemporary research is changing both dramatically and circumstantially (Marcus 1998, 1999). And nothing is changing more dramatically than the temporality holding the deeply embedded conception of ethnographic research in place. Here I want briefly to examine the conditions and sources of the anxiety arising from, on the one hand, the time pressures on the deliberate and patient production of ethnography, and on the other, the sense of belatedness that plagues ethnographers, as many, if not most, try to produce knowledge of the contemporary. These ruptures of the traditional ideals of temporality in anthropological research where it is most energetic today, in turn, go to the heart of the circumstances which are transforming the work of ethnography, for which anthropologists do not have as yet an alternative set of norms of professional practice. In the meantime, then, there can only be the sense among anthropologists of a near unbearable slowness and belatedness in producing ethnographic knowledge as a major symptom of the changes to the ethnographic method that are more broadly occurring in anthropology.

There are two factors operating in the contemporary mode of the production and reception of ethnographic research within the community of anthropologists (at least, in the United States) that are critically responsible for defining the conditions that are undermining the ideal of temporality on which the authority of traditional ethnographic research has depended. First, there are much increased time pressures generally in the university to complete graduate degrees more quickly. In my own generation of graduate training (the early 1970s), for example, there was no administrative limit on the time one could take with dissertation research, and there were reasonable resources to be found to extend fieldwork or writing-up periods. These liberal conditions for taking one's time could be devastating to a student's progress in some cases, but it was a crucial resource for producing the norm of patience and taking one's time in the case of the best and subsequently most influential career-defining projects of dissertation ethnography. In the trend of the corporate university toward efficiency in graduate training, along with fewer funding sources (and decline in their monetary level as well) for ethnographic research from fieldwork to write-up, the norm of temporality is challenged as a professional standard of ethnography at the very beginning of careers, when anthropologists most crucially define their "capital" and reputation as ethnographic researchers.

Second, and more significantly, in many projects of ethnographic research, and perhaps in the most interesting and innovative ones, the most engaged reception that they receive has shifted from what the professional community of anthropologists thinks of them to how various other constituencies and readerships value such projects. The topics of ethnography today are quite di-



verse, and aside from often very small coteries of specialists of the same topics within the discipline, anthropologists in general don't know what to make of some of the best and most original work that ethnographers produce, especially given that there are still no explicit norms for the alternative practices of ethnography that are emerging in many topic arenas today, nor is there a density of anthropological research as yet in many of these arenas. Indeed, as I have observed (e.g., on selection committees for senior appointments), anthropologists often judge ethnographies by the notice and reaction that they have received among the external constituencies where they have circulated. The standing of a body of work in the arenas which it addresses can actually take precedence over a purely anthropological reception of such work, which is often lacking in substance. Instead, within the discipline, many important ethnographies today are admired or judged by anthropologists in largely "aesthetic" terms — they signify well or not as ethnography in relation to its tradition and ethos. Their detailed assimilation into intellectual contexts of significance and relevance depends on how they are received by other diverse constituencies.

To me, this move in the relative significance in the reception of anthropological ethnography from its professional community of standards to constituencies external to this community, created by the course and relations of fieldwork itself, is perhaps the most fascinating development in the current evolution of social/cultural anthropology — a development that urgently needs explicit discussion in rethinking the norms of the longstanding ethos of anthropological research. But this move is also the crucial condition that has challenged the temporality of ethnography and given rise to an anxiety about the belatedness of producing ethnography at its deliberate pace, now exposed to other constituencies of both reception and competing, overlapping forms of representation from which anthropologists were formerly protected by the priority of professional standards valorizing patience in producing ethnography. The "scholastic point of view" which Pierre Bourdieu defends in the epigraph to this paper — and especially against the tendency to move the practices of researchers closer to the practices of subjects as suggested in the "Writing Culture" critique of the 1980s, amid others — is especially challenged in contemporary anthropological research, even as it hangs on as the privilege of professionalism.

In the remainder of this paper I want to examine elements of the exposure of ethnography to other agendas, receptions, and ecologies for its constitution (in this sense, its authority is more "found" in fieldwork than given), with the present decline in the standards of substantive professional reception by anthropologists for their own products of knowledge, and how this gives rise to a certain bind or anxiety about relevance and belatedness that inhibits an ethnography that strives to take its time. But first, I offer brief characterizations of three examples among many others of how ethnographic research that tries to take its time, in conforming to the norm of temporality in anthropological research practice, is oriented to contemporary change and pushed into quicker tempos of producing

descriptions and interpretations of shifting realities amid many forms of competing representations, including those that are themselves objects of ethnographic analysis.

A Korean graduate student at Rice University is finishing her dissertation on the operations of risk in venture capital finance in South Korea. Stimulated by recent anthropological interest in the nature of this aspect of capitalism under globalization, she was drawn to Korea by the 1997 currency crisis that devastated several east Asian economies. Returned from a year of fieldwork in Seoul, she is dealing with a collection of materials that registered the moving ground on which her project was established. When she arrived in the field, the situation of financial expertise had changed from the reporting on the 1997 crisis and its aftermath, and it continued to change rapidly while she was in Seoul. How to establish a temporal frame for her work, which will allow ethnographic thick description and interpretation that will endure beyond belated and ephemeral relevance, is a major sensitivity driving her strategy for writing her dissertation—a dissertation that must be completed within a few months given the limited funding available to her (ironically, she will only be able to take her time once the dissertation is completed and a likely postdoctoral fellowship allows her to do justice to her material—suggesting the need to rethink the nature of the dissertation in the making of anthropological careers). Anthropology as now constituted offers her little in the way of concepts, strategies, or rhetorics to stabilize her analysis or its objects, to slow them down, in order to conform to conventional standards of “good” ethnography. There is both cross-cultural expertise and deep engagement with the practices of particular subjects in her study, but they are not likely to be configured easily into the expected norms of ethnography.

Then, there is the recent work, *French DNA: Trouble in Purgatory* (2001) by the distinguished anthropologist Paul Rabinow, in which he has acutely observed the French achievement and success in mapping the genome before the Americans, and what this means distinctively in a French context. Yet, Rabinow’s fieldwork for this study is belated. It takes place among the team of scientists in the period following this achievement, and reports in detail on the “forms” that are emerging around genomics in France. What endures in Rabinow’s book is perhaps least developed—the French cultural context for DNA; what receives detailed treatment is what is belated and ephemeral, and Rabinow struggles to conceive of a new conception of ethnography (in which the explicit concept of ethnography itself plays no part!)<sup>1</sup> that justifies the moment and the “singularity” which he opportunistically assimilates by having “been there” in fieldwork. What is “thick” in Rabinow (the politics of science, corporations, and funding in the aftermath of the success) is not as dramatic as mapping the genome, but as perhaps Rabinow would like to argue, it is more consequential than what is ethnographically “thin” or undeveloped in his account (the peculiarly French context of the effort to map the genome).

Finally, there is the work *Advocacy After Bhopal: Environmentalism, Disaster, New Global Orders* (2001) by Kim Fortun, which is a rich text on this issue of generating enduringly relevant, thick ethnography from a project that is belated at the outset. The Bhopal disaster occurred in 1984. Fortun spent two years at the Bhopal site during 1988-89, during the period of the settlement. Her time was spent among activists in the aftermath of this disaster, and she produced accounts of the meanings of this event in multiple contexts through an ethnography of advocacy itself. Following her dissertation, she did not publish a full work until 2001, as the memory of the Bhopal event receded even more among readerships she might want to reach. Fortun's responses both in fieldwork and writing to the anxieties of working with the traditional norm of slowness in producing ethnography were thoughtful and innovative, to which I will return at the end of this paper.

The trajectory of her work after the dissertation on constantly moving ground, so to speak, and in the face of complex regimes of representations of differing embedded temporalities that overlapped and sometimes contrasted with those she was creating, was to keep on doing fieldwork, which in her case meant continuing acts of writing for different constituencies and occasions. The continuing problem of Fortun's research, and the central problematic of her fieldwork, were to find new forms and styles of writing to sustain the relevance of her work in constantly changing space-time contexts. It was, perhaps, only the requirement of submitting work for tenure evaluation that made her produce a long work—the equivalent of a published ethnography that anthropologists usually submit for academic promotion. The pattern in which she produced her work and the relative standing of major published work for conventional professional review in relation to the manner of producing anthropology on this topic amid multiple constituencies and regimes of reception are suggestive of the changing forms and valences that much anthropological research on contemporary problems seems to be manifesting. As we will see, strategies of temporalizing work, in order to offer conceptually stable knowledge of a subject in the realm of “the scholastic point of view,” at least in the report to the academy (which her book is), play a major role in giving new patterns and forms of research authority within the older reigning norms for such research.

In all of the above examples, the job of ethnography as it is being reconceived in each case is neither the traditional task of describing a process that is more or less stabilized or structural, nor is it to explain what is culturally distinctive in the changes addressed (what, for example, is Korean about financial risk, what is French about DNA, or what is Indian about this environmental disaster, although in each case, and especially in Rabinow's, this sort of expected anthropological expertise plays an important role in constituting the subject of study). To demonstrate cultural difference and distinction is part of the scenery of analy-

sis, to be sure, but it is not the point of analysis in any of the cases. Rather there is a set of events that are localized but are of global significance and must be described by an assemblage constituted by and argued for in the design of ethnography and its movements which bring certain sites and actors in analytic relation to one another. What takes time in describing objects such as these is not the kind of descriptive thickness that Clifford Geertz made famous as the special contribution and virtue of ethnography, but rather attention to extra dimensions of situations and sites brought into analytic relation so as to demonstrate the symbolic, real, and imaginary relations existing among them, justifying the particular assemblages of objects, subjects, and situations that the ethnography describes. These relations are not at all obvious, and require meticulous fieldwork and a probing of actors' own capacities for critical reflexivity to demonstrate. To get at this multiplicity of perspectives and critical sensibilities embedded in social life and expertises studied indeed takes all the time in the world, and it may be precisely the kind of knowledge that actors and makers of representations competing or overlapping with the anthropologists' own may be less interested in, less conscious of, or less valuing of. This would not be of such consequence if anthropologists were not so exposed to the politics of knowledge and the reception of subjects to their own work in ways that matter more than ever, as I have argued that they are.

Taking the time to provide thick ethnography in this sense, then, is what is at stake in such projects. The anthropologist is often engaged in overlapping discourse and purposes with subjects for whom the pace of ethnographic insight may seem slow, and the anthropologist is anxiously subject to this judgment once he is operating outside or only partially in relation to the privileges of the "scholastic point of view." In each of the above examples, the production of a distinctive ethnographic knowledge, if that is possible, is as significantly subject to constituencies within the boundaries of fieldwork as to the disciplinary community which may admire itself moving into these arenas of contemporary change but may not be able to grasp, critique or engage in as sustained a way with the products of such research as are the constituencies of such research themselves. Anthropology is finally on the verge of fulfilling its dream of receiving direct and meaningful response from its "natives" (a prominent ideal in professional lore of classic fieldwork), but the natives in this case are not the classic subjects — the tribal or far off others. They are more often counterparts from whom the tempos and modes of anthropological practice cannot be authoritatively separated.

*The Sources of the Anxiety About the Slowness of Ethnography Exposed to Other Representations and Other Temporalities in Producing Knowledge*

Anthropologists today want their ethnography to be relevant to others — to a generalized public, to other communities of experts, to subjects themselves — even more than it is relevant to their own disciplinary projects and problems. Furthermore, to do good ethnography today in many arenas requires placing the

practices and cultures of other kinds of experts, whom the anthropologist might otherwise treat collegially, within the bounds of fieldwork itself, as subjects like any other. This requires that anthropologists ally with or take seriously in the production of their own knowledge the expert or practical knowledge of others.<sup>2</sup> In the resulting collaborations that define the “field” of ethnographic research there must thus be an explicit negotiation of authority that might involve a clash of norms for producing knowledge, in which a sense of the tempo at which ideas are produced and elaborated and things become known with more or less certainty is a key factor. And finally, to do good ethnography today is to be critically self-aware that ethnographic findings and knowledge are offered in a complex zone of representations from which they cannot be absolutely distinguished. How to insert ethnography within zones of anticipated reception, debate, and overlapping modes of similar knowledge production is increasingly becoming part of what constitutes good ethnography, as well as of the conception of what is to be included and done within the “field” bounded as fieldwork. Here, too, the timing and pacing of ethnography in relation to the often quicker studies characteristic of alternative modes of representation of what is happening in the realm of a common object of interest are crucial factors in affecting the self-confidence and authority of ethnography as it massively enters into the study of the contemporary.

These, then, are the three interrelated sources from which current challenges to the self-confidence of the enterprise of anthropological ethnography arise, and I want to elaborate on each in a bit more detail.

### *The Hyperdesire to Be Relevant*

During the 1980s and 1990s, anthropology, among other disciplines, was strongly influenced in topics, concepts, and styles of research by the waves of critical interdisciplinary fashion, focussed on the study of culture, that first explored the idea of the postmodern and then settled into projects of scholarship under the label of cultural studies. Cultural studies, in particular, (perhaps in atonement for the apparent apolitical sins of postmodernism) constructed a particular persona for the academic scholar and a rhetoric for inquiry that emphasized relevance and the activist voice and potential of research. The idea that such a movement could and should generate public intellectuals out of academic careers, at least in the United States, and certainly in a world that is increasingly transnational, has been avidly debated, giving a sense of purpose to all varieties of left-liberal scholarship that have been supported by the interdisciplinary movements of recent years.

Anthropology always had this sort of liberal commitment and spirit in its professional culture, even though it was only marginally expressed in its conformity to the scientific rhetorics in the heyday of positivist social science. The influence of cultural studies, then, only released into the designs of fieldwork and

ethnographic writing, and the way that they were evaluated, what was already deeply embedded in the professional culture of anthropology.

The anthropology of the contemporary became driven by the same issues that defined NGOs, social movements, journalism, and left-liberal commentaries on the unfolding of distinctive events in the United States and elsewhere, in a world that was conceived to be globalizing. In the absence of a defined past or project for this activist inflected research within anthropology itself, the desire for a publicly relevant anthropology has become even stronger. Anthropologists now primarily conduct research in arenas and with regard to issues, not primarily of their own making as a discipline. This fact fuels even more calls for a public anthropology and a desire to serve constituencies at varying levels of abstractness and specificity. It is perhaps naïve to think, after all the years of critical thinking about the nature of public spheres, that anthropologists could still hope to inform a general public (the symbolic capital of which is the op-ed piece on the editorial pages of leading papers, or catching the attention of major policy makers). More realistically, anthropology is increasingly accountable to, and defines its forms of knowledge in relation to, the specific publics for its work that are created by the activity of ethnographic research itself. These are often extended and far-reaching publics, but they are at least defined specifically by how a project of ethnographic research touches them. These are the sorts of publics to which anthropological research could aspire to be relevant, by the reactions it receives in the forms by which it produces and circulates its knowledge.

It is not that ethnography does not have unique things to say to such constituencies defined by the sites of its research. The problem rather is in the belated forms in which it produces its results, still oriented authoritatively to a professional readership. And in this, the pacing and tempo by which ethnography is produced still conforms to the traditional norm of taking one's (almost unlimited) time. While the resulting anxiety in the production of ethnography is not as apparent as in the frenzy of activist cultural studies writing to keep up with the events it would like to comment relevantly upon (almost always, cultural studies writing about current topics is preceded or surrounded by lucid and penetrating treatments in other media of the same events), the same current hyperdesire for relevance pressures the temporality of slowness prominent in the identity of being an ethnographer. Perhaps the saving grace in this conceit and ambition to matter more now is that anthropologists at least keep in close touch with the more realistic specific publics for their work defined by the ethnographic research process. They listen to them first as subjects, informants, and collaborators in order to produce their own knowledge, and thus experience the anxiety of belatedness strictly within the bounds of spaces defined by the research process itself. At least this makes such an anxiety manageable and perhaps even productive within the specific pattern of relations defined by contemporary ethnographic research itself, to which I now turn.



### *Anthropological Ethnography and Expert Modes of Knowledge*

These days, an ethnographer is most painfully aware of the slowness of her work when she encounters someone in the field to whose ideas and perspectives she attaches great importance for her own (averitable collaborative relationship), but whose use and valuing of such perspectives and ideas is of a very different, and quicker, temporal order than hers. And, I would argue, that the dependence on relationships with such de facto counterparts is ever more common in ethnographic projects that move among an assemblage of sites and persons in an anthropology of the contemporary.

It is not that ethnographers make such experts or specialists involved with their research the object of study (as in some ethnography of the culture of expertise—scientists, consultants, lawyers, activists, corporate executives, etc.), or else consider them colleagues collateral to their research, out of bounds of the “field”, but they actually seek permissions, authority, overviews, and eventually engaged critiques for their research through and from them. Often through relations with such persons and their cooperation does the ethnographer enter the field and define her own project of inquiry within it. Such approximate counterparts in the field are subjects of the research, but ultimately not its object. At various times they serve differentially as its patrons, partners, and subjects.

We have as yet few descriptions in memoirs and published discussions of recent fieldwork of such figures (but See Rabinow’s account, 1999, of his PCR research, “American Moderns”). Yet, they define the collaborations that make good ethnography of the present feasible. Inside these relationships occurs the mesh, and often clash of temporalities that define the valorization of certain kinds of interpretations, reflections, and their expression. For example, the consultant or lawyer counterpart of the ethnographer may retail or dispose of a shared good idea, an interesting insight, or a useful concept far more quickly than would the ethnographer who might want to hold onto it, make it endure, give it a more central thematic place in the developing research than would the counterparts. These conflicts of temporalities are worked out in many ways in fieldwork, and are often covered up in ethnographic writing, but there are as yet no strategies that anthropologists have discussed for dealing with this aspect of these key collaborative relationships of ethnographic work today.<sup>3</sup> The legible residue of this predicament of fieldwork is one telling dimension of the ethnographer’s anxiety about being slow to which I am drawing attention in this paper.

### *Ethnography Within Complex Zones of Overlapping Representations*

Recently, a Chicana graduate student at Rice who was seeking a subject for her dissertation fieldwork that addressed life on and across the border of Mexico and the United States discovered the complexity of the used clothes business as a transnational, transcultural activity with many actors, sites, and diverse cultural codings, unified in a single frame and rationale of business. She was excited about this activity as the focus of dissertation fieldwork. Then she found a bril-



liant feature piece in the Sunday *New York Times* which provided a virtuoso treatment of this subject in a few pages—in this case on the movement of used clothes from New York to East Africa. An ethnographic study of this subject elsewhere could only be an elaboration of what inspired journalism had already done with the aid of considerable resources (what I call a writing machine) much more concisely and more timely than ethnography is capable of. Placing a high value on originality in her work and considering carefully what such a duplicate study over a much longer period of time would contribute significantly in the context of media and scholarship that treat the U.S.-Mexican border as well as of Chicano studies itself as a kind of social movement, the student decided to table her interest in developing dissertation research on this topic, perhaps reprising it later as a component of a broader study of objects and symbols which flow across this border.

In any case, the situation of this student is typical of many anthropologists in formulating their research today, and particularly scholars who are beginning their careers in the present professional culture for the production of ethnography that I outlined—a professional culture which highly values recognition and response from outside its own disciplinary community, and that has been deeply affected by the hyperdesire for relevance that I described. Rarely does an anthropologist take up a topic or interest that has not already been more prominently and more promptly treated by other media—prestige and resource rich journalism being only the most common example. Nor can this field of already existing representations be bracketed and ignored in the name of disciplinary purpose, as might have been the case in the past. The challenge is to devise normal strategies to incorporate such zones or fields of representations and their modes of production within the boundaries of the “field” of fieldwork, or at least ethnographers should have a clear and explicit understanding of how the work that they produce in its changing forms fits into the zones of representation that pre-exist and surround it.

And in this rethinking of the zones of reception of ethnography, or rather the incorporation of this kind of consideration into the explicit norms and forms of the doing of ethnography, the question of the relative slowness of ethnography, its tempo and pacing, and finally its belatedness, is foremost. How are ethnographers to become comfortable with the inevitable belatedness of being slow compared to the tempos and values on the rapid turnover of knowledge, concepts, and interpretations in the ecology of overlapping discourses in which any ethnographer of the contemporary finds herself today, during fieldwork and after producing writing from it?

### *Responses*

Probably to resist the pressures to speed things up in pursuing ethnographic research is a good thing, or at least I think so. Even as ethnography changes its modus operandi and its identity there is nothing that suggests that the valuing

of a patient, deliberate norm of temporality will not continue to be necessary, although it might require a different sense of fulfillment as ethnography revises its accountabilities, ethics, and relevances amid diverse constituencies in any single project of research.

The bold and confident response would be to argue unequivocally that slowing things down and the benefits thereof is actually a contribution to domains of discussion and representation which need it. In itself, slowing things down would provide a strategy of mundane subversion that critical social science has always hoped for. This is precisely what subjects and discourses that are the object of ethnography need, and the strategy of critical anthropology is not so much to preach a particular counter-message, which is already likely to be expressed in some ambivalent form by subjects themselves within the scenes of fieldwork, but to patiently explore a cogent argument in ways that are probably not produced in the spaces and sites of fieldwork. Resolute slowness thus might create an effective and critical politics of knowledge by introducing what the distanced “scholastic point of view” otherwise allows outside the realms of practical consciousness. This is an attractive and self-confident response to an anxiety concerning the belatedness of ethnography, but it is also unrealistic about the extent to which the contrasting tempos of representation among the subjects as well as constituencies of ethnography challenge the authority and privilege of being slow. The critical virtues of being slow are a fine rationale for their work that members of the professional community of anthropologists may tell each other, but does it finally have demonstrable critical effect and power among the constituencies of fieldwork?

A more defensive, but equally attractive rationale for ethnography that is always slightly belated is that it works in historical time. This equally naïve and hopeful view is that the ethnography is an historical document in the making. Its true relevance lies in the future as part of an emerging archive. Suggesting this rationale grasps for the historian’s freedom from the anxiety of belatedness, by escaping the judgment of present relevance through deferral (even though many historians produce their accounts of the past with the present in mind, but this motivation is also unmentionable at least in the routine rhetorics offered for historical research, located in its own past time-space). In any case, to dissolve a circumstantial belatedness—the result of the norms of practicing ethnography—into an alibi of historical perspective ignores the powerful motivation of a growing anthropology of the contemporary to be engaged with present and emergent processes unfolding, and to be recognized as such.

Still, the way that an anthropology of the contemporary reflexively temporalizes itself in both situating fieldwork and, more crucially, the writing that comes from it does address the anxiety about belatedness and is a key to offering an appropriate authority for a deliberate, patient ethnography slower than a rapidly changing present or other kinds of modes of representing it. As Rabinow temporally characterizes the work of studying the coming of something new

through contingent apparatuses and assemblages, the anthropologist is operating in fieldwork and writing in a time that encompasses the tripartite “the recent past—the emergent—and the near future.” This suggests the usefulness of a device or strategy for conceptually creating the frame for a deliberate ethnographic process that “buys time” at least and lessens the anxiety of belatedness of an ethnography of the present amid other kinds of overlapping representations that get there faster, so to speak, or keep up better with changes in the objects of study.

In a fascinating forthcoming work in which he presents an ethnography of the work of foreign correspondents, Ulf Hannerz subtly considers the technologies of investigation and writing of this kind of journalism in the frame of the related issues that have been raised about the craft of ethnography in recent decades. At one point, he also deals with the appropriate temporality for the more enduring accounts of the journalist working in an otherwise supremely ephemeral genre. Hannerz evokes Fernand Braudel’s distinction of three time spans in the writing of history: there is event history; there is history of the long perspective (Braudel’s own specialty); and between them there is conjunctural history, or what Hannerz terms medium-term history—covering a decade, a quarter-century, or half a century. When figured in the recent past, this latter is the sort of history that allows the historian to approach the present, while still retaining the privilege of distance, deliberateness, and patience, accorded the scholarly time-space of doing historical research. However, when this medium-term temporality is evoked within the ethnography of the contemporary, challenged by the need to reconceive the traditional norm of an unbounded slowness in producing classic ethnography in order to relieve the anxiety of belatedness, it becomes the sort of “past-present-future” suggested by Rabinow. The historian’s medium-term history still in the past is shifted a bit and mapped on to the “becoming” time-space of the ethnography of the contemporary. It is this kind of conceptual situating of ethnography that needs explicit treatment and experimentation in the design of fieldwork and ethnographic writing.

To return briefly to Kim Fortun’s *Advocacy After Bhopal*, she offers a skillful temporal architecture for her account that effectively defines the medium-term frame that negotiates the necessary slowness of ethnographic research with the threat of ethnography’s permanent belatedness in relation to its object. Fortun powerfully stimulates the memory of the reader for her purposes. She opens with a striking reminder of what happened in 1984, the year of the Bhopal disaster, by a diverse and carefully orchestrated descriptive list of events. The reader’s fading memory of that year is restimulated and oriented to the past-present-emergent time-space in which Fortun’s account operates. For her purposes, and effectively for the reader’s, the contemporary *is* this conceptually created time-space, and in my view, this invention works effectively to create time for ethnography without the anxiety or judgment of belatedness. In Fortun’s text, Bhopal is as relevant as event and textual object as it was in 1984. Fortun’s sustained device is partly a circumstance of her continually deferring the moment of genre

ethnographic writing until the time of tenure consideration that I described, but it nonetheless defines one effective strategy as a response to the bind of producing an ethnography of the contemporary that I have focussed upon in this paper.

In sum, then, it appears that the complex of rhetorical strategies around the condition of “being there” in classic ethnographic research that were so thoroughly exposed and critiqued as the sources of authority for ethnography as a knowledge form by the “Writing Culture” critique of the 1980s is being supplanted at present by strategies for dealing with the temporal challenges of doing ethnography with a necessary deliberateness in changing time-spaces of fieldwork and writing. Thus, “being there” is perhaps no longer as important as “taking one’s time” in sustaining an authority for ethnography as a knowledge form among its complex constituencies in fieldwork and zones of overlapping representation in reception.

#### *Footnotes*

<sup>1</sup>See Rabinow’s more recent set of essays, in press, in which he provocatively provides one paradigm for an alternative practice of anthropological research that does away with the primacy given to sacred concepts like fieldwork, ethnography, culture, and the native point of view. There is an important debate yet to be had among those who see the need for an explicit creation of an alternative paradigm of research practice in anthropology, especially in the emergence of an anthropology of the contemporary. Some might see more potential for revision or reinvention in the classic tropes of ethnographic research in anthropology rather than their necessary replacement under the inspiration, in Rabinow’s case, of Michel Foucault and John Dewey. There is much in Rabinow’s formulation of an alternative that speaks to the way that classic ethnography is constructed by a norm of temporality that does not fit the tempo or time-space of Rabinow’s envisioned alternative.

<sup>2</sup>Anthropologists have always done so within the confines of fieldwork in isolated time-space far away and on “others,” and they have attested to as much in the many accounts of classic fieldwork that we now have. But as the “Writing Culture” critique emphasized, these collaborations were left in the field, and largely disappeared in the production of knowledge at home. The difference now is that they cannot be left in this way in the thoroughly co-eval space of fieldwork, except through continued and questionable privileged assertions of anthropology’s version of the scholastic point of view. Rather ethnographic authority must be renegotiated in full relation to the range of knowledges through which it constructs its own, with profound implications for what is to be expected of ethnographic research in forms and norms by its professional community.

<sup>3</sup>An excellent example of this scene of collaboration in which the anthropological mode of knowing, and its tempo, becomes immersed in those of subjects is Kim Fortun’s ethnography of environmental activism in the wake of the Bhopal disaster, which I described briefly. Her participatory fieldwork for two years, sited in a house in Bhopal of leftist scientists-turned-activists, consisted mainly of writing that took several forms and developed diverse rhetorical strategies, including forms of empiricist/descriptive writing, reflective writing, and analytic/hermeneutic writing, all of which play into the composition of ethnography. But all of these forms, among others, were shared in a community of

writers for various purposes, which in terms of praxis, activism of this sort can be considered to be, and yet none of these forms of writing were privileged in the way that they would be in the patient, deliberate genre of ethnographic knowledge-making for the academic community of anthropologists. The delay that I mentioned in Fortun producing her work in the form of an ethnographic text should not be understood as much in terms of the traditional norm of taking one's time expected of ethnographic research, but rather by the delayed, anxious extraction of this form of writing from the kind of diverse writing machine that activism is, and in which Fortun continued to pursue as further fieldwork for several years following her departure from Bhopal. Taking one's time in this case is thus much more problematic than the ideal temporality of slowness in producing ethnography would intimate.

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[admonition ridgepole]

bound by trophy | salute

to brethren | red

wash | how many installed

ret || rent

clear burn

operating land, domestic bacteria

as treats a stateroom | half a lobe and barricade

all this  
only enough  
to feed the village for three months

pew and amber

bulwarks

[gulf library]

*tw* | neither bird nor ornament

there was the calf stranded across the creek | that bellowing

valuables stored under plywood

the ragged ranges

thorn beast



[withal]

freedom of residence

freedom of movement

public order

as history knows

knees on the ground

designed to starve the whole region into submission

what justice looks like

industry's station

desirable winter siege

wreckage street by street

smelting in progress

and the rejoicing

as by  
one's ears

*mug eul gu si uph uh suh*

ganglion    *staum* | *stam*

isthmus || makeshift  
shelter's direct proportion of drinking water to raw sewage

four times chanted    escarpment

asperline | tharp

: just a normal customer with no heavy accent at all

thatcher poacher . that the bark had been scored . who, salt tongue .  
who, allotment of arable land . father just buried . shapes—balls, oranges .  
black dress heron . of being in and affecting . I don't know what's  
the problems in that family probably poorness

Scn:

Scn:

Scn: Those 840 workers? They're just gone—

[offering to general protectors]

why is it that the tips of the beaks are burnt

direct expropriation (pillage)  
collective appropriation (wars)

gorge and mine    vertical shaft vertical drop

: was first year high school

: because from far away    distant

: came out    noise came to see

: every morning street close by hospital newborns thrown away

[Seven Language Pictorial]

when the book was opened and the dead marched | are there youngsters in the  
house, in the house that is on fire

save injury

stalk mouth

wonderful praise | wonderful dove

bulldozed || sun

from **SCENE OF THE CRIME**

Ammiel Alcalay

Letter from Angel Almedina, Vietnam vet from E. 113th st., to Gerald Nicosia:

Gerry,

*I am at Montrose VA in a psychiatric ward. It is a locked ward but I am OK, I think. I've met Patton and MacArthur. They are black. There's a marine who's spaced out on crack who says he is Spock (Star Trek). I am taking no medication. Talk to you soon. The Asylum is in good hands.*

Angel

“scene of the crime”

“these infectuous dreams”

scene of the crime:

The Mediterranean / Venice & Motor, off the 405

*I mean take it from Steven Seagal's point of view, I mean the guy shot 15 phone conversations — what kind of a script is that? And the thing at the train station, I mean everything just gets blown up — I mean you know it has to be a special effect — I mean this crossed the line for me, this kid on the train, I mean if he was actually watching it and it wasn't on tv or anything, how could that possibly be real? I mean the hole in the side and then when I went to visit, you know that last day when they showed the flag — it's pretty deep, probably just about from here to the 405 — there were 42 people from my home town — another friend, they got her out right away but she got hit by jet fuel — Does jet fuel burn? So it's hot, really hot? But not to the point where it just takes your*

*skin off, is it? I didn't know jet fuel was hot — we put jet fuel in, you know, that scene where Steven is near the train station, before everything blows up — the last thing she remembered was just something out of the corner of her eye — people were making calls, you know, like that messenger who called his wife — I really think they must have shot it down — but what about all those phone calls, I don't think they would have shot it down — it wasn't like they just put this thing together a week before, they had to assimilate themselves — it's scary, these guys scare me — I was almost 10, you know, in England, so there was always the IRA, but you've always got to worry about what people are thinking, you know I was in Germany, I mean this is a culture that, yea, I mean I'm no fan of Germany, big time, I mean even the French, you know me and Darrell were the only ones who showed up for work — I mean what kind of bad taste joke is that? — but you know they're all bilingual and they're so serious and arrogant about everything — yea, I mean, granted, it's more cultured, I mean architecture, meals mean a lot — like in Italy — I mean, I feel like we've already been here forever but, like in Italy, they'd just be getting started — we were working like 80 hours a week — I mean you really have to get outside for lunch for an hour or so — are you on the Sony lot? — most of my stuff has been either Sony or Disney — yea, I've worked those lots, Fox has a new building, you know? — I'm buying you guys lunch, you've done all this free work here already, so I'm buying — when did you guys start shooting anyways, a year ago or so? — you know, now that I've had a chance to look at you a little bit more, I **have** seen you somewhere, maybe in a series — what were some of your features? — we should really get together and watch some of that stuff, you know?*

“they go to film after film till the whole world seems to turn on a reel”

scene of the crime:

a dark and distant era a journey armed  
with obligation an easy trap this noble  
work we now call royal habit invisible  
by design unappreciated impervious to  
change removed from the glare in the

half light of holding a mean line in the  
half light of giving an empire which is  
a kingdom of the landscape bred within  
failed states no attempt to explain to  
reflect the living reality no discernible  
response to revelations and claims  
routinely subordinated designed to  
insure the good we can do together

“people march toward the strange glorifying eye of the camera”

broken from the womb poorly the graces  
of formal gardens the road lies elsewhere  
that which is not public doesn't count cannot  
take place it shall be as this room our windows  
rattle in the night despite all the deceit we too  
inhabit this great evil stirring in the world crudely  
numb not a flame shoots out but could extinguish  
the torch of any liberty the fresh memories of  
tyranny by no means a common feature of such  
accounts of persons who felt they were never given  
a chance to come to terms fundamentally undermined

“as a method for keeping the story from ending”



to the extent that it conforms information  
is recognized information so assembled  
central to our abilities fixed in consensual  
shadow history politics memory why the  
vast sea of discontent why the marriage  
the escalation the loss of human subject  
have we forgotten the yearning the song  
of old empty altars in a time of oil and famine  
marines in Bahrein the army in Kuwait Palestine  
brought to its knees Iraq parched to the marrow

Words from George W. Bush, Jr. (speech to NATO ,11.20.02); "Invisible by Design: U.S. Policy in the Middle East," Irene I. Gendzier (DIPLOMATIC HISTORY, Vol. 26, No. 4; Fall, 2002; 593-618); *Ace of Pentacles* (New York, 1964), John Wieners; *Home to War: A History of the Vietnam Veterans' Movement* (New York, 2001), Gerald Nicosia, p. 626.

## SOME DISCOURSES ON/OFF THE DIVIDED SELF: LYRIC, ETHNOGRAPHY AND LONELINESS<sup>1</sup>

Maria Damon

### I. The Divided Self

Some years ago in a graduate seminar on contemporary American poetry, a particularly gifted student remarked during the course of our discussion on Allen Ginsberg that what was so moving about the Beat poets was their insistence on making the “signifier fit the signified,” on fusing them, through violence if necessary—forcing representation to match up perfectly with something putatively anterior to it: “being”—“essence”—one’s “true self.” Thus the emphasis on nakedness, candor, self-disclosure of an almost compulsive rigor. Through “telling it like it is,” in other words, they staked their entire poetic careers on forging—or revealing—a trustworthy unitary subject whose autobiographical pain was immediately graspable through the reading experience whether on the page or on the stage. The “I” in the poem, counter to elaborate academic theories about “personae” and “dramatic irony” that abounded at the time, was the I of the life, the poet’s life. And, this impassioned and eloquent student went on to point out, it couldn’t be done: thence the poignancy of the writing—the beauty of the wreckage that the impossibility of getting rid of literary artifice, or the splitting of the “self” into subject and object of writing, wrought on literature and on their lives. High stakes—impossible stakes—to say the least, as it was founded on a chimera, namely a single bedrock essence that could, moreover, be articulated—if only one searched and spoke and wrote and declaimed and lived hard enough. Could it have been this very attempt that, as Ginsberg so famously observed, destroyed the best minds of his generation?

I was very taken with his proposition at the time and still do not think it was wrong. Speaking as it did to one of the central tensions in the history of modern lyric poetry—the relationship between signifier and referent—, it could in fact be profitably considered with regard to not only the Beats but to any number of modernism’s participants or modernity’s denizens. The crisis would become especially acute for those on the cusp of what we now consider the postmodern: to, right before a generalized acceptance of performativity and multiplicity, take a final ambivalent and anguished stand in favor of a certain utopian and nostalgic model of unalienated unity. His argument rewrote persuasively the oft-repeated lore that those coming of intellectual and artistic age right after the unprecedented scale of World War II’s annihilations were destroyed by the commercialization and sterile suburbanization of USA-style late capitalistic postmodernity; he claimed rather that what caused such anguished and powerful work was the necessarily-doomed attempt to deny the inherent, mediated performativity of text/selves in favor of immediate experience. Other scholars, such as gay historian George Chauncey, have corroborated this sense that 60s culture tried to obliterate self-

difference which had come to be considered a distressing cultural norm: the 60s, for example, marked the era in which the “double life” of marginalized identity was put aside in favor of, to use idioms then prevalent, “coming out of the closet,” “taking off the mask,” doing your own thing, being or expressing yourself, embracing your identity—as if you had only one.<sup>2</sup> While Chauncey emphasizes how the unitary “identity” in “identity politics” was constructed in a political climate that could be seen to violate the well-wrought artifice of double lives that gay men and other minoritized people had crafted, it is easy to see how the Beat ethos (particularly pointed in Beat culture’s proximity to gay and Black subcultures, which it variously misrecognized, obfuscated, celebrated and emulated) countered that presumed duplicity, in the service of an aesthetic and/or lifestyle in which self-expression precluded any doubling, which latter phenomenon was negatively coded as pretense and subterfuge. As the “divided [binaristic] self” of the modernist period, with its separation of inner and outer, good and bad, mask and “real self,” public and private, evolved into the “fluid” and “fragmented self” of the current postmodern era, it passed through the cataclysm of the 60s-80s liberationist era, in which the unitary, “authentic” self was proclaimed as needing emancipation from the false and oppressive roles imposed by an external, hostile, and conformist society. Identity, in the singular, was the concept around which social activism organized itself before, primarily, Black feminists once again finally reminded us that we are, and live as, more than one or even two selves simultaneously. Dissenting 1960s art, it has often been said, was an anti-artifice art, an art that presumed only the tragic aspect of double-consciousness and tried, with some cruelly well-meaning, reductive clumsiness, to fix it.

In the narrower realm of poetry, this amounted, in the eyes of this era’s cultural workers, to an emphatic repudiation of what the Agrarians/New Critics/Fugitive critics, frank elitists, had theorized as the autonomous poem purged of any intentional fallacy or surrounding context, the messiness of social, personal, historical or economic contingency. For the Beats and other dissenting poets of the postwar era, a poetics had to be lived as well as written, in spite of the high cost of such a proposition. In fact, willingness to incur such life-exacting cost was an index of true poeticity. However, this insistence on simplification of self to self-sameness was a naive solution; to simply undouble double consciousness as a strategy for cultural expression, not to mention for lived experience, simply didn’t work all that smoothly, especially for minoritized individuals. In attacking the elitism of proponents of the decontextualized work, new American poets (Beats and confessionals among them) denied the complexity of the relationship of text to ever-shifting context.

Minoritized subjects such as Black and queer people within these dissenting literary communities could not easily or glibly drop the pleasures, the protective maneuverability, or even the historical sorrows associated with the performative, the multiplicity of roles they inhabited. Social outsiders within a society of dissenters, they were neither the complacent bourgeois nor the frostily

Eliotic poets who comprised the foil against which the New American Poetry constituted its ethos, but rather people for whom an unambiguously single “self” was clearly a fallacy, who had not had the historical luxury of living that fallacy, and who had crafted marvelous lives and art out of an ethos of performativity. Finding themselves in a position of adjacency to, rather than fully part of, both mainstream and dissenting cultures that took only the mainstream as their reference point, these minoritized writers’ lyric work witnessed and documented both their own psyches and the societies in which they could only partially participate. Over time, some of these poetic projects could not sustain the contradictions of witnessing; the extreme degree of their doubling, as well as the impossibility of self-sameness (undoubling), created unbearable psychic strain. These writers, later in their careers, wandered about in the wreckage rubble of lyric as if it had been an overly ordered, hyper-aestheticized cerebral city that had sustained a bombing campaign—their fragments, rants and expressions of “solitudes crowded with loneliness” testified to the fragile fiction that modern unified subjectivity had been.<sup>3</sup>

At a certain point after immersion in this 1950s “outsider” poetry I was struck by its hyper-descriptive, ethnographic content (consider “Howl”’s enumerations, for instance, as a “thick description” of the underworld culture Ginsberg romanticized and participated in). I wondered if such work could be considered (auto-)ethnographic (Johannes Fabian provides an important link here by insisting that all ethnography is autobiography; and the poetry of this subculture was noted for its autobiographical content<sup>4</sup>), especially with reference to the poignant “participant observer” role that minoritized subjects are often thrust into when they interact with the mainstream (that is, daily, hourly, etc.), or, in this case, and even trickier sometimes, an oppositional subculture that claims to provide conditions for an unalienated life but cannot make good on its claims because of its ambiguous and complicity with the mainstream. I wondered if, in fact, the breakdown in formal control that characterizes much of this poetry—especially in the later work of Bob Kaufman and John Wieners, who will be discussed in greater detail below—and in the ethnographic distance some of this early work maintained were related to this strain of being, paradoxically, immersed in a counterculture that claimed to strip pretense away therapeutically, but was actually unable to protect its more vulnerable members from the socially punitive consequences of doing so. I wondered if there was any insight into the nature of creative survival and poesis to be gained from juxtaposing, under the general heading of “discourses of divided consciousness,” the subjective processes of ethnographic practices and texts with those of lyric. The subjectivity of the ethnographer and the lyric poet, and the way that subject is represented in resultant texts, both defamiliarized from and resonant with its originating (small a) author, seem to have something in common, though the ethnographer has traditionally written a record of external experience under the banner of science, objectivity

and society, and the lyric poet an internal experience under the banner of art, subjectivity and privacy.

A concept key to this drama of doubling and undoubling is the insight variously formulated by Marx, Freud, Du Bois, Walter Benjamin, Paul Gilroy among others: namely, that the subject in modernity is de facto traumatized by alienation and double-consciousness. Underlying the self-as-other predicament of the poet and the ethnographer is the traumatized and self-divided modern subject who, through inevitable—rather than self-induced—dissociation, alienation and double-consciousness brought about by social conditions, experiences itself as other. While this is a generalized condition of modernity, it manifests differently for different subjects and under varying conditions. The split subject is at once a pathological effect of specific (in the case of intrafamilial violence or near-death accidents) or historical-collective (in the case, for instance, of historical slavery, wage-labor exploitation, or a history of ethnic/religious persecution) trauma *and* a normative condition in the modern era. The experience of alienated modernity, as Theodor Adorno argued in “Lyric Poetry and Society” (implying but not stating that this alienation is profoundly traumatic) lies at the very core of the modern impetus toward lyric: the social violence of modernity is always implied, even in the most solitary of pastoral verses, which function in dialectic counterpoint as compensatory balm to that social violence.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the apparent choice to isolate on the part of the lyric poet or the adventuring ethnographer is not a choice; rather, the already fragmented subject of modern lyric and/or ethnography creates a narrative of *having chosen* solitude, to address and yet avoid confronting the traumatic experience, and to produce texts which both reveal and conceal, address and circumlocute. These two representations of self-estrangement, ethnographic self-estrangement and lyric subjectivity, though not unilaterally equivalent, are related to the traumatic dissociation of “double consciousness” ranging from the normativity of the “healthy” modern psyche to the deviance of mental illness. They operate on a continuum, with strong “family resemblances.” The modern condition is aptly summed up by Arthur (“il faut être absolument moderne”) Rimbaud’s “Je est un autre;” Rimbaud, a paradigmatic lyric poet, eventually abandoned the lyric (his masterpiece *Un Saison en Enfer* constitutes his farewell to it) to emigrate to Ethiopia, where he wrote several essays for French journals of natural history before disappearing entirely from the world of print. Double-consciousness, it seems, is the sine qua non of lyric, as it is of ethnographic experience and writing; lyric is a dissociative genre; dissociation is an effect of trauma; trauma is a generalizable cultural characteristic of modernity, as is double-consciousness. At the normative end of this continuum is the Cartesian subject, whose humanity consists in the talent of self-reflexivity—or the ability to split oneself off from one’s body in order to observe, reflect upon, judge and regulate that body’s activities; at the other end, schizophrenia and addiction, which we encounter in John Wieners and Bob Kaufman. The dichotomized split of “cogito

ergo sum” is now fragmented into multiples; postmodernism accepts this multiplicity rather insisting on its aberrance.

The predicament of whether one could be one or was always multiple, whether one could merge any “I” with a self-regarding “eye,” was of course not restricted to poets or ethnographers, but characterized the life of the subject in the modern era. Traumatized by the separation of signifier from referent, of “Self” from subjective activity, of the individual from the socius, of the worker from his/her empowerment to labor on his/her own behalf, the modern psyche is split. As the subtitle of Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* suggests, an alienated self-consciousness is the cultural norm of modernity. Because trauma has become normative, it follows that a forcible undoubling of the double-consciousness endemic to modernity would be no less traumatic. A belief in the generalized cultural trauma of modernity is thus at the heart of this essay, with the significant caveat that this condition is exacerbated for minoritized subjects; lyric poetry and ethnography are two genres typical of the era which well instanciate this claim through their methodological and philosophical reliance on split subjectivity even as they acutely pressure, explore and expose this problematic.

One further note on the peculiarities of ethnography and lyric in the house of the doubled self, of which the two modalities function as complementary manifestations. Ethnography, beyond its foundational divide of self versus other, or home culture vs. host culture, is a doubled discourse in an even more fundamental way. It effects an internal split in the putatively singular self of the ethnographer in the “participant observer” mandate, which imposes duplicity and a high degree of anxiety on the ethnographer. In the discussion of ethnography that follows, Bronislaw Malinowski, to whom the methodology if not the term of participant observation is attributed, provides a case study in the desperation of the performance of self-sameness in the face of overwhelming personal experience of dividedness. One could say that ethnography is founded on the projection of the doubled self onto an external model of “our culture” versus “their culture.” Lyric poetry, whose trademark characteristic use of the first person (the “lyric I”), likewise claims a sort of self-sufficiency for the “speaking subject.” But here, the splitting happens internally rather than as an outward projection. Through the very nature of discursive introspection, the self has to look at itself as if it were other (which it is). Though the final lines of a poem, especially in contemporary mainstream lyric, tend to gesture toward a reconciliation of the watched self with the commentator self—in other words an affirmation of self-sameness on the part of the “speaker of the poem” and by extension the author and the monadic epistemological system s/he represents—the genre reveals, through its very self-consciousness, the division at the heart of lyric subjectivity. In other words, it is the recuperative unity and not the putatively temporary self-division of the subject that is ultimately suspect. The poetry discussed below I hope exemplifies the crisis that threatens lyric when this is confronted directly.

## II. “Other” Poetry

Jean Genet suggested, in *The Thief’s Journal*, that “there is a close relationship between convicts and flowers.” I suggest that there is likewise, under the larger rubric of divided subjectivity, a close relationship between ethnography and lyric poetry, though which is floral and which is criminal is anybody’s guess, changes from moment to moment, and perhaps each has a goodly dose of both components. Speculation suggests that lyric poetry and ethnography, having similar genealogies with roots in the emergence of the modern subject, both perform a kind of self-estrangement within the writer, a doubling of consciousness, effected by but also resulting in a loneliness and anxiety. This anxiety serves as the impetus for the mastery of the respective genres—ethnography and lyric poetry—and by extension, of the umbrella discipline—anthropology and poetry-writing respectively. As (again) Jean Genet, auto-ethnographer of the underworld of petty criminals and lumpen gender-benders, so aptly puts it, “Then I really felt in exile, and my nervousness was going to make me permeable to what—for want of other words—I shall call poetry.” With more sophistication than many of those American dissenting writers who held him in high esteem, Genet locates the poetic as coextensive with exile and (self)-difference—not as a compensatory move toward reconciliation. Poetry is *reliant* on the gaps and spaces between the fragments of self and self; it originates therefrom, rather than from a place of wholeness. Genet is writing from a position low on the social order, in which exile is not a matter of choice but one brought about by vagrancy across national borders, of the kind performed by those below the radar of governmental surveillance. The purported condition of ethnographers and self-conscious poets is one of contained self-exile: in the service of eventual expertise, they are willing temporarily to cede certainty and risk the disorientation of immersion in an uncomfortable environment. The classic ethnographer undergoes, during fieldwork, the unmanned/unmoored feeling of cultural confusion and irrelevance. For the poet, self-estrangement comes with an altered, non-quotidien triangulated relationship between “self,” “world,” and “language”—in each case, the dark night of the soul is lived through to find salvation in a reunified, putatively wiser subjectivity on the other side.

## III. Digressive Contextual Core Essential Material Snore Snore Yes Yes

While there have been movements in poetry practice and scholarship that place these in close relation to anthropology, I want to distinguish this inquiry from at least some of them. The “ethnopoetics” of the 1970s, whose practitioners, primarily Dennis Tedlock and Jerome Rothenberg, wanted to heighten the sensitivity of urban, Western, English speakers to indigenous people’s word-art, arguing somewhat defensively that it was “just as good” as the high lyric tradition, and deserved aesthetic as well as sociological attention. Although many feel that there was some genuine potential for widening the field of poetic activity and



scholarship, this movement has been justifiably criticized for its naive and paternalistic appropriation of indigenous culture in the name of a universalizing modernism which gathers up many different verbal practices under its own (Western avant-garde) standard of “poetic language,” with little regard for how these verbal events function within their originating cultures. More recently, there have been anthropologists, such as Steven Caton, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Smadar Lavie, who examine “poetry as social practice” among Middle Eastern people such as the Bedouin, Northern Yemenites, and Palestinians in the occupied territories; unlike the earlier ethnopoetics scholars, anthologists and poets, they attend to the complexity of the context in which this body of spoken or written work is produced, and to how it functions *within* its particular culture. Subfields within anthropology address folklore, ethnomusicology (with at least some attention to the verbal aspects of music-making), and the anthropology of creativity.

What happens if we look at poetry *as* ethnography, and conversely at ethnographic practices as poetic? At the parallel developments in disciplinary subject formation that shape the putatively responsible ethnographer or the poet as “skilled craftsman” as well as sensitive human(istic) being? How does this (or not) distinguish him/her from the object of study or the objective correlative of lyric content? What is the nature of the continuum along which “self” and “other,” “poetry” and other discourses, subject and object of study, witness and victim, citizen and denizen, observer and participant are ranged? And what about considering the poeticity of fieldnotes? Poet and editor Mark Nowak’s journal *Xcp: Cross-Cultural Poetics* has pioneered such endeavors, especially in issue #3, *Fieldnotes and Notebooks*; Nowak’s own poetry incorporates ethnographic interviews and excerpts from classic ethnographic texts, and in other ways frankly acknowledges a methodological and thematic debt to ethnography.<sup>6</sup> One could consider the careers of anthropologists like Michael Taussig, with his turn toward performance and ekstasis — not into madness and addiction, but certainly away from the norms of ethnographic decorum and into modalities that affirmed multiplicity even as they challenge what is permissible within the purviews of anthropology. Edward Sapir, Ruth Benedict, Stanley Diamond, folklorist Susan Stewart, Renato Rosaldo and Ruth Behar have published poetry, and the latter two have explored quite explicitly the affective dimensions of the ethnographic endeavor with an eye toward healing the oxymoronic split of the “participant observer”; some anthropological journals routinely publish poetry; *Anthropology and Humanism* has a poetry editor on its regular roster and publishes several poems in every issue. There are also, to be sure, “rogue anthropologists” who defected from their critical-humanistic distance and were more or less absorbed into the contexts they studied; their careers and writings could be usefully explored in tandem with the poets who have slipped beyond the purviews of the poetic mainstream, but such a project falls outside the boundaries of the current crude template.

#### IV. The Lyricism of Ethnography

Classic modern ethnography offers itself as a precedent genre in which loneliness and processes of estrangement are established as foundational methodological norms from which great work ensues. In his magnum opus, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), Bronislaw Malinowski, the acknowledged originator of the method, justified his proposed mode of research, which has become known as the “participant observation” method of conducting fieldwork, with the following startling rationale: the anthropologist, presumed in Malinowski’s text as in all other anthropological texts of the time to be a white man, must banish himself from the company of others like him; the loneliness thus induced will drive him to do his fieldwork.<sup>7</sup> Only the fear of going mad of loneliness, Malinowski reasons, will induce the ethnographer to seek out the company of his (ambiguously inferior) non-white subjects. The immersion experience he as a social being undergoes in their culture, which he also, as a scientist, documents thoroughly, becomes the basis for his research. Self-estrangement (the split between “human being” and scientist, the literal distance between the individual and his home culture, and the cognitive distance between the individual and his host culture) leads to immersion in a different culture, but rather than wholly heal that estrangement, the ethnographer must maintain it in order to be both a participant and an observer in that culture; he must never forget his allegiance to his work, lest he “go native.” The “healing,” or reconciliation, happens in the other direction; once back in his native culture, the anthropologist’s regained subject position as Westerner can subsume the other experience and relegate it to an episodic experiment whose results he now documents and analyzes. The end product, the published ethnography, conceals the messy, disorienting experience of loneliness that midwifed its existence; it is optimally a declaration of mastery of one’s discipline, and over one’s emotions. A subtle gendering and whitening process happens here: the ethnographer re-masculinizes and re-whitens himself through the writing that, in a reversal of the original distancing from his own people, now distances him from the host culture and reintegrates him with his own. However, there are traces of fear and abjection to be found in classic ethnography, and this loneliness, which generated the text, remains at its core.

Significantly, Malinowski’s exile was not self-willed. His most influential writing and most formative fieldwork in the Melanesian Trobriand Islands was undertaken when Poland was experiencing the ravages of World War I, and was being colonized by the Soviets to the East. Malinowski was himself interned as an “enemy alien” in Australia during the war. We see some of the stakes and experiences that motivate Malinowski’s project in *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*. The book, scandalous when it was first published (posthumously) precisely because of the gap it revealed between the polished ethnographic work and the messy, abject ethnographic process, is fraught with frequent, anguished passages in which he is preoccupied with the health and welfare of his mother, the

fear of never seeing her again (this fear materialized), nostalgic moments of longing for a Poland he can never revisit, and more generalized concern for the fate of his country.

While we can read these traces between the lines and at times explicitly, we can also appreciate the intention and trajectory toward mastery characteristic of ethnography that is born out of a need to reterritorialize and integrate one's experiences of alterity, duality and the shock of modernity. Even while reviewing his relationship with his recently dead mother and other lost relationships, even while explicitly articulating the reality of a modern life lived in fragmented free-fall, toward the end of the *Diary* Malinowski explicitly asserts his faith in the liberal-humanistic theory of individual self-sameness, the very one he must suspend or at least call into question by virtue of the putative belief in cultural relativism that gives anthropology its intellectual purchase: "My whole ethics is based on the fundamental instinct of unified personality. From this follows the need to be the same in different situations (truth in relation to oneself) and the need, indispensability, of sincerity: the whole value of friendship is based on the possibility of expressing oneself, of being oneself with absolute frankness" (296). In fact, the *Diary* itself was a deliberate exercise in self-reflection for the purpose of achieving self-sameness (and the eradication of undesirable traits and habits, such as "dejection," obsessive novel-reading and womanizing, that obstruct this process) through self-knowledge. Self-knowledge, in other words, is power, in much the same way that intellectual mastery over "his" "savages" is power. This desire for self-knowledge through self-disclosing narrative resonates sharply with the yearnings of someone like Allen Ginsberg, who attributed the power of his bond with Burroughs and Kerouac to the informal psychoanalytic sessions they conducted, in which the three of them took turns lying on the floor and revealing all their secrets in monologues while other two listened in non-judgmental silence, much as Malinowski imagined his fiancée as the recipient of his confessional words. (What appears to be different is that Ginsberg, Burroughs and Kerouac were not attempting to cure themselves of bad habits.)

That one can be entirely "one [and the same] self" at all times is a goal only in an epistemological system that sees multiplicity as counterfeit, and downgrades the experience and integrity of those who, in W. E. B. Du Bois's words, "ever experience [their] two-ness." En route to this unambivalent-sounding assertion about his integrity, Malinowski makes it clear that not only does he experience terrific "two-ness" quite often, but that even in his most exalted moments he validates his experience by imagining that he is sharing it with his fiancée; she is an invisible presence suffusing all his fieldwork experiences—especially those in which he appreciates the landscape—with meaning and redemption. This is a kind of self-splitting, an inability to be a unified subject. Moreover, immediately following the declaration of oneness cited above, he adds, "The real problem is: why must you always behave as if God were watching you?" (297). In other words, it is not at all "natural" or easy to be wholly unified

and unself-conscious; the sense of being watched by oneself and/or others, whether that be projected into the figure of God (critically), a loving fiancée (approvingly), by “natives” one does not consider one’s equal (unnervingly), seems far more engrained—his (and perhaps everyone’s) default setting. His inner experience is an imagined performance for an omniscient benefit, and derives its meaning therefrom. As in the case of the Beat poets several decades later, the frantic proclamations of self-sameness belie a lived experience of multiplicity, double-consciousness, self-in-not-always-comfortable-social relationship.

The *Diary* abounds with intense moments of pastoral appreciation, approaching as they do the transcendent moments of lyric poetry, and sharing many of the characteristics thereof, which link the practices of ethnography and field diaries to those of lyric poetry. Malinowski has tremendous descriptive gifts; even in translation the passages in which he is transported by the natural beauty of the tropics approach the dissociative power of the lyrical objective correlative, and are often accompanied by statements about extreme moods, either “fits of dejection” or triumphant “joy” about internally declaring intellectual ownership of “my village”; the diary entries of their youth begin in gladness, whereof in the end—and periodically throughout—threaten despondency and (the fear of) madness. Auditory hallucinations and synesthesia born of both deprivation of the known and a surfeit of well-being occur: “I had moments of wild longing to hear music and at times it seemed to me that I was actually hearing it [Beethoven’s 9th]” (63-4); “Marvelous sunset... One could *hear* and *feel* that color in the air... I was not homesick, I didn’t think about Poland” (67). Repeatedly, Malinowski attributes great and overpowering intention and personality to the landscape itself in the best animistic tradition, only to master himself by fantasizing the power and prestige his research will bestow on him in the scientific West in passages that have been much quoted by Malinowski’s and classic anthropology’s critics and revisionists in order to demystify the ethnographer’s project and link it unambiguously with colonial domination. Of course this critique is correct, but it underestimates not only the compensatory nature of the ethnographer’s grandiosity (which does not excuse it, but casts it in a dialectical relationship with itself, as if Hegel’s master-slave dynamic were being played out within a single mind), but the ways in which his dual (or duelling) psychological state is an effect not only of individual loneliness but of cultural and historical trauma.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the *Diary*, Malinowski mentions his desire to write poetry, a few attempts to do so, and occasional feelings of triumph in relation to the process, but it appears that only one poem has survived, and it predates his breakthrough fieldwork. In January 1912 he wrote “In Wawel Cathedral,” a dark sonnet of death, silver coffins and martyr’s blood that places the speaker and a companion (a lover? a spirit?) in a cathedral’s “dark nave” feeling the fate of their impending death.<sup>9</sup>

Others from within the discipline Malinowski represents have observed this great interior drama with far more critical acumen than the foregoing comments demonstrate; the ethnographer’s loneliness and other revelations (particularly the

ethnographer's racism) in the *Diary* have been much written about, and ethnographic fieldwork, its methodology and textualization have by now moved far beyond mythologized Malinowskian heroics to the degree that engaged communication and intersubjectivity rather than loneliness and participant observation are considered constitutive processes of ethnography.<sup>10</sup> But the ways in which the dynamics of classic ethnography with its global reach intersect with those of the micro-drama of the intensely local "lyric I" have not been fully explored. The grandiose/abject swings in inner experience such as those described in the *Diary* and implicit in much modern poetry, all the way from "I wandered lonely as a cloud" to you name it, indicate an anxiety over a necessarily unsettled relationship to one's own mind and experience.

## V. The Ethnography of Lyric

By transforming the loneliness of fieldwork in a foreign culture into observation-oriented writing, the ethnographer attempts to re-masculinize and whiten himself (conquering the feminizing and abject conditions of loneliness and the subject position of the "other") through producing text for consumption by his home culture that, though (until recently) downplaying the ethnographer's consciousness, by implication locates that consciousness as searching, perceptive and, through its very erasure, ultimately omniscient. In lyric, the consciousness itself is foregrounded, attended *to*, as the most interesting element of the text; in ethnography, it is attended *from*, the motor driving the prose, the tastefully backgrounded *sine qua non*. In modern lyric, especially since the dominance of Eliot's "objective correlative" in which the poet sought to route his cognitive and affective process through reflections of these processes in external nature (as if "we" were not part of "nature") or some other mute "Other" (a rainy day=a melancholy mood, shirts flapping on a clothesline=a rapturous angelic though ultimately earthbound feeling, etc.), the writer more overtly intends his observations to be traceable to the originary genius of his own mind, and often lets fly an aperçu in the last line that clinches the overlap of perceived object with perceiving subject. But in both cases, it performs an intact, capable and (re)unified power exerting itself from the driver's seat after a harrowing apprenticeship in the workshops of internal division. After World War II, this illusion of control was put into crisis; for poets and ethnographers, the temporary excursion and discourse on that excursion conclude implicitly thus: "I'm glad I learned so much about [the Berber, the Lao, the shirts flapping, the rock whose compactness I tried to experience briefly], but mostly I'm glad to be once again human [unlike them] so that I can have the consciousness to make these observations about them and ultimately about myself."

The work of several post-war poets—notably here Bob Kaufman and John Wieners—lays bare the contradiction at the heart of the genre: they convert the solitary, noble fieldworker/poet back into the lonely, dislocated subject. These

poets adopted ambivalent participant observer positions to describe the scene they were part of, describing in somewhat static, stylized terms the West coast bohemian milieu of coffee houses, bars, “shooting galleries” and urban landscapes in ways that both self-consciously captured the “scene” for posterity and also distanced them from it through the alienated labor of note-taking and documentation.<sup>11</sup> It is possible to see, in Wieners’s and Kaufman’s work, the ambivalence, skepticism and/or wariness that accompanied their immersion in these alternative communities. Kaufman’s and Wieners’s nuanced expressions of their relatively complex position on the margins of an already marginal urban and artistic subculture are noteworthy and deserving of close attention, because in attending to the ways in which they pressure the contradictions of their experience as insiders and outsiders, we can illuminate some of the ways in which countercultures and/or oppressed people can function effectively or ineffectively in the face of crushing and destructive state-mandated imperatives to knuckle under. In tandem with an emphasis on describing “scenes” and celebrating community is a distinct penchant for the trope of loneliness. Loneliness, for Kaufman and Wieners, is not the slightly pleasurable, bittersweet melancholy that afflicts, for example, the pastoral subject of “Lyric Poetry and Society,” or even Kerouac’s moments of solitude en route across the country, moments which disrupt manic bouts of descriptive effluvia about hitchhiking or driving companions. Rather, loneliness is a mind-altering affliction that actually interferes with this kind of reverie-positive “solitude,” as is suggested by the title of Kaufman’s first book, *Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness*. Acute loneliness actually prevents one from experiencing lyric solitude, though it often operates in a kind of dialectical interplay with it (as we see in Malinowski), taking the phenomenological form of a short-lived euphoria; in the long run, however, that way madness lies.

Lyric poetry, which had long been one among several types of poetry in European and American literature, became (at the same time as the development of anthropology) the dominant, almost exclusive kind of poetry produced at the upper registers of culture and eventually came to dominate the middle-brow mainstream as “poetry” tout court. Whether Romantic or modernist, lyric’s appeal lay mainly in its ratification of the individual subject observing itself across a range of feelings and thoughts against a backdrop of “objective correlatives” — symbolically laden landscapes, natural or other objects external to the poet’s psyche that nonetheless functioned in concert with the poem’s intended import (i.e. an overcast sky suggested the poem’s melancholy, to which direct reference would be clumsy). The apex of lyric achievement, as former laureate Robert Hass stated in a public lecture, is to enact the moment at which a subject becomes aware of her/his own subjectivity — s/he “catches her/himself” in the act of reflection and in doing so grasps the wider ramifications of her/his meditations on external phenomena.<sup>12</sup> Although a lyric poem’s success rests on the effect of closure and holism (the sharp aperçu of the final line that leaves the reader moved and admiring), this is another kind of participation/observation whereby the poet



estranges her/himself from quotidian, normative, unreflective activity and observes her/his own psyche as if it were a foreign entity. This process must be conducted in solitude; again, as in the ethnographic situation, the abject condition of loneliness is transformed into the powerful condition of the self-isolated genius observing the world: Emily Dickinson's legendary reclusiveness—and her status as denatured female—is possibly the most paradigmatic model here; so is Robert Frost's crusty misanthropy. One could say that the feeling of *inferiority* is transformed as the poet takes this very feeling as proof of his/her (presumed superior, more highly developed) *interiority*.

In the post-World War II era and especially since the intellectual revolution of the late 1960s, lyric poetry has been attacked for its false presentation of a unified subject, which, these critiques maintain, is an inaccurate representation of human experience post-1945; lyric's attention to precious minutiae as ratifying the poet's powers came to be seen as an act of cerebral imperialism, just as ethnography's roots in world conquest and its reliance on the spurious objectivity of the powerful observer came under heavy criticism and revision with an eye toward decentering the organizing subjectivity of the writing (Western) ethnographer. The work of the poets I focus on, unredeemably marginal subjects (queer, mentally ill, racially indeterminate, addicted) who cannot rehabilitate themselves through writing but write anyway, re-exposes, through the tattered and jagged fragmentation of their language, the loneliness at the heart of textual production thematically preoccupied with close observation and "accurate documentation." This work exhibits some of the tendencies of lyric ("beautiful language," for instance), but thwarts any sense of closure, completeness, or mastery. The poets' careers are characterized by an initial phase of reaching toward lyrical norms; as their lives progressed (or devolved), it became increasingly fragmented and undisciplined. Their oeuvre lies somewhere between *écriture brute* (naive writing), conventional lyric, and vanguard experimentation. The trajectory of this writing is, arguably, of a piece with the historical "un"disciplining of ethnography and poetry.

Most interesting, in terms of the "crisis in representation" that haunted the humanistic disciplines after the 1960s, the work of certain poets enacts a metonymic crisis in poetry as ethnography. While their early work exhibits some characteristics of lyric, it eventually veers sharply away from any possibility of closure or mastery: it tests the limits of the discipline of poetic craft. Moreover, the poets' social dislocations indicate that they inhabit the double-consciousness of the minoritized, nonnormative subject—and this experience of displacement is the subject matter of their work. One could consider the poets in question—Kaufman, Wieners, others—among those who found that writing "lyrik" after Auschwitz was not only unethical, it was impossible; the disintegration of their psyches in a sense attested to their attempt to find a new, "truer" way to witness, to embody and inhabit language in (post-)modernity.

*Bob Kaufman: "I kept my secrets. I observed those who... were not Negroes and listened to all their misinterpretation..."*

Bob Kaufman (1925-1986), a Black (and apocryphally Jewish) merchant seaman and NMU strike organizer in 1940s New York City, reinvented himself in the late 1950s as a San Francisco Beat poet; from being a "family breadwinner" concerned with democratizing labor he became, thanks to the McCarthy-era purges of leftists from labor unions, a member of a subculture in which breadwinning was scorned as conformist, and labor was seen as complicit with an oppressive social and political climate as well as stifling domestic arrangements. Under the Beat sign, family life took on an experimental fluidity, and the "wife and seven-month-old daughter" mentioned in the NMU's newspaper dropped out of sight and were replaced by another wife and child on the opposite side of the country.<sup>13</sup> As a poet, Kaufman wrote highly stylized, somewhat dissociated descriptions of his hip milieu published in *Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness* (1965), a title whose oxymoronicity suggests the challenging situation of double-consciousness he negotiated. As a Black subject in a social environment that prized Black culture but was not necessarily comfortable around Black people (that is, he was a Black ethnographer in a predominantly white counterculture), he maneuvered skilfully between participant and observer, writing verse that was "lyrical" without having at its center a stable speaking subject. Though in many of his early poems the speaker is positioned as a participant observer, he himself was to some degree regarded as an exotic "Other" by his white colleagues in the Beat orbit. His active participation in circulating wild legends about his origins (that he was Haitian, that he was born to an Orthodox Jewish father and a Martiniquan "voodoo queen" mother, that his grandmother, a slave, eloped with the plantation owner's son) provides an interesting instance of the trickster native informant whose multiple and contradictory stories keep the ethnographers guessing. (Another Black poet of the era, Stephen Jonas, who similarly traveled in mostly white poetic circles, also maintained several unverifiable and mutually incompatible accounts of his origins. Dramatically instancing the degree to which, in the 1960s, the "Veil" still divided white from Black, both Jonas and Kaufman maintained, during their poetic periods, entire lives that their white poet friends knew nothing of—in Jonas's case there are some suggestions that he worked in organized crime—, and it has proven extremely difficult to research these writers' biographies.<sup>14</sup>) Three of Kaufman's poems illustrate a move from the ethnographic to the—shamanistic, as it were—to the unrecuperable habitation of the split itself in the wreckage of history and the wreckage of normative poetic language—habitation of Genet's exilic space of true poetry. "Bagel Shop Jazz," "THE POET," and "The Ancient Rain (Bicentennial Poem)" trace a sort of arc from an identifiable participant-observing subject of conventional, descriptive lyric through a harrowing amalgam of the poète maudit and double-consciousness-afflicted subject to, finally, the all-out prophetic and paranoid national jeremiad where language breaks down in



apocalyptic terror-cum-vindication. Here is “Bagel Shop Jazz,” named after the Co-existence Bagel Shop, a Beat hangout in San Francisco’s North Beach district:

Shadow people, projected on coffee-shop walls  
Memory formed echoes of a generation past  
Beating into now.

Nightfall creatures, eating each other  
Over a noisy cup of coffee.

Mulberry-eyed girls in black stockings  
Smelling vaguely of mint jelly and last night’s bongo drummer,  
Making profound remarks on the shapes of navels,  
Wondering how the short Sunset week  
Became the long Grant Avenue night,  
Love tinted, beat angels,  
Doomed to see their coffee dreams  
Crushed on the floors of time,  
As they fling their arrow legs  
To the heavens,  
Losing their doubts in the beat.

Turtle-neck angel guys, black-haired dungaree guys,  
Caesar-jawed, with synagogue eyes,  
World travelers on the forty-one bus,  
Mixing jazz with paint talk,  
High rent, Bartok, classical murders,  
The pot shortage and last night’s bust.  
Lost in a dream world,  
Where time is told with a beat.

Coffee-faced Ivy Leaguers, in Cambridge jackets,  
Whose personal Harvard was a Fillmore district step,  
Weighted down with conga drums,  
The ancestral cross, the Othello-laden curse,  
Talking of Diz and Bird and Miles,  
The secret terrible hurts,  
Wrapped in cool hipster smiles,  
Telling themselves, under the talk,  
This shot must be the end,  
Hoping the beat is really the truth.

The guilty police arrive.

Brief, beautiful shadows, burned on walls of night.<sup>15</sup>

“Bagel Shop Jazz”

I've discussed this poem at length elsewhere, with attention to the tensions it outlines between women, white ethnics, and Black hipsters in the Beat counterculture, as well as the elision of the highly visible gay scene that formed another dimension of the bohemian circles in which Kaufman orbited.<sup>16</sup> The Black men are the only ones granted an interiority, hiding "terrible secret hurts" behind "cool hipster smiles" as Kaufman acknowledges the loneliness of being misperceived by his white colleagues, who looked at him as a loveable, wild novelty act—a Black man who could extemporize Yeats, Eliot, Lorca and Tennessee Williams all mixed in with street patter and dozens—a sort of team mascot in their ongoing fight with police and squares. He was their noble savage, and occasionally he let slip clues about his consciousness from "within the Veil" of his (at least) doubled social life. I have also mentioned the poem's status as a stylized tableau, almost overly choreographed; this ethnographic depiction of "village life," acknowledged to be fleeting (just as many white ethnographers' dubious assumption that indigenous life was on the verge of disappearing gave their work a poignant urgency), is also a bid for literary history. (It is noteworthy that though this poem literally eschews the famous "lyric I," there is both an implied "we" and what Preston Whaley has called an "ethnographic I" in Kaufman's poetry and especially here.) In Kaufman's case, the delicate position he negotiated as a Black man in a white world adds another dimension to the stylized, static, emotionally muffled and thumbnail-sketch quality of the poem; its mildly schitzy tinge suggest that he is both active within the scene as one of the "coffee-faced Ivy Leaguers" and watching from a disembodied position hovering somewhere above, or watching the pageant unfold from outside the bagel shop window (which he once kicked in in a high-spirited moment)—the classic victim/witness split. In other words, one could read this poem, innocuous and wistful as it may seem, as a symptom of social trauma. And Kaufman did indeed suffer at the hands of his Beat literary confrères as well as the police, enduring racial epithets as well as patronizing affection from the former and physical violence from the latter; he responded with his cool hipster smile—external social inferiority transformed into complex, doubled interiority.<sup>17</sup> Taking into account Freud's outline, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, of the (human) organism's developing a tough skin (consciousness) as a response to unpleasant stimulus, provocation and attack (trauma) from without, one could read the lyric itself as a normative skin—the organ/membrane developed to process and defuse the power of raw shock. Kaufman's lyrics, then, as well as his stance as a hip lyric poet, become the protective layer that his actual skin—the history it implied, the ongoing social subordination to which it consigned him despite his best literary and political efforts—could not provide; the understatement of the poem and the cool hipster smile it embodies provide a "veil," or interface mediating inside and outside, behind which he can preserve some autonomous if lonely and anterior selfhood. The poem concludes with an equally veiled reference to global violence of the atom bomb, the neighborhood violence recorded by spray-painted body-outlines

on city streets, and epic literary violence in its echo of the Virgil's commentary on a mural of the Trojan war: "lacrimae rerum sunt" ("Brief, beautiful shadows, etched on walls of night"). Is the poem a protest against the aestheticization of social violence that effected the Beat retreat from politics? Is it an attempt to "come to terms with" a troubled and doomed counterculture that deserves its downfall? Is it a moment of resistance not only to the invasion of the "guilty police" but to the superficiality of its own utopianism?

As Du Bois predicted in his characterization of "double consciousness" as crippling rather than enabling, the doubled perspective that was Kaufman's survival strategy and that permitted him a foothold in the social order came at too high a price; eventually, in Kaufman's biographical trajectory, lyric failed him. After a period of poetic silence and ambiguously willed anonymity due to disillusionment, addiction, and continued social trauma, he briefly resumed writing; in 1981, a volume of new and previously uncollected work came out thanks to the devoted efforts of Raymond Foye, who followed the ever-more-elusive Kaufman around North Beach, collecting manuscripts and eliciting new material.<sup>18</sup> (In his positioning as the sought-after object, one could say that Kaufman became the "native" to Foye's ethnological pursuit.) The new work was decidedly different in tone and style. Two of those poems, "THE POET," and "The Ancient Rain," reflect how far Kaufman had traveled from the participant-observer coolness of the Other into a hell realm of utter prophetic isolation and Other-worldliness. In the former poem, the heightened sense of doubleness ("I HAVE WALKED IN THIS WORLD/ WITH A CLOAK OF DEATH WRAPPED/ AROUND ME, I WALKED ALONE, EVERY/ KISS WAS A WOUND, EVERY SMILE/ A THREAT") no longer pertains to Black/white or interiority/ exteriority or to race as an index of visibility/invisibility, but to life and death themselves; zombi-like, the poet moves between them, between inertness and vitality, between the womb and the grave. Every sensation, gesture and relationship is fraught with terror, duplicity, and incomprehension. He has himself become a skin, a sensing organ mediating life and death, with nothing to protect him from the torture that is human society.<sup>19</sup> In the latter poem, in long lines that virtually abandon any pretense of craft and mastery, the poet prophesies the final reckoning of a racist nation that can't honor its own potential, that has squandered its promise of freedom. Notably, one of the most harrowing aspects of the apocalypse Kaufman predicts (etymologically, apocalypse is "uncovering," as in the final removal of the veil, the final undoubling) is that "All the symbols shall return to the realm of the symbolic and the reality become the meaning again. In the meantime, the masks of life continue to cover the landscape." In other words, part of the end of life as we know it is the collapse of the dual realms of referent and sign, a dualism on which our entire social life is structured, liberal humanist disavowals notwithstanding. Here poetry appears to have lost whatever conventionally "critical humanist" edge had characterized the earlier work (its note of satirical commentary), which property Bruce Albert asserts as anthropology's value as a discipline.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike Kaufman, W.E.B. Du Bois's efforts at ethnography did not drive him mad or do him in, but their failure, in his eyes, to effect real change in the lived reality of Blacks in the US did drive him away, first from the genre, and then from the United States, which was both his home culture and his host culture (thus the ironies of double consciousness). Written as an appeal to the universal humanism he believed resided in the individual enlightened white psyche if not white society, *The Souls of Black Folk* sets forth in oratorically masterful ("poetic"!) prose brimming over with rhetorical doubling, formidably irrefutable historical detail, and experimentally hybrid chapters and genres the critical apparatus of double-consciousness, which formulation has become a cornerstone of contemporary race theory. Du Bois's hope of explaining, as auto-ethnographer, the rich interiority of "them that live within the Veil" was not fulfilled, and eventually, after many more engaged experiments in Black social and political uplift, disgusted with the intractability of the US political self-interest that continued to fuel oppressive policies, he emigrated to Ghana where he continued his life-long activism.<sup>21</sup> It is in the failure of the ethnographic attempt (the fault lying in the reception rather than the creation or production) and the corollary disillusionment with the humanity of the humanists that I see similarity with the poets under consideration here, as well as—primarily—in Du Bois's thorough exploration of the possibilities and limitations of double consciousness.

*John Wieners: "I am one of them"*

John Wieners' (1934-2002) trajectory was similar to Kaufman's, if his sensibility was different. While Kaufman was a "street poet," often condescended to as a populist by other San Francisco Bay Area poets, Wieners, though of working class origin, came to San Francisco via Boston College and Black Mountain College, his avant-garde credentials intact. In his early "A Poem for Tea Heads," which is probably also his best-known poem, a drug user—the protagonistic but dissociated "lyric I"—documents the underworld of drugs and gay sex as if he were observing himself from the outside; it is clear that trauma underwrites his engaged disengagement, his lively but distant voice:

A poem for tea heads

I sit in Lees. At 11:40 PM with  
Jimmy the pusher. He teaches me  
Ju Ju.

Hot on the table before us  
shrimp foo yong, rice and mushroom  
chow yuke.

Up the street under the wheels

of a strange car is his stash — The ritual.  
We make it. And have made it.  
For months now together after midnight.  
Soon I know the fuzz will inter-  
rupt will arrest Jimmy and  
I shall be placed on probation.

The poem

does not lie to us. We lie under its  
law, alive in the glamour of this hour  
able to enter into the sacred places  
of his dark people, who carry secrets  
glossed in their eyes and hide words  
under the roofs of their mouth.

6.16.58

An addict who became schizophrenic in his later years, Wieners thematized loneliness throughout his career, sometimes in yearning lyrics, sometimes in freeform schizobabble that also somehow had “poetic,” political and social content. In this poem, even though he is describing putatively pleasurable sensory stimulants—food, drugs, the intimate company of an attractive man—, there is a ritualized, automaton quality to his description of their activities. Clearly recounted for the benefit of an outsider-onlooker not familiar with the world of drugs or of homoerotic miscegenation, the moment is not one of intimacy between the lyric I and “Jimmy,” but, if anything, with the Idea of the Poem mediating a fundamentally alienated encounter; there’s a “what am I doing here” quality to the writing underscored by the mystery and exoticism Wieners imputes to his partner in drugs and sex—though he is certainly sensitive to the differential social power in their relations (the man of color will be treated more harshly than the white man for the same illegality), this seems to heighten his glamor for the poet/ethnographer. In his isolation, writing kept Wieners company. In Wieners’ ethnographic view, Jimmy is not isolated—he has “dark people” who are initiates in juju, and the secret “words [hidden] under the roof of [his] mouth” indicates his participation in a putatively non-alienated orality, in contrast to Wieners’s decentered and, as became evident, increasingly deterritorialized literacy. In prose passages of his journal *707 Scott Street*, written in the late 1950s but not published until forty years later, Wieners likewise describes San Francisco as an urban scene of great desolation in spite of its frantic activity and “glamour,” emphasizing also his own deterioration in prose that feels slo-mo, stunned, paralyzed by incredulity:

...But the city is a fabled labyrinth, and sustenance there is subterranean. Life on the surface regiment, ordered mechanized the people move as robots, displaying neither love nor fear..

At night when there is only one eye and the police prowl as roaches thru every layer. Searching like poets every face, gait, manner of dress. Under the street lights only the eccentric stands out garbed in the costume of his game. Streetwalkers, showgirls, perverts, late business men, clerks, schoolboys, tourists, from the healthy country ... poets with pale faces, girls dressed in black beside them. All parade by on silent errands. There is seldom laughter except in the neighborhood and negro districts. Here all is flash and glamour. ... How long? Two years at it and I am worn out. My teeth half gone at 25. A racking cough all night. Little food and sour stomach in the morning unless drugs, not to deaden one, but open doors for the fantasy world. Sur-real is the only way to endure the real we find heaped up in our cities. ... Every scrap of bread is worked for. Every crumb from the master table of 1959. (53-4)

Thus, as if ethnographic precision or the notion of being sought out by cops could cure loneliness, for sustenance Wieners gives allegorical meaning to his struggles to survive, to score, to find companionship. The loneliness here is observed sociologically, and contained in the strangely static tableau of the scene, as if the decay of his own body took on some compensatory meaning when placed in a larger historical context, or as if his isolation were mitigated rather than exacerbated by the possibility that isolation is a psychic state of the era; at least he didn't have to take personally its ravages on his person. Wieners's journal is at once a writer's journal that records a sorcerer's apprentice type of submission to the discipline of magic, a set of ethnographic fieldnotes, a foreshadowing of future madness (when the split becomes untenable), and an attempt at survival through distancing himself (through writing/observation/articulation) from the traumas of postmodernity, drug abuse, poverty, homoerotic passion in a repressive era, and so forth. One further observation can be made about this fragment and "Bagel Shop Jazz" with regard to the positioning of the writer and reader to the content. Although both passages are written in the present tense, there's a sense of memorialization, as if the scenes being described were already over and in need of commemoration. Johannes Fabian has aptly described the relationship of ethnographic time to "the Other" in terms of domination and objectification: the host culture being described, putatively more primitive than the ethnographer's home culture, is fixed as static through the very conventions of the genre; the present is an eternal present, unchanging, and hence implicitly a reification of both the ethnographer's past experience in the field and the ongoing past-in-the-present of the objects of study.<sup>22</sup> In Kaufman's and Wieners' work, that of the minoritized poet-ethnographer, there's a related future anterior sense — this is what we will have lived through — if we survive. The distancing function of ethnographic



There is a princess in the tower.  
 And steps like inside the Statue  
 of Liberty lead up to her.  
 Wooden, with grass and sunlight upon them  
 I could climb the stairs or stay  
 here in the poem (105)

In another expression of dissociation, Wieners is both the princess trapped in a tower and the princess who *is* a hollowed-out tower (again, echoes of Kaufman, who also writes of the poet's experience of his subjectivity as subject to, and rattling around inside, his body); he is, moreover, also the seeker who can climb up into her, as well as the writer — the writer both inside and outside the poem — who has to choose between the poem and active contact with others. Sex itself is seen as ethnographic, *a priori* split between observing and participating, a retreat into the scientism of observation and recording — a professional, socially sanctioned version of the tormented dissociation that has marked so much of Wieners's and Kaufman's relationship to the physical world. As Jeff Derksen writes, tongue-in-cheek, "So would you like to, uh, ethnography."<sup>23</sup>

Elsewhere there is no mitigating presence of the romantic Other whatsoever, but a stark declaration of aloneness. This bleaker encounter with disappointment could be valorized as less exploitive (there is no fantasized or projected-upon Other to be deified or vilified) and less inclined to the palliative of sociological rationalizing, but it is almost unbearably painful to read. The poem "To Sleep Alone," for example, is primarily a catalogue of activities rendered in the infinitive, as if to suggest that the loneliness is without conceivable cessation (infinite):

To sleep alone	to play alone
To wake alone	go work alone
to walk alone	to grow alone
to wash alone	to mourn alone
to write alone	to climb alone
to see alone	to fall alone
to think alone	to dress alone
to die alone	to strip alone ...

(Selected Poems, 238)

Paradoxically, the overwhelming repetition of the word "alone" doesn't seem to empty it out semantically. Rather, the many verbs' variety is eviscerated by the



inevitability of the appearance of the word at the end of each line to negate, with its Poe-esque finality, any particularity or pleasure in the many activities pursued by humans in the course of a day or a life.

Wieners's writing is clearly "minority discourse" with its "high degree of deterritorialization."<sup>24</sup> The subject is "beside" or "outside" himself, as the ethnographer's imperative requires.<sup>25</sup> Also, stylistic or aesthetic concepts such as "multi-perspectival," "disoriented," "high degree of self-consciousness"—which implicitly acknowledge a divided subject—, bring these descriptions of psychic states to bear on "outside" or vanguard styles of writing. Robin Blaser's essay on Jack Spicer's poetics, "The Practice of Outside," and Nathaniel Mackey's *Discrepant Engagement: Dissonance, Cross-Culturality and Experimentalism* are signal texts that elaborate this resonance between outsiderhood, cultural borders, and alternative artistic production. The kind of psychic alienation described by Wieners is both peculiar to his sensibility and typical of the split between public and private spheres that many minoritized folks negotiated *without* paying the high price of their sanity—but this is not to say that they didn't suffer. John Wieners lived through both transitions—from "divided self" to the mandate to be "authentically gay," and then from that era of liberation activism to the current permission to be multiple without one's multiple identities necessarily being construed as the result of oppression. While his survival testified to the resilience of creative imagination, the conditions of that survival testified to the extreme psychic hardships these changes have entailed.

On his return to Boston in the 1960s Wieners' mental illness progressed, and his work became less disciplinedly "lyrical," instead dramatizing internal scripts in which he adopted the personae of glamorous female figures such as Bette Davis or the Virgin Mary. However, at times it continued to be auto-ethnographic, as in the harrowing "Children of the Working Class," written "from incarceration, Taunton State Hospital, 1972":

...

gaunt, ugly, deformed

broken from the womb, and horribly shriven  
at the labor of their forefathers, if you check back

scout around grey before actual time  
their sordid brains don't work right,  
pinched men emaciated, piling up railroad ties and highway ditches  
blanched women, swollen and crudely numb  
ered [sic] before the dark of dawn

scuttling by candlelight, one not to touch, that is, a signal panic  
thick peasants after *the* attitude

at that time of their century, bleak and centrifugal  
they carry about them, tough disciplines of copper Indianheads.

there are worse, whom you may never see, non-crucial around the  
spoke, these you do, seldom  
locked in Taunton State Hospital and other peon work farms  
drudge from morning until night, abandoned within destitute crevices odd clothes  
intent on performing some particular tasks long has been far removed  
there is no hope, they locked-in keys'; housed of course

and there fed, poorly  
off sooted, plastic dishes, soiled grimy silver knives and forks,  
stamped Department of Mental Health spoons  
but the unshrinkable duties of any society  
produces its ill-kempt, ignorant and sore idiosyncrasies.

There has never been a man yet, whom no matter how wise  
can explain how a god, so beautiful he can create  
the graces of formal gardens, the exquisite twilight sunsets  
in splendor of elegant toolsmiths, still can yield the horror of

dwarfs, who cannot stand up straight with crushed skulls,  
diseases on their legs and feet unshaven faces and women,  
worn humped backs, deformed necks, harelips, obese arms  
distended rumps, there is not a flame shoots out could ex-  
tinguish the torch of any liberty's state infection

1907, My Mother was born, I am witness t-  
o the exasperation of gallant human beings at g-  
od, priestly fathers and Her Highness, Holy Mother the Church  
persons who felt they were never given a chance, had n-  
o luck and were flayed at suffering.

They produced children with phobias, manias and depression,  
they cared little for their own metier, and kept watch upon  
others, some chance to get ahead

Yes life was hard for them, much more hard than for any blo-  
ated millionaire, who still lives on  
their hard-earned monies. I feel I shall  
have to be punished for writing this,  
that the omniscient god is the rich one,  
cared little for looks, less for Art,

still kept weekly films close for the  
free dishes and scandal hot. Some how  
though got cheated in health and upon  
hearth. I am one of them. I am witness  
not to Whitman's vision, but instead the  
poorhouses, the mad city asylums and re-  
lief worklines. Yes, I am witness not to  
God's goodness, but his better or less scorn.

#### The First of May, the Commonwealth of State Massachusetts, 1972

That he continued documenting his mutable sense of reality as well as his class outrage, witnessing and being witnessed by a God who regards the poor with indifferent, uninvested contempt, indicates a need for the process of documentation itself (as well as the proliferation of interacting voices) as a counter to the loneliness on which he has blamed his schizophrenia. However, the poem also reveals, both in its content and in its broken syntax and orthography, the extent to which the critical distance of formal writing has become untenable; he is no longer a disinterested observer but a witness "under observation" in the blind panopticon of the state psychiatric hospital—or rather what he sees there of himself and others is so painful and self-indicting that, again like Malinowski, he projects his observations onto an all-powerful but, in his case, uncaring gaze. His feeling of impending punishment is not only metaphysical guilt, but the fear of actual recrimination if his descriptions of the hospital inmates are made public, like the scandal that followed the showing of Frederick Wiseman's "Titicutt Follies," an exposé of another Massachusetts psychiatric hospital, in public cinemas around the same time. While the term "critical distance" (as well as "liberal humanism") doesn't quite fit here, Wieners is both a critic and analyst, as well as, to use Johannes Fabian's term for a constitutive element of the performative, a "thinker," as is Kaufman in his final jeremiads.<sup>26</sup>

#### VI. Two Final Notes: Word on Community and a Follow-up

A. In spite of the overwhelming despair and unrecoverability of Kaufman's and Wieners's psychic states, physical frailty and material poverty, it must be said that they were much loved and cared for by their respective poetic communities—who were, perhaps not quite as dramatically, likewise struggling for psychic and material survival. One cannot say that they ended up like Malinowski or Du Bois, world-renowned and certain of having made widely acknowledged contributions to human knowledge, etc.; as public figures, their "works and lives" are only marginally recuperable into any liberal humanist discourse of greatness or achievement. But during the last decades of their lives they were surrounded by younger poets as well as surviving friends from earlier

generations who collected and published their messy and scattered manuscripts, fed and housed them, dropped in daily to see if everything was okay, took them to hospitals, to readings, and so forth. A dynamic of devotion—one of survival at the edges of possibility—played itself out that indexes a different—though perhaps not all that different, like convicts and flowers—kind of community from that enjoyed by the illustrious, beloved mentor in the academic community (Malinowski) or the auratic, legendary public intellectual (Du Bois). Where these final musings are taking me in a comparison of lyric and ethnography under the lonely sign of the divided self, I'm not sure. Perhaps you can help.

B. So, what happened to the student whose initial proposition opened this paper—the proposition that the Beats were attempting the impossible by forging a (“re”)unity between sign and referent? Marc Penka went on to write a brilliant if contorted dissertation on Hawthorne, and, after his defense, disappeared into the southwestern desert where he often camped out solo. A year after anyone had seen him, we learned that he had died of a heroin overdose in the desert among the wildflowers and succulents in which he had found past solace. This paper, which I imagine burnt, curling into fragile and sculptural ash in the shape of roses, is offered as a wreath laid on an imaginary grave, a garland of criminally complicit flowers, a cenotaph for a fallen warrior of the sign.

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(Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Regular or longtime readers of *Xcp: Cross-Cultural Poetics* will recognize parts of a review I published here of John Wieners' *707 Scott Street* in 1998. The process of writing that review set off a chain of speculations that has, so far, led to the current essay. "Callow But Not Shallow," *Xcp: Cross-Cultural Poetics* 3, pp. 137-147. Thanks to Mark Nowak, Joanna O'Connell and Ed Cohen for their assistance on the present effort.

<sup>2</sup> George Chauncey, "The Strange Career of the Closet," lecture at University of Minnesota, May 1998.

<sup>3</sup> *Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness*, Black poet Bob Kaufman's first book of poems, will be discussed below (New York: New Directions, 1965). Loneliness was a major sociological and philosophical preoccupation of this era, epitomized by titles like David Riesman's sociological treatise *The Lonely Crowd* and Alan Sillitoe's work of fiction, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. One could hypothesize that in the forcibly depoliticized 1950s, political and economic dimensions of Marx's "alienation" had become psychologized and affectively rendered, so that the term became resonant with "disaffection" or "anomie" rather than "exploitation" or "exchange value."

<sup>4</sup> Johannes Fabian, "Ethnographic Objectivity" and "Ethnology and History," *Anthropology with an Attitude* (Stanford CA: Stanford UP, 2001), pp. 12-13, 75.

<sup>5</sup> Theodor Adorno, "Lyric Poetry and Society," *Telos* 20 (1974), pp. 56-71.

<sup>6</sup> See *Xcp 3: Fieldnotes and Notebooks* (1998); and Mark Nowak, *Revenants* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (New York: Dutton, 1961 [1922]). Malinowski does not appear to have actually used the phrase "participant observation" himself, though in the course of the discipline's development it has become the standard terminology. While George W. Stocking, Jr., has convincingly demonstrated that other ethnographers were de facto involved in this kind of fieldwork strategy, Malinowski has been mythologized as first turning it into a de rigeur methodology. Stocking, "The Ethnographer's Magic: Fieldwork in British Anthropology from Tylor to Malinowski," *Observers Observed: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork*, edited by George W. Stocking, Jr. (Madison WI: Wisconsin UP, 1983), pp. 70-120.

<sup>8</sup> For just two instances of the degree to which the language of dualism—beyond the classic dualism of Westerner and "Other"—permeates meditations on the nature of anthropology and participant/observation, see Richard Handler's discussion of anthropology experienced by anthropologists as an uneasy and dynamic synthesis of/struggle between science and art, and Herbert Gans's discussion of the extreme anxiety produced by the necessarily duplicitous role of the participant-observing social scientist. Handler, "The Dainty Man and the Hungry Man: Literature and Anthropology in the Work of Edward Sapir," in Stocking, pp. 208-231; Gans, "The Participant Observer as Human Being: Observations on the Personal Aspects of Fieldwork," in *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, edited by Robert G. Burgess (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), pp. 53-61.

<sup>9</sup> Malinowski, "W katedrze na Wawelu," ("In Wavel Cathedral"), translated by Frank L. Vigoda.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Bruce Albert, "'Ethnographic Situation' and Ethnic Movements: Notes on Post-Malinowskian Fieldwork," *Critique of Anthropology* 17:1, 1997, pp. 53-

65; Fabian, "Ethnographic Objectivity," *Anthropology with an Attitude* (Stanford CA: Stanford UP, 2001), pp. 11-32; and Stocking.

<sup>11</sup>While I am not concerned with making an intervention in the emerging subfield of Beat scholarship, it is useful to look at Beat writing in particular as an ethnographic endeavor, as it problematizes the assumption that all writing and culture swept up under the Beat rubric cleaved to a naive concept of "spontaneity" and undocumentable ephemerality. Part of what the Beats were up to, in delineating the boundaries of their dissenting enclave within consensus-culture 1950s, was outlining a kind of counter-nationalism, and these artistic "scapes" functioned to both describe and prescribe (with the scribe as outsider and insider) the roles of the denizens of beat, as well as the "territory" itself. This writing can be seen as ambivalent auto-ethnography as well as, in many cases (such as the romans à clef of Kerouac and Ginsberg's "Howl," which functions as a Who's Who catalogue of the inhabitants of his hip nation), an outright bid for literary posterity. As self-proclaimed deviant subjects, Beat writers cleaved powerfully to an ethos of survival through community, though they strove to distinguish that community's folkways and culture from those of the communities of upwardly mobile or sterilely static middle classes or working classes, Black or white, from which they had fled.

<sup>12</sup>Robert Hass, Beach Lecture, Minneapolis MN, April 2000.

<sup>13</sup>"Family Breadwinner," *The Pilot*, May 31, 1946, p. 7. For a more extensive treatment of Kaufman's biography, see Maria Damon, "'Unmeaning Jargon'/ Uncanonized Beatitude: Bob Kaufman, Poet," *The Dark End of the Street: Margins in American Vanguard Poetry* (Minneapolis MN: Minnesota UP), pp. 32-76; and "Introduction," *Callaloo* 25:1, pp. 105-111.

<sup>14</sup> See *Stephen Jonas: Selected Poems*, edited by Joseph Torra. (Hoboken NJ: Talisman House, 1994), pp. 1-12. The suggestion of Jonas's involvement in organized crime came from Joseph Torra, conversation with the author, January 1998.

<sup>15</sup> Bob Kaufman, "Bagel Shop Jazz," *Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness* (New York: New Directions, 1965), p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> Maria Damon, "Triangulated Desires and Tactical Silences in the Beat Hipscape: Bob Kaufman and Others," *College Literature* 27:1 (Winter 2000), pp. 139-157; "Other Beats," *Hambone* 13 (Spring 1997), pp. 177-185; "Jazz-Jews, Jive and Gender: Ethnic Anxiety and the Politics of Jazz Argot," *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*, edited by Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin. (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1996), pp. 150-175.

<sup>17</sup> For an anecdote about poet Jack Spicer's scribbling the word "Nigger" across a presentation copy of Kaufman's broadside *The Abomunist Manifesto* where he knew Kaufman would see it, and Kaufman's response, see Killian and Ellingham, *Poet, Be Like God: Jack Spicer and the San Francisco Renaissance* (Middletown CT: Wesleyan UP). Kaufman's clashes with the North Beach police are well-documented. See, for example, David Henderson and Vic Bedoian's KPFA radio special on Kaufman, etc; Damon, "'Unmeaning Jargon'/ Uncanonized Beatitude: Bob Kaufman, Poet," p. 33; and Jeffrey Falla, "Bob Kaufman and the (In)visible Double," *Callaloo* 25:1, pp. 183-189. Falla also discusses, usefully for this essay, Kaufman's double-bind, as a person of color, of being both hyper-visible and invisible.

<sup>18</sup> For a fuller treatment of Kaufman's biography, see "'Unmeaning Jargon'/ Uncanonized Beatitude," p. 32 ff.; and Damon, "Introduction: Bob Kaufman, Poet," *Callaloo* 25:1, pp. 105-111.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of “percussion: drumming, beating, striking,” and the relationship of poetry/music, percussion and social violence, see John Mowitt’s book of the same name. Durham NC: Duke UP, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Albert, p. 60.

<sup>21</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: New American Library, 1969), p. xii. For a fuller discussion of the doubling inherent in this and other work by Du Bois, see Shamoan Zamir, *Dark Voices: W. E. B. Du Bois and American Thought 1888-1903* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1995); for an exploration of Du Bois’s connection to anthropology, see *Critique of Anthropology* 12(3) 1992: special issue on *Du Bois and Anthropology*, and especially a treatment of his ambiguous valuation of “double consciousness” in Ernest Allen, Jr., “Ever Feeling One’s Twoness: ‘Double Ideals’ and ‘Double Consciousness’ in *The Souls of Black Folk*,” pp. 261-275.

<sup>22</sup> Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, (New York: Columbia UP, 1983).

<sup>23</sup> Jeff Derksen, “I Need to Know if this is Normal,” *Xcp: Cross-Cultural Poetics* 2. pp. 63-75.

<sup>24</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, (Minneapolis MN: Minnesota UP, 1983), p. 24ff.

<sup>25</sup> Fabian, “Ethnographic Objectivity,” p. 31-32.

<sup>26</sup> Fabian, “Culture with an Attitude,” *Anthropology with an Attitude*, p. 97.



## THIS EVENING LET'S

Adrienne Rich

not talk

about my country. How  
I'm from an optimistic culture

that speaks louder than my passport  
Don't double-agent-contram my

invincible innocence I've  
got my own

suspicious Let's  
order retsina

cracked olives and bread  
I've got questions of my own but

let's give a little  
let's let a little be

~

If *friendship is not a tragedy*  
if it's a mercy

we can be merciful  
if it's just escape

we're neither of us running  
why otherwise be here

Too many reasons not  
to waste a rainy evening

in a backroom of bouzouki  
and kitchen Greek

I've got questions of my own but  
let's let it be a little

~

There's a beat in my head  
song of my country

called Happiness, U.S.A.  
Drowns out bouzouki

drowns out world and fusion  
with it's *Get—get—get*

*into your happiness before  
happiness pulls away*

*hangs a left along the piney shore  
weaves a hand at you— “one I adore” —*

*Don't be proud, run hard for that  
enchantment boat*

*tear up the shore if you must but  
get into your happiness because*

*before  
and otherwise  
it's going to pull away*

~

So tell me later  
what I know already

and what I don't get  
yet save for another day

Tell me this time  
what you are going through

traveling the Metropolitan  
Express

break out of that style  
give me your smile  
awhile

## DON'T BE SIMPLE, BE COMPLEX

Kirin Narayan

My American grandmother Nani retired from teaching art in the Taos school system, arriving in Bombay just before I was born. The story goes that she lamented not having enjoyed her grandchildren. "Have another for me," she coaxed my mother. Nani wanted so much to raise a girl that even before I was born, she brought girl's baby clothes all the way from America.

The other story goes that my Indian grandfather Dada, lying on his deathbed, addressed my mother changing his dressings as "Ma." She knew then that she would have a fourth child, and after the mourning period was over, she did indeed become pregnant. My father's relatives joked in a slightly anxious way that I was Dada returned; this was why I was bald like the old man until I was almost two.

I know both these stories. I am Nani's girl-baby, and I also can sometimes command wary respect from the Gujarati side of the family, as though there is a stern old man hovering behind me, a reflection in glass. "His eyes," muses Ba, my father's mother, "His ears." She stares, not touching. "His mouth."

Ba lives in Nasik, four hours away. I live with Nani in Bombay, next door to parents.

When Nani says she'll teach me to read and write, I am almost delirious with excitement. I love disappearing into other worlds by being read to or by scrutinizing pictures in books I know well. Now I eye the tall shelves of books standing guard over secrets in practically every room in both houses.

Nani's right hand curves around my chubby fingers as we hold a pencil together. Her hand has wrinkles and small flecks of brown. My skin is just a shade darker than hers. We bend over a table under the screen of crimson bouganvillea on her porch as she guides us through the alphabet she's already taught me to recite. Our notebook has three close lines in red and blue, a big space, then more sets of three lines.

We shape capitals between the three lines, and fit lower case letters beside them: Aa, Aa, Aa. Nani starts each page, then lifts away her fingers, leaving me to manage the pencil that has suddenly grown wobbly in my fingers.

Next we go for numbers, all the way to ten. I love how Nani presses around me, how all her attention is focused along with mine to the end of our pencil. I am also not impervious to the admiration of other grownups who stop by. "Not even three and she's already learning to write?"

My big sister and brothers are at school and so being occupied with a notebook gives me the sense of participating in something important. I spend my days at a low wooden table, mouth working with the effort to form letters just so. But learning how to draw these marks is only a prelude to the figuring out the miraculous ways they recombine. Endless processions of vertical, horizontal, slanted and looped lines start to march towards meaning. C-A-T and here is our

Manuela leaping into the page with her thin black and orange body. C-A-R and there is the gray-brown Ambassador being wiped down by the driver outside.

J-A-M says the jar Nani sets before me in the morning. That's easy to decode, but then the jar also carries other letters that I recognize from the sacred center of letter combinations, my own name: a 'K' an 'I' yes, even an 'N.' K-I-S-S-A-N jam. I peer over the plate. Now does the "kiss" in Kissan relate to the kind of "puppy" (in Hindi) that adults sometimes smack onto my round cheeks as a welcome break from the usual grabbing and pinching of so cute-cute flesh? If this is 'Kissan' as in the slogan *Jai Javaan Jai Kisaan* (Hail to Soldiers, Hail to Farmers), why is this word written in English, and if it is in English why doesn't it just say 'farmer?' Wait, there's an 'F' word here too; but no, it's F-R-U-I-T, not that jolly man who stands in a dancing circle called a dell, hey-ho-the derry-ho, to choose his wife.

'Babar' is easy to recognize. 'Celeste' is harder: why is the 'C' here so different than in 'Cat'? And the 'C' in 'Christopher Robin' is only the beginning of a long confusion of letters.

And what about words people haven't already read aloud to me? What about words that absorb adults so completely they don't notice a child? What about words in other languages that I hear around me—Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati—words scripted in ways I do not understand?

One morning as my father hides behind his screen of lifted newspaper, I check first to see if this is one of the English papers, not the Gujarati *Bombay Samaachar*. Then I tap at his arm.

"Can I read with you?" I ask.

"Come," says Pa. Unlike Nani, who makes a fine point of distinguishing whether one *can* or *may* do something, Pa pulls the newspaper off to one side, clearing a path into his lap. I climb up into his armchair and settle in.

Usually I sit in Pa's lap in the early evenings if he's home, before empty bottles gather beside him. Mornings are not times that Pa can be counted on to say much. He always seems exhausted and dazed. Once he brushed his teeth with fungicide from the medicine cabinet, realizing only when it didn't rinse out that it wasn't mint-flavored toothpaste.

The servants set out peeled and sliced fruit in a plate beside Pa: apples, mosambis, chikoos, papaya, mango, depending on the season. He also sometimes drinks orange juice from a small can. Very few things appear in our house in cans in the early 1960s, so this is really special.

We are safely together in the tent behind Pa's newspaper, along with the fermented smell of old alcohol drifting from his pores. I don't mind this smell; to me it means that my gentle sad father has returned and that he might even brighten with laughter. The other father who smells of liquor freshly splashed with shaking hands does not focus his eyes well enough to see small children. I snuggle closer on Pa's lap.

Before we start on the newspaper, Pa lifts the can with a picture of an orange. "What does this say?" he asks.

"Sun sip," I read aloud.

"*Shaabaash!*" Pa applauds. "Now let's read it backward,"

*Sun Sip* becomes *Pis Nus*, I learn. Pa explains that the can gives off a metallic taste that is just like piss! "Piss" is a crackling grown-up word compared to "pee," further proof of how reading confers sophistication.

Pa points to the newspaper next. *Nehru* becomes *Ur-hen*, and the big *dam* he wants to build is *mad*. Pa laughs happily and I laugh with him. *Delhi* is *Ihled*, a place that makes you ill with Delhi-Belly.

I already know that Pa likes to be silly with language and that this usually makes Ma groan. "Why be simple?" he asks whenever he takes a vitamin B-complex pill, "Be complex!" Twiddling his big radio to an orchestra, he clutches at the small of his back, exclaiming, "Ach, my aching Bach!" Or if he really wants to make Ma roll her eyes, he tells a joke that she has never found funny, about the men in the bar: one said to another, "that guy looks melancholy." "Yes," replied his friend, trying to focus his eyes, "Head like a melon, face like a collie."

I don't get that joke either, but I laugh anyway, because it is my clever father. Now, hiding behind the paper with him, learning the basics of juggling words, I am his conspirator.

When my brother Rahoul comes home from school, I show him how I can read forward and backward. I want Rahoul especially to know what I can do because I have heard grown-ups talk about how though he's only nine he's arranging words in poems.

Rahoul patiently allows me to show off. "But can you read in a mirror?" he asks.

"No."

"Come, I'll teach you."

Rahoul picks out a few magazines from the living room coffee table and we go into the dressing room where there is a long mirror set in the wall over a low dressing table. Standing tall beside me, Rahoul holds up the red-bordered cover of the latest *TIME/EMIT*. He shows me how I can read back to front even when the 'E' juts in the wrong direction. Next he holds up the cover of the *Imprint* magazine. Some symmetrical letters are just the same, but others loop and slope over their own familiar shoulders.

Suddenly I understand. Rahoul reads this way because he is left-handed. Both he and Deven are lefties, a faintly scandalous thing for India. Everyone knows that a right hand is meant to eat with, and the left hand is meant exclusively for washing dirty bottoms when you're old enough to wash your own. Rahoul and Deven have learned to eat with their right hands, but unlike other kids we know, they have also been allowed to write with their left hands.

"Do lefties read like this?" I look up to meet Rahoul's brown eyes in the mirror.

“Sometimes,” Rahoul smiles down me. “But you know what? I’m ambidextrous.”

“Ambi-what?”

“Here’s a piece of paper. Here are two pencils. Write your name the way you usually do with your right hand and at the same time, write it backward, like mirror writing with your left. When you’ve done that a few times, write your name forward with your left hand and write it back to front for the mirror with your right hand. When you can do both these things, you’re ambidextrous.”

Rahoul wanders off to the rarefied world of an older brother. I don’t stop to wonder if this is yet another trick thought up to keep me occupied and out of my siblings’ way. I want so much to learn this new step in writing.

So I spend the rest of the afternoon crouched at the low dressing table, pencils in both hands. The space where the backbone of ‘K’ or the last stroke of ‘N’ almost join in their forward and back progressions, I realize, is like the boundary of a mirror. Reading and writing are sliding glass doors, allowing me through.

## GIRL WITH YELLOW MONKEY-FLOWERS IN HER HAIR

Duane Niatum

[This story recalls a young woman from our village who fell in love with a stranger. She was a beauty already known for creating her own chowder and carving her own path through the forest's darkness and light. She was thought fearless and had chased off a black bear while wandering a mountain path hunting for a special patch of blueberries. So she became in time the favorite daughter of our village near a great river with seven blue and green voices that emptied into the Straits. These voices were the voices of your ancestors, the chiefs of the surrounding villages.]

On a day that was a spinner of dreams the people saw her carry a basket of purple violets to her grandmother. This was nothing unusual, of course, because everybody knew how much she loved her grandmother and each season she would bring her a different bouquet or gift. But what was different was her singing to the bees as she danced along the path; a bumblebee on a blackberry flower joined her dance and flew three pollen circles round her black hair bouncing in tiny waves among the monkey-flowers. Many young people lived in the village but none of them had ever been known to sing to bees, flowers, blue elderberry, much less salmon and the yellow-pine chipmunk. A boy who lived in a lodge close to her parents even saw her doing a morning dance with a maiden hair fern. And on this particular yellow-skinned afternoon, a song sparrow answered the monkey-flower girl as their paths crossed and re-crossed.

And after the girl skipped on to her grandma's lodge, this bird, who was always the first to announce spring, spread the word throughout the circle of lodges that this girl was clearly ripe for marriage. With her hair a meadow of perfume and her breath smelling like honey, she was as spicy as any lily from the marsh. Still, her parents, grandparents, cousins and friends, were jolted out of their skin when they were told that a visitor had been seeing her for a few moons. The girl's grandma was even more shocked to learn that she had made no hesitation in accepting him as her man. Thus her grandma saw the extent to which her proud and independent granddaughter had truly fallen in love with a stranger. Nevertheless, neither the grandmother nor anyone in the village had a clue as to how constant was the man's presence among them. They just heard that she had told her family that the young man was so handsome and fine physically and spiritually, that there was nothing in the world that she would not do for him. Yet the girl did admit to her grandma that she was unsure what village he came from. She guessed that he was from a neighboring one. Yet, because she went to see him only at night and never asked too many questions, his origins were strictly unknown. She kept to herself the fact that she had tried asking him indirectly who he was and where he came from, but he simply turned into a song and looked up at the stars and moon, and only slowly turned his face back to her hungry, dream infatuated eyes.

So the people saw that the suitor made his way into the village like approaching night shadows, and left in the same darkness. The suitor's comings-and-goings were thus witnessed only by the moon and stars and other relatives in the sky, and they were keeping the story to themselves.

The girl with monkey-flowers in her hair also remained silent of the fact that she had asked her lover to come and live with her and her family in the village. She told him that he would be as welcome as one of their own sons. But before she knew what had happened, the young man stopped visiting her. Furthermore, she never saw him again. However, a well-seasoned driftwood crow, with an ear cocked high in the air to the left to catch the latest gossip floating by, suggested to the people that the girl was caught in a spell of powerful herbs and the emerald-speckled moon. Crow wagered she had no idea what her lover looked like, and would probably never know. The old driftwood Crow said—"think about it friends—neither dawn nor the morning sun has ever revealed one of his features. For all we know he could be a loon from some northern lake." Still, Crow's gossip never discouraged her from continuing to run off to meet him at their hidden place. Only the girl knew that for several nights she held hands with no one except the dark.

This hardly mattered, anyway, since before spring changed its clothes and summer had woven itself in and out of the evergreen landscape, her grandmother, parents, and the entire tribe saw from her blossoming belly that she was pregnant. The grandmother still believed it was one of the young saplings from a neighboring village. She had been convinced by the wind of this tale, because nearly every time the young woman skipped or walked down the path that led to the next village, the older boys from her own would hide behind salal and rhododendron bushes and stare with yearning at her return. Even the grass beneath her feet were aware that this yellow-haired figure that had once choreographed the local boys' friendship dance would hold forever their hearts in her hand twirling from side to side over the path.

The people of mist, moss, and huckleberry dreams soon heard from the chorus of drums that the monkey-flower singer gave birth to three little wolves and a girl with hair on the back of her hands. Upon learning what had happened, the chief of her village told the people that as a result of this perplexing birth, no one in the village would be allowed to stay. He insisted that each family must prepare to move to the far side of Sequim Bay and abandon the old village. The chief said that the girl must be left alone and that not a single person should give her any fire or food. Yet one woman from the village dared defy the chief. When every last member of the village had moved away, the girl's grandmother returned to the site and carefully put some embers in a horse clamshell and buried it beside a few cattails in a pond near the beach.

Sensing how alone she actually was, the young mother stepped down the path to the beach to dig razor clams for her daughter and the three small wolves that were her sons. Although it was a struggle to dig enough clams for the



hungry mouths, she managed to do so quite well. Then, as she left the beach with her clambasket full to the brim, she stopped before a few cattails. She bent down close to the earth and heard a voice like her grandmother's call to dig beneath these tall grasses. She did what was requested by the voice and soon uncovered the burning embers held in a horse clamshell.

In three or four days the young males grew almost to full-grown wolves. While she went back to the beach to dig more clams, she could hear them sing and dance near her digging spot. As they danced they threw off their wolf skins and their shadows were human. The old stories showed how they could transform themselves as the mood struck them. Their mother thought the wolves sounded like a few of her second cousins who often played the teasing game with her. But now that the wolves were nearing manhood, their mother grew tired of their fang and claw games. She was also pretty angry. Every time she planted some new plants in her garden, the wolf-boys would uproot and scatter them to the edge of the village. The wolves would growl and snarl and have a wonderful time chasing the rabbits from their mother's snares. When she turned three shades of blue, the mother realized that she must give them a serious scolding before she too changed to fury fangs and claws.

The young mother felt good about the fact that she had worn the shawl of motherhood with the devotion of a she-bear. So she chose to sing to the sea as she dug razor clams with her digging stick for her snickering, scowling, snapping brood. Never once did she return home without her basket shining to the brim with clams. And while the mother was busy on the beach, the wolves' sister would watch at the door so that their mother would not catch them unaware. Each moment the daughter heard her mother's footsteps, she warned her brothers.

This nervous movement of her daughter's made the mother suspicious that something peculiar was happening while she was at the beach. So she planned a surprise for them all. After their mother had finished feeding them again and had returned to the beach, she carried a piece of rush mat. She stuck her digging stick in the mud and put the mat over it. She formed the mat so it looked like a person working like a badger in the clam bed. She built a fire beside the bed and went through the motions of scratching here and there in the shadow of the mat. When she heard the wolves begin to dance, she tiptoed quieter than a cougar up to her house. The little sister was caught with locked jaws and backward-flickering eyes. The sister had, indeed, been tricked. She saw the fire on the beach and she was sure that her mother was busy digging for food. The mother rushed to the longhouse door and pushed her daughter to one side. She entered the lodge and saw the wolves were as much human as four-legged pranksters; the mother saw their wolf skins piled on the floor. Her three sons were no longer wolves; instead, they were stocky young men. In an instant it takes a flame to burst into rage, she took every wolf-skin and threw it into the fire. She said with all the energy of her burden, "I'm your mother. I'm not blind to the fact that you've become strong young men. So I find it incomprehensible that you would want to make me suffer?"

My life has been a split and rotting tree lately. Since you are forever forming into a pack of wild beasts, I'm beginning to feel like a beast myself."

After their mother spoke to them in this manner, the young men decided to go up the mountain trail to a cascade meadow. They wanted to talk it over in a place sacred to the people. It was a retreat the young could take for their vision quests. Lying in a circle with their feet pointed toward the center, they concluded that honoring the desires of their mother would be the best path to follow. Her needs, they agreed, would become more important than the calls of their stomach. So before day changed to night, they donned men's clothes for good.

And within three seasons one became a powerful hunter, the second caught a seal almost every day, and was an excellent fisher. On a recent night the elder hunters honored this young man in a dream by praising his ability to coax a seal to the side of his canoe with its water song. The third young man built canoes and split cedar roof slabs for their longhouses. Their mother's eyes shined like sunlight on river water as she recalled the stories circulating among the village fires of her sons' passage into manhood. She breathed a sigh of relief and was looking forward to retiring into the grandmother's lodge. Already certain girls were practicing their charms to gain the attention of her sons. In gratitude for their successes, their mother began to tell the old stories and songs to her family. She closed this small family celebration by happily including a few Crow, Minx, and Fox jokes as well.

The young men were bringing so much game home that they could afford to be generous with the meat and fish. None of their large family ever had to go hungry. In a village not far from their own, that was recovering from a terrible landslide that washed away two longhouses, the young men took plenty of dried deer and elk meat and smoked salmon and trout. They were especially generous to four elders who had no young people to look after them.

The people who had deserted the village and left the girl and her children alone to die could see smoke from all the new longhouses. These people were curious as to what had happened in their old village. So, in no time, the chief asked one of his canoe leaders to paddle with a group of young men over to the old settlement and find out how this woman was getting along. The men in the canoe were chewing on the edges of their cedar vests when they found highly spirited and proud young men standing before their longhouses, rather than the silly pups that they had left. Before they paddled from their old beach, the woman who braided monkey-flowers in her hair loaded their canoe with dried meat and smoked salmon and herring. As the canoe took on added weight and began to sink deeper into the water, the young men felt grief over their parents' abandonment of the young woman and her children. When these men entered home waters and paddled to shore, they told the chief and the people the story of what they had found out. After listening to their story, the chief and all the other people in the village wanted to close down their new camp and return to the old village they had thought had crumbled into sticks like a deserted beaver's lodge.

The son who had become an extraordinary fisherman had also developed certain powers that gave him the voice to talk with the forest, sky, mountain, and sea people, and his guardian spirits were the strongest forces from the deepest and darkest canyons of the sea. He also had the power to call on a wind whenever he wished or needed one.

The chief and the people were determined on paddling to their birthplace and they prepared to cross the water. As the paddlers raced the canoes out to sea and turned in the direction of their ancient village, the young man who became a fisherman used his medicine and called upon the wind of Thunder. The sea rose in waves that climbed and fell like volcanic rock. The waves crashed down upon the canoes. All the people were drowned except those in the canoe with the girl's grandmother.

The mother of the wolves continued to prosper and generously shared her wealth with the community. In time she became the most prosperous trader on the peninsula and the village people honored her with the name, "the heartbeat of our seasons," the elder whose cape was a harvest basket. Elders today believe this story was passed on to us from the people of Friday Harbor. These elders remind us all that in the days of long ago, there were many wolves that wandered in and around our villages. The wolves could be heard howling late in the evening. Their voices from the black pitch of night were offerings the people wore like a sky necklace in their sleep. The gift of this memory is that we are considered the children of the wolf. During our potlatches at the moment, some boys still wear little wolf head- gear during the special dances. And as the boys move around the family circle, our elders accompany them playing on tiny whistles carved from red cedar and bound with cherry bark.

[The inspiration for writing an adaptation of a Klallam sacred narrative is to lend support to all the Klallams at Lower Elwha, Jamestown, and Port Gamble who are encouraging the young to learn the language, songs, and stories of their ancestors. I hope the modern context for the story draws them into its world. Furthermore, key figures in the story are youths, and this, too, should appeal to their interest. We have passed the point where we can ignore the fact that the Klallam language is endangered, and with it our oral traditions. For more than a hundred years the forces of Euroamerican culture, particularly those of the missionaries, federal government and educators, succeeded in convincing or shaming American Indian children and youth into ignoring or resisting all connections to their tribal heritage. The Klallam communities still in existence are making every effort to turn this around.]

## STAGING A TIME FOR TEA: THEATER AND POETRY IN WRITING THE PLANTATION

Piya Chatterjee

*Dramatis Personae:* She/Narrator; Alice of Wonderland fame, and Companions; British *Burra Sahib*<sup>1</sup>; British *Memsahib*; Indian *Sahib*; Indian *Memsahib*; Four Women Pluckers as a Chorus; You (the Audience); “Son of the Forest”; Goddess; Dancers; and Other Incidental Characters.

*Act 1, Scene 1* *The stage is horseshoe shaped. It curves, a crescent embrace, around You. On the extreme left, suspended from the ceiling, an empty picture frame. On the stage, angled behind the picture frame, an ornate wooden table and chair. On the table, an oil lantern. To one side, a large oval shaped mirror in a highly baroque bronze gilt frame. Next to the chair, a stool. Next to the stool, a pirhi (small wooden seat). The backdrop is a cream muslin cloth stretched loosely across the center back of the stage. The stage is dark. There are hints of shadows.*

*Slow drumming begins: dham, dham, dham. Then a sound of keening: “continuous like the lonely wailing of an old witch... an unsettling, unsettling”<sup>2</sup> sound. This wailing rises to a crescendo, reaches an unbearable pitch and then stops suddenly. Absolute silence.*

*A woman’s figure steps out on to left of the stage which curves out like a strange pier, into You. She wears a long dark red cloak of some lustrous material. The robe has a cowl, it falls low on her forehead, shadowing her eyes. She wears gloves the same color as her cloak. Her mouth is outlined in red and black. She stands by the desk, in front of the chair. With exaggerated motions, she removes from a deep pocket in the cloak, some objects. She must remove these from the folds of her person as if she were a magician: slowly, with flair and precision. A quill pen; a bottle of india ink; a silver sickle; a bottle of nail polish; a clutter of false fingernails; a porcelain tea pot with a long pouring spout; a porcelain cup; and some tea bags. She turns to You, with an intimate and welcoming smile, as if noticing You for the first time watching her place this strange collection on the table.*

*SHE: Nomoshkar. Hello. May I sit? She sits drawing the folds of cloth around her.*

*I am weary. My journey here has been long and its tale most peculiar. So strange that as it is told, You may keen, You may sigh, You may not be able to tell the difference between a wail and a whisper.*

*So piercing its cacophony, You may twist your fingers into your ears.*

*So unbearably beautiful, the sorrow of a body curved into its shadow, you will forget to breathe.*

*She takes a deep breath, exhaling it into a sigh, ending in a wry laugh.*

Oh, let us not be so serious, so serious. This is a *jatra*<sup>3</sup>, a dance, a shadow play, a sitting room drama. Such *kichdi*<sup>4</sup>, such higgeldy-piggeldy, You will elbow your neighbor and whisper for a crystal ball. You will look under the chair for a flotation device. What is this, what is this? You will fasten your seat-belt more tightly and look out into cerulean space. You will find the ball, You will toss it in the air; You will cover your face with your hands and shake your head. ‘What is this, what is this?’ you will say in despair. *Pause.*

Let the tale unfold as it will. Don’t panic. There are some plots, some roads with milestones, a cartography of words. If it is all too much, and the path disappears into the light thrown by the headlights, and you think you are not moving—then shut your eyes. The illusion of such stillness within the rush of the road underneath your wheels offers such a contradiction. *Pause.* Let yourself fall into the rabbit hole. Dream, Dream.

Imagine, within the crucible behind your eyelids, a porcelain cup. Imagine, after a breath, silence resting on its lips.

*The lights dim. She leans forward and lights the lantern to a low flame. She pours liquid from the tea pot in her cup. She is barely discernible as she rests back in the chair’s shadow. The cup seems to warm her fingers. For a minute, You hear the sound of rain and then again the dham dham dham of the drums, a distant wailing. It fades.*<sup>5</sup>

How does a postcolonial feminist ethnographer, haunted by poems she has written in many fields of diaspora, come to stage theater in her ethnographic text? Why do the voices of Pablo Neruda, Mahasweta Devi, Thomas Merton and Alice in Wonderland appear in these stories of tea, of Indian plantations, of women in labor?

I remember that arrival in my imagination upon that stage of theatre while revising a manuscript on women, labor and postcolonial politics, *A Time for Tea*. I was in Chandernagore, West Bengal, India. It was the late summer of 2000, I think. I had fled my Calcutta home with reams of manuscript and a motley collection of books to an old colonial bungalow resting on the banks of Ma Ganga, the River Ganges. Alone, upstairs in a large room with desk and bed, I struggled with the solitudes of writing: listening to the eerie mechanical breathing of my laptop’s sleep mode, the patter of monsoon rain on the tin roof. The river running quietly outside the shuttered windows remained a benediction. On some dark, dry evenings, I would take an old oil lantern and sit on her banks, watching the shadow of a fisherman’s boat go by.

I had been struggling for a while to find a way to write poetry within the registers of a text which was already reflexive and using now well-known conventions of feminist ethnographic writing. I had worked hard to balance the autobiographical, and the “I”, of my own authorial positioning within the narratives, and histories of tea plantation workers, particularly women, whose lives were going to constitute the backbone of this book about post/colonial tea plantations.

While indebted to postmodernist interventions in anthropological writing, I sought to put under scrutiny, following Elizabeth Enslin,<sup>6</sup> the contradictions of power between ethnographer and her subjects which cannot, even with dazzling rhetorical moves, take away from the very real limits posed by the textual, and epistemic, conditions of anthropological production.

Yet, despite and perhaps even because of these struggles to find the “right” language of reflexive analysis, the ghosts of poems haunted me. In the most difficult moments of my time in the plantation, when stunned by contradictions of power and exploitation into silence, when unable to pick up a pen, I found myself only able to read poetry.

Or write poems myself: reaching into the shadow-self to unmask, in shaking verse all the stories of labor, loss and displacement that shimmered in this time of the plantation. Poetry was not functional in these moments. It became the medium through which I could grasp the politics of despair, the body bent in labor, imperial complicities, the wider karmic scripts of history. Pablo Neruda and Mahasweta Devi (whose prose can edge onto the fine blade of an angry poem) are among my many teachers, there and then, as I gasp towards other languages of understanding about power and its many histories. It is ironic, and telling, that I read Neruda and Devi in English, in a text alien-tongued, once-removed removed from his Spanish, her Bengali.

How could I not include their lessons in my text? How might I trace my own poetic voice into it, slip in from backstage?

But there is another ghost who rests with me in the old bungalow by the river where I meditate on solitude and writing. I learn that this house, by the great river, is also known by its former colonial name: *Moran Shaheber Bagan Bari*, Moran *Sahib's* Garden House. I learn that a young Rabindranath Tagore used to visit this very house, its *lichee* garden, and as a fourteen year old boy, he wrote his first poems sitting on the riverbank. I am humbled by the possibility that I may be sharing a space in which a young boy, who would later become one of India's most renowned poet and writers, imagined his own life and scribbled its truths on the edge of an old river. It is this, then, that liberates me into theatre, into the celebration of other voices, of poetry. I cannot put into language such an unfurling into theatre and into poetry, its immanent coupling. Perhaps, I honor a trace, a presence, a suggestion of *lichees* and century-old joys: the young boy and his poems by the river.

And so this is how, because of these ghosts of poems, that I come to theater.

I write the theater separately from the text. I know that one of its functions is to interrupt the analysis by using an allegorical mode to tell a parallel story of the plantation. Like all acts of creative writing, I come to the characters, and the descriptive stagings of the play, by mining from fragments of memory: a poem by Pablo Neruda on women's hands; a dance-drama called *I-Is a Long Memored*

*Woman* which moves to an epic poem by British Guyanan poet Grace Nichols, to tell the story of Caribbean slave plantation women's histories.<sup>7</sup>

I write the theatre too, as I read Antonin Artaud's *The Theater and Its Double*, imagining how one might bring into my play Balinese shadows, their radical departure from the proscenium arch. I grasp, intuitively, Artaud's exultation of Balinese aesthetics. More generally, I revel in the theatrical aesthetic, how its mode brings together everything: "bodies, gestures, dance, sounds, words, lights, shadows, and silence."<sup>8</sup> Poetic voices can move, passionately, then within the scenes I create. They don't have to become awkward placeholders, odd disruptions, within the ethnographic narrative. They can now participate in that analysis, not within the margins, but as another oceanic current running alongside the story: co-eval, bodied, immediate.

There are several themes within the theatre itself—beyond the textual strategies it effects—which are important to underscore. The first, which I have gestured to already, is the manner in which it serves as an allegory: a hybrid collection of characters who are distillations, archetypes if you will, of people who traffic, in the most significant ways, within the political and cultural economies of the plantation: the senior manager or *burra sahib*, his wife, the *memsahib*, both British and Indian; the drunkard who stands in for the tragic realities of working-class men's alcoholism; the Son of the Forest who gestures towards British and Indian dominant constructions of savagery and primitivism; Four Women Pluckers who serve as a Greek chorus, who stand in for working women, the tea pluckers. The theater plays with Alice of Wonderland fame, her tea party. *Alice in Wonderland* is an iconic Victorian text of not only childhood dreams and fantasy—but also gender, sexuality, empire and otherness. I suspect that these are coded well into this hallucinatory tale of hookah-smoking caterpillars, mad hatters and even madder queens.<sup>9</sup> I re-invent Alice in my play, retaining her petulant girl-child charm while at the same time posing her as an ironic, puzzled and even angry observer of the play.

Much like Grace Nichols' Long-Memorial woman, who stands in as a narrator of slave plantation history in the dance-drama *I-Is a Long Memorial Woman*, my theater's action is moved forward by the words of a Narrator, *She*. Though she stands within the play, and participates within the scenes, she is also an observer—like Alice, who might or might not be her alter-ego.

It seems clear that in some ways she is also the "me" of the ethnographer. However, even though the Narrator/She may in some ways re-present the ethnographer, I also see her as standing in "excess" of that positioning. I am uncertain about where those moments of excess might exist: perhaps in the statements of irony, sadness and utter confusion she exhibits while at the same time insisting on her power "to narrate" the play. The Narrator's role of narrative authority and ambiguity follows a technique of "masking" which is significant if one is to also see the gendered dimensions of my own coming to several kinds of "voice" in the staging of the play—and the ethnography. This dialectic of masking



and un-masking of narrative authority is an enduring strand in women's writing—and in feminist analysis of “the autobiographical” in women's writing. Since my ethnography is, quite explicitly, a feminist analysis at several levels, this second theme—of feminized masking/un-masking—constitutes the bedrock of the theater.

A third important theme in the play threads together “history” and “fiction.” I use primary historical documents with voices from fiction such as that of Mulk Raj Anand's famous late-colonial, anti-British novel about the tea plantations, *Two Leaves and a Bud*. I am working here with dramatic licence, inter-textuality, and the “fictions” of history, through which Mulk Raj Anand creates the most important and climactic scene in his novel. He uses a documented case, known as the Khoreal case, as a pivot within a thickly textured narrative about the sexual and racial politics of the Planter Raj. The novel ends with the murder of a worker, called Gangu, (instead of Gangadhar) who tries to protect his daughter, Leila, (Hira in the actual case) from an assistant manager. The confrontation, which ends in the killing, constitutes the novel's climax and closure. In the theatre, I have used another book which offers the transcript of the actual case upon which Mulk Raj Anand based his novel. Both texts are twined in the theatre and prose discussion of sexual politics.<sup>10</sup>

*Act 5, Scene 7. The lights come on slowly. The Narrator still sits to Your right, on her mora. The four women squat next to her in a half arc. One rolls the tobacco, another scratches the earth on the stage with a twig. She stirs up some dust, a barely discernible cloud of brown air.*

SHE: So here there we have it. *Mai-Baap*. The mother-father, how odd, what gender-bending in this claiming of the Mother. But there we have it. And the the body of hoof beats, some whispers of kidnapping, a few tales of plunder.

WOMAN 1: (lifting the twig from the stage and shaking it at the Narrator, mocking) *Shhh. Shhh, memsahib*, don't give up the ghost of the story so easily. Don't even think about entering such labyrinths of flesh and stone. You may unleash a monster with three heads.

WOMAN 2: (shoving Woman 1 playfully). *Titch. Titch*. Why are you scaring her so? She is doomed to tell these stories. *Memsahib*, enter the labyrinth. Go on. Be brave. There are corpses hidden in its catacombs but, who knows, they might be friendly. The dead like to tell a tale or two when they have a chance. There are not many who will listen to them, no?

WOMAN 3: What would Gangadhar say, I wonder, if he sat up on his bed of ashes. That poor *coolie*, that poor father. Consider his impotence when the *sahib* comes for his daughter, Hira.

WOMAN 4: Hira, the jewel of the *sahib's* desire. “...The *sahib* accompanied by a *chowkidar* of the bungalow came to Gangadhar's hut and renewed his proposals which were refused. About nightfall of the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, the *sahib's* bearer, Nasim Ali asked Hira to accompany him to his master's bed. The demand was refused...”



WOMAN 3: ...enraged at the refusal, late at 10 p.m., the *sahib* arrived at the scene armed with a revolver and called out ‘Hira, Hira.’ Hira’s younger brother started shouting and Gangadhar came rushing from a neighbor’s hut. “The *sahib* fired three shots at him. The first missed him, the second shot hit him in the arm without causing any more injury than an abrasion, and the third hit him on the right side of the chest, broke a rib and passed on at the back...” The *sahib* was tried but acquitted by an all European jury.<sup>11</sup>

WOMAN 4: (taking the twig and poking it into the Narrator’s hips). *Eh, Eh*, what do you make of that? Maybe you will meet Hira in the labyrinth. Maybe her ghost will speak with her father. Consider this possibility, *memsahib*. Consider it well. *The lights fade.*

I leave this meditation on theater-as-ethnography, or ethnography-as-theater, to reach back into Antonin Artaud’s sense of the ways in which theater can bring us into that “state of ineffable anguish which is the characteristic of poetry.”<sup>12</sup> It is not possible, or perhaps desirable, to exorcise the ghosts of poems, and other ghosts, who continue to haunt these stories of tea. They gesture in their almost-presence of histories beyond language: to the body, to silence.

*Act 6, Scene 1* The light comes on slowly on the Narrator on her stool, the four women on the stage floor. The Narrator flexes her fingers, scrutinizing them against the light. One of the women looks up at her movement and shakes her head.

WOMAN 1: This is no *natak* (theatre), *memsahib*, why do you move your fingers so?

WOMAN 2: The body makes its own swollen journeys through history, *memsahib*, the answers are not written in your fingers and the pen which you hold. The body has no calligraphy to decipher.

WOMAN 3: But oh, maybe it does, maybe it does. Like a faint swell in the ocean of your words, *memsahib*, perhaps a body speaks through secret hieroglyphics. But you look strained, *memsahib*, run your fingers against your other fingers. The flesh contains its crevasses, its whorls of absence. Perhaps, they tell a tale? *Lights fade.*<sup>13</sup>

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> The (*burra*) *sahib* is a Hindi vernacular term from the colonial period which loosely translated suggests “master/ruler/gentleman.” *Burra* translates loosely as “big.” In the colonial period, it referred explicitly to a European, Britisher or Englishman. In post-colonial India, the *sahib* (like its feminized counterpart, *memsahib*) connotes upper-class/ caste, urban, westernized status. *Burra sahib* is less common than the generic salutation of *sahib*. In the contemporary plantation, the *burra sahib* refers explicitly to the senior

manager or planter who is contrasted to his assistant manager, the *chota* (small/secondary) *sahib*.

<sup>2</sup> Mahasweta Devi, “Little Ones,” *Bitter Soil*, (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1998): 2.

<sup>3</sup> The *jatra* refers to the folk-theatre of rural Bengal. My use of it here encompasses this rubric as well as suggests the hybrid *adivasi* (non-caste, non-Hindu), and non-Bengali dance gatherings in the plantations of North Bengal.

<sup>4</sup> *Kichdi* is a vegetable and lentil dish mixed together with rice. It suggests culinary confusion, a mixing of what should otherwise remain separate in the rites of cooking, consumption and commensality. I deploy it to connote a purposeful categorical hybridity.

<sup>5</sup> All excerpts of the play are taken directly from my book, *A Time for Tea: Women, Labor and Post/Colonial Politics on an Indian Plantation*. (Durham: Duke University Press), p. 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Enslin, “Beyond Writing: Feminist Practice and the Limitations of Ethnography.” *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no.4 (1994): 537-568.

<sup>7</sup> I have used this film in classes I have taught on women in plantation contexts. The stunningly beautiful, kinetic, movement of body, fabric, sound, silence—the sheer raw power of dancers with the poem—has always remained with me.

<sup>8</sup> See *A Time for Tea* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> See Nancy Armstrong, “The Occidental Alice.” *Differences* 2, No.2 (1990):3-40.

<sup>10</sup> I use this discussion in *A Time for Tea*, see Chapter 5, fn. 42, p. 367-368.

<sup>11</sup> D. Chamanlal. “The Khoreal Case,” *Coolie: The Story of Labor and Capital in India* (Lahore, 1932),70.

<sup>12</sup> Antonin Artaud, “On the Balinese Theatre,” In *The Theatre and Its Double*, p.63.

<sup>13</sup> Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea*, p.171.

Fresh Off the boat,  
FOBulous, Follower Of Buddha, FOBtastic

got Fumbling Ofay Boys fiending for the Fruit of Our Basket  
forget about it

they Finished, Obsolete, Bankrupt  
Fucking Old Bastards  
and they sons too  
Founded Oppressive Bacculaureates  
in Fucking Over Browns

a Fetish Only for yellow Bedfellows  
Frequent Oriental Brothels  
because they believed that the Fugitives On Board  
knew ancient Chinese secrets to Fantastic Orgasm Benefits

while us Funny Oriental Boys  
felt like Fucked Overlooked Bachelors  
Footbinding Outmoded Barbarians  
Burying Our Feelings as  
Frigid Oppositional Bookworms

And some of us play that role  
Favoring the Ongoing Bandwagon  
and fiending for the flavor of the Fever for the Offcolor Bamboo  
Followers of the Bootstrap  
Fold Origami Bridges across the Bering  
Friends Of the Bourgeois  
who like to Fuck Opaque Bigots  
Feigning One-dimensional Boyfriends  
Fools Overestimate Benevolence  
or is it they just want to Falsify Our Blood  
to Finagle an Obsequious Bestseller?

Plans of Fools Often Backfire  
cuz Fools Often Oscillate  
and

Fascists Often Bungle

Fate Often Boomerangs

and our Farce an Opportunity to Buck  
the Fatcats' Onerous Blubber  
My people  
let's Fight the Osmosis of Boundaries  
Find Outspoken Bombshells

My people  
we are a nation  
of Fat Overweight B-boys and B-girls,  
Failed Olympic boxers  
and Fresh Overlooked Bindlestiffs  
carrying armloads of Fragrant Orchid Bouquets  
gay or straight  
Femme Or Butch  
our Families Often Barbeque  
and we sip Fizzy Orange Beverages  
while screaming Finally! Our Bulgogi!

We Formulate our Overdue Brisance  
and Forecast Our Brotherhood and Sisterhood  
and Broadcast on Our Feet,  
on FOB Operated Bicycles  
and Filipinos on Buses

Get the word out  
Forsaking Our Blessings  
has been greatly exaggerated  
My people  
Never  
Forget Our Beauty.

# ELEVEN MINUTE PAINTING READING MODULE V 0.1

Tan Lin

*(dub ver.)*

## **A SIDE.**

What are the forms of non-painting and what are the forms a non-painting might take? Paint = wall paper? Canvas as ambient soundtrack? Painting as slow motion film script? Dew-champ wanted to create works of art that were non-retinal. It would be nice to imagine a painting that didn't need to be looked at but could be sampled, like the newspaper, the television or the weather. The most annoying thing at an art museum is always the wall with a painting hanging on it.

## **B SIDE.**

What are the forms of non-viewing and what are the forms non-looking might take? Paintings to be hallucinated vs. paintings to be sampled vs. paintings to be recited vs. paintings to be counted vs. A beautiful painting is a painting that disappears one half brush stroke at a time. Like a thermostat, it should merely regulate the other colors and furniture in the room. Ad Reinhardt was wrong. Everything that is painted is sitting next to everything else that is not. The beautiful painting is involuntary. It should repeat itself endlessly in the background, like boredom, candle sticks or wallpaper. Only in this way can it repeat its own perceptual mistakes. As anyone who has ever sequenced a painting will tell you, perceptual mistakes are never sublime. A painting should expire just before we look at it, just like the drapes.

Of course, in some novelistic vein, any background is highly absorptive and non-composed. And so at the subliminal i.e. non-designed level, erasure allows looking itself to become abstract, [bracketed], hypnotic, and [mesmerizing.] Everything that is beautiful is a code for something that is already known. Nothing should be unknown. The feelings we have are just a kind of furniture and painting is no different. The program [ ] code you are now watching generates 16.7 million different shades of color backgrounds. Some of these are suggestive. None of them functions in place of memory. Memory cannot be sequenced. Memory is usually non-designed. You are about to enter: Three rooms. Mirror balls. Roving wallpaper. Disco. Home Furnishings. Lifestyle. Getting up [ ] and having a smoke. Nothing that is painted can be beautiful for more than a minute. Any painting that is narrated is beautiful because it last longer than the time it takes to

repeat it. Beauty should not be surprising; it should be very repetitive and very boring.

As we all know, painting, like poetry, should aspire not to the condition of the sublime but to the condition of relaxation and yoga. A lot of people think great paintings, like great poems, should be memorized. As anyone who has ever read a painting will tell you, paintings are most beautiful [and least egotistical] at the exact moment in which they are forgotten, like disco, photography and other Four on the Floor Productions. The problem with most painting, like most design and architecture, is that it is a little too bourgeois.

Each PAINTING sequence should last exactly 7.2 seconds or the amount of time it takes to pronounce painting one letter at a time. 7 is generally thought to be the maximum number of pigments the human brain can readily absorb. George Muller did pioneering studies on this and his theory is called Muller's Number Seven. Hence, most phone numbers are seven digits in length. 7.2 seconds is hopefully just long enough to get the canvas into a groove. It might suggest a strobe light going off at timed intervals. The interval can be beautiful because the interval can be dubbed. Relaxation like non-designed home décor, has no real bounds. It supplements that thing known as real life. That is why it is so pleasurable to read a painting as opposed to look at it.

[1, 4, 3, 2, 5, 7.2, 6].

### ***Chapter 1. Home + Lifestyle.***

#### ***Var. 3.***

Someone (I think) said the time for paintings that are painted and the era of looking at feelings is long gone. The most beautiful painting would make all our feelings disappear the moment we were having them. This sequencing of 'events' constitutes a code more uncrackable and soothing than anything we could actually see. With their numerous circuit boards, televisions and computers do this; together, they enhance the micro production and sequencing of feelings heretofore thought inaccessible, complex, or purely entropic. If all paintings could just be language projected onto a wall, those names—accessories—for things canceling the wall would be more beautiful than anything we could feel.

Nothing that is negative is simple. Everything that is artificial is related to everything else in the room. Painting should aspire to the most synthetic forms (the colors or numbers around it) and the most synthetic forms are found in houses with rectilinear walls, hallways, and foyers. Each wall separates one space from another. Everything that can be divided is divided into its proper sequence (i.e.

style) of ones and twos. Private spaces are over-elaborated and under-inhabited. Public spaces are under-elaborated and lack sufficient feedback. Things that are living vs. things that are dead vs. languor.

#### “NIAGARA FALLS IS JUST A KIND OF PAINT”

What would it be like to read a painting? It would be the most beautiful thing in the room that could stand to be looked at. It would be more beautiful than the thing itself. A beautiful painting is a painting that can be repeated over and over again. You are reading about a painting comprised of a thousand wayward sounds. Look. A beautiful painting is a painting that can be repeated over and over again. Repetition is the only thing that makes something more perfect than it already is. For this reason, there is always a gaze that does not reach inside the face (I was looking at). That should be the gaze of painting. Andy Warhol understood this and he repeated the look of a painting every time he painted the same thing over and over and over and over. That is why he painted the faces of photographs. Nothing is more beautiful than a face repeated by make-up. Novels were the earliest form of photography known to the human retina. That is why few books are mistaken for paintings. Paintings, unlike words, die the minute they attach themselves to a wall. Someone said “Excitement is the only thing in the world that cannot be predicted.”

figure 1.

figure 2.

#### “NIAGARA FALLS IS JUST A KIND OF PAINT.”

My name is Veronica. Because I like to come to a given space of our choosing, every thing I see tends to look like a diagram or flow chart, as if it were designed to produce comfort zones, trance passages, or luck. Here is a house, here are its binary coordinates.

I was reading a story about the anti-actress ChloË Sevigny, who is the most chased-after fashion trend setter now because she is “ugly-beautiful”, wears vintage prairie dresses one day and Yves Saint Laurent the next, and seems negligent and muse-like at the same time. She often claims not to know what she is wearing. She moves around the room like an anti-cheerleader. She goes shopping in Hello Kitty underwear. She played a vapory deb in *The Last Days of Disco* and, in *Boys Don't Cry* a trailer park girl who falls in love with a boy who's really a cross-dressing girl. She can make a beret look very recent. Her publicist announced: “she is

trying to dissociate herself from fashion at the moment.” When I think of Chloë Sevigny I feel the paint brush wobbling on my retina. Someone said: “Anticipation is an interesting and difficult thing to produce.”

**I**

**LIKE**

**disco**

The ultimate lifestyle exercise for a home is its television. It produces error after error. If knowledge unlike pleasure takes place in a network, a painting should pursue itself in a set interval of time i.e. the time allotted to it. The ideal interval is programmed, usually three or seven or twelve, and expands indefinitely. In that way all the canvasses, like portraiture or shades of color, could be replaced by something that reminded one of a couplet, an integer, a television set, a phone number or the revolving seasons. If one doesn't have a television set it is necessary to make one. It is now spring or it is now autumn when you read this. The temperature is the same across this screen. Somewhere it is summer and I am losing someone because she is already gone. The television set is sitting on the window sill. It resembles a painting. These are the feelings television has and these are the ways we make our feelings disappear into them, like small pieces of ice. The best paintings like poems make our feelings evaporate at a constant rate like a disco, which is nothing but a rotating system of words masquerading as numbers. I think it is snowing and I worry that the guests will be late. I flick on the screens. This is an election year, of course. How to incite the idea of reading without reading? How to accessorize reading as a practice similar to entertaining. One comes and then one goes. One adds something and then one subtracts something else.

The most precious commodity in modern life is time. I live in a house like a series of loops, plus signs

+

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## WORLD ECHOES: CARIBBEANNESS AS METHOD

Nicholas Lawrence

At the outset I take inspiration from a remark by Martiniquan poet Edouard Glissant: “Le monde se créoliser” (IPD 15). The world is creolizing—that is, in the special sense that Glissant gives to the term, the world is entering a phase of accelerating hybridity, “a limitless *métissage*, its elements diffracted and its consequences unforeseeable” (PR 34). *Métissage* here invokes the senses of crossing, braiding, and miscegenation that occur in the production of creole languages, and Glissant’s creolization generalizes these processes by applying them to all levels of contact and exchange among global cultures. At the same time, the term acknowledges a process of diffraction, a scattering and spreading out of the constituent elements of diverse cultures after the impact of their encounter. Creolization is thus a condition related to what Glissant elsewhere calls archipelagic thought—a thought organic to the situation of the Caribbean, made up of highly diverse yet interlinked island societies—and further characterizes what the poet has termed *antillanité*, Caribbeaness, a linking of cultures across linguistic and other barriers. In his remarkable theoretical and literary work of the past two decades, Glissant has frequently suggested the usefulness of this latter concept for a current understanding of the world as a whole. “What I’m proposing,” he writes, “is that today the whole world is becoming archipelagized and creolized” (Britton 179). Or, to put it another way, the world is becoming Caribbeanized—subject to a template whose outlines derive from the geographic, historical, and cultural configurations of the Caribbean region.

Another name for the world-wide phenomenon of simultaneous integration and stratification, hybridization and diffraction of human societies is, notoriously, globalization, a much contested term,—and part of my intent here is to compare Glissant’s Caribbean inflection of the discourses of globalization with other versions. Although it has been both celebrated and reviled as an economic process, usually as a sign for the penetration of multinational corporations into hitherto undeveloped sectors of the world market, globalization carries a range of other possible meanings. Most simply, it can refer to the accelerating growth of supraterritorial relations, economic and otherwise, among the peoples of the contemporary world—what sociologist John Tomlinson calls “the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterizes modern social life.” “It is these multivalent connections,” Tomlinson argues, “that now bind our practices, our experiences and our political, economic and environmental fates together across the modern world” (2-3). In cultural terms, globalization carries with it the charge, for writers and artists, of developing a transformative model for the kind of global consciousness most relevant to an increasingly interconnected planet. Glissant’s Caribbeaness, which he defines crucially as “a method and not a state of being,” offers itself as both an

image of such consciousness and a way toward realizing its implications, one that finds parallels in the work of other Caribbean writers as well as of practitioners of archipelagic thought elsewhere. What follows is a look at the promise and problems of Caribbeanness as method in responding to the simultaneous promise and threat posed by a globalizing, creolizing world.

The key term in Glissant's theory, underlying all the rest, is Relation—a way of reconceiving not just the relationship of self and other, or of groups, cultures, and nationalities, but the constitutive fluidity and mutuality of identity formation itself. Relation is predicated on a fundamental equivalency of identities, and furthermore depends on a continual extension and recomposition of identities by means of their various contacts, collisions, engagements, and exchanges with one another. Like his fellow Martiniquan Frantz Fanon, Glissant revises the Hegelian master/slave dialectic with an eye to abolishing the necessary subordination of the slave, but presses further than Fanon in sidestepping altogether any struggle for recognition; the utopian goal for Glissant is precisely to preserve the nonrecognizability of the other, what he terms the other's *opacity*, within a radically egalitarian framework. A poetics of Relation thus positions itself as the super-session of imperialist and colonialist worldviews, and draws on methods other than ethnography and surveillance in its search for knowledge. Rather than proposing in advance a totality that is completely knowable and hence mappable, Relation proceeds by an alternative route to knowledge through encounter—sounding out in proximity rather than scoping out from afar. Glissant draws on chaos theory in order to stress the unforeseeable consequences of such relational encounters, which he elaborates with a related pair of terms: *chaos-monde* and *échos-monde*, the world as dynamically unstable and the world as mediatized echo-chamber, alive with feedback, appropriation, and distortion. Two images drawn from recent history provide Glissant with vivid examples of the instability and contingency of Relation as it operates in the contemporary *échos-monde*:

Is it meaningful, pathetic, or ridiculous that Chinese students have been massacred in front of a cardboard reproduction of the Statue of Liberty? Or that, in a Romanian house, hated portraits of Ceauçescu have been replaced by photographs cut from magazines of characters in the television series “Dallas”? Simply to ask the question is to imagine the unimaginable turbulence of Relation. (PR 138)

Clearly, Relation as Glissant conceives it in no way avoids the violence endemic to human encounters, but it is a violence based on tactical seizure and artful decontextualization rather than murder or suppression.

Can there be a method calibrated to the practice of Relation? Tactics and the artfulness of appropriation recall Glissant's discussion of the creole language as “a kind of conspiracy that concealed itself by its public and open expression” (CD 124), originally the product of an encounter between master and slave speech

and marked throughout its history with ruses and linguistic detours. These are the elements of a method—initially for survival, and later for affirmation of composite cultures and mixed identities—that has numerous antecedents and theoretical parallels. “Tactics,” for example, as Glissant employs it, is the term counterposed to “strategy” in Michel de Certeau’s analysis of *arts de faire*, the arts of doing or making do in everyday life, and borrows from de Certeau’s spatialization of the distinction between these concepts, in which tactics refer to the nomadic, opportunistic use of temporary sites in struggle in contrast with strategy’s establishment of a secure base of operations. De Certeau’s vocabulary in turn harkens back to the arsenal of Situationist concepts used by Guy Debord and his colleagues to derail conventional perception and construct what they called “livable moments” within the postwar society of spectacle. Of these, two cited explicitly by Glissant are *dérive*, “drift,” and *détournement*, whose senses include those of “diversion,” “subversion,” and “appropriation.” The early Situationists developed the practices of drift and diversion partly as a critique of the postwar rise of anonymous, bureaucratic processes of urban planning, and partly as an attempt to re-subjectivize an increasingly reified and brutalized urban landscape. In a project with distinctly anticolonial overtones, Debord and his colleagues used the surrealist methods of montage to disjoin and rearticulate, on paper and then through the practice of walking, the neighborhoods of metropolitan Paris, stressing as they did so the categorical importance of “psychic atmospheres” pertaining to areas that bore little if any relation to those districts recognized by officialdom. The result was a new form of relating to space: psychogeography, “the study of the precise effects of geographical setting, consciously managed or not, acting directly on the mood and behavior of the individual” (Knabb 45). It is easy to see how Glissant might recognize in the Situationists’ segmenting and recomposition of Paris a potent reversal of the historical action of metropole on colony, as well as an echo of his own interest in evoking the social meaning of the archipelago form—what John Berger has called “the address of a landscape.” *Dérive*, *détournement*, psychogeography—these techniques are recognizable elements of the Caribbean toolkit sketched out in *Poetics of Relation*.

What brings Glissant’s concern with Caribbeanness into present focus, however, is not a theoretical development but a material one. In his essay “Globalization and September 11,” Michael Mann notes that while many assume globalization is working toward a single, seamless world society, it in fact proceeds along multiple and at times contradictory axes of development, “each of which may have differing boundaries, rhythms and results, diffusing distinctive forms of integration and disintegration across the globe” (52). Mann focuses on the axes of economy, military power, politics, and ideology as primary “networks of interaction,” but for Glissant it is increasingly the network itself, the architecture of interaction, that requires scrutiny. Here the ambiguity of the *échos-monde* again comes into play. For if Glissant favorably invokes the image of the network, à la Deleuze and Guattari, as rhizomatic root-system in contrast with the “predatory

root-stock” model of exclusive identity, he nonetheless recognizes that the network may develop predatory, and disintegrating, capabilities of its own. The internet is only the most obvious example from the communications revolution to exhibit both the promise and perils of connectivity.

Recall that, for Glissant, the practice of Relation seeks to preserve the opacity of the other, and that furthermore this opacity is best preserved through a combination of proximity and distance. On the face of it, the geographical configuration of the Caribbean appears to cry out for the technical solutions made available by the new media of communication. Formerly isolated islands linked both to mainlands and to one another, communicating across boundaries of history, race, language, culture—with this in place, can Relation be far behind? Not quite. What’s lost in the new regime of connectivity is, paradoxically, the necessary distance required to preserve the distinctiveness of communicational agents, and beyond this, an accurate image of their asymmetrical relatedness with one another. Technology, the great equalizer, multiplies variety at the level of content while advancing silent hegemonies of form; a poetics of Relation, on the other hand, exists to make visible the formal protocols governing our exchanges and to transform them. It does this, moreover, not simply to underscore Glissant’s declaration—“We demand the right to opacity for everyone” (*PR* 194)—but to acknowledge and draw from the new conditions of intimate distancing afforded by the contemporary *échos-monde*.

Let me turn here, for an example of tactical Caribbeanness put into practice, to Glissant’s fellow poet Kamau Brathwaite. Born in Barbados, educated at Oxford, long-time teacher in Jamaica and more recently in the United States, Brathwaite has followed a trajectory similar at various points to Glissant’s, and their poetics share neighboring space—Brathwaite’s concept of “nation language” parallels Glissant’s concern to develop a language adequate to the specificities of Caribbean experience, and his insistence on a mode of thought native to his region, a “tidelectics” rather than a dialectics, echoes Glissant’s discussions of an archipelagic thought whose rhythms of drift and recurrence disavow any easy assumptions of linear progress. Nothing in Glissant’s poetic oeuvre, however, addresses the related problems of technology, visibility, and uneven development as directly as Brathwaite’s “X/Self,” a work that has undergone successive revisions over several decades, appearing most recently in his collection *Ancestors* (2001). The following citations come from the version in his 1993 book *Middle Passages*:

Dear mama  
i writin yu dis letter / wha?  
guess what? pun a computer o/kay?  
like i jine de mercantilists!  
well not quite!  
i mean de same way dem tief / in gun  
power from sheena & taken we blues &

gone. . . .  
if yu cyaan beat progress  
whistle (95-96)

This “letter Sycorax” is both a letter to Sycorax from her newly equipped son Caliban and, through the poet’s development of a jagged-edged “Sycorax video style” typography, reminiscent of computer displays before the advent of True Type, a shaky manifestation of the letter itself in a new medium, appearing as if by magic. Sycorax herself, the island spirit imprisoned by her colonial antagonist, appears to collaborate with her son’s writing from the other side of the computer screen, leaving a trail of Xs through the text that mark the spot of their encounter and suggest, in their evocation of the preliterate mark of signature, the recalcitrant passage to a new mode of expression. Caliban, meanwhile, has not simply learned a new language in order to curse with it—“nat one a we shd response if prospero get curse wid im own curser” (107)—he has learned a new technology as a means of access to the prosperous “lingo” of his oppressor, while realizing technology as an uncanny means of both extending and extinguishing the self. At the same time, the prospect of new technology opens up a potentially endless regress of anxiety, of falling behind as it moves inexorably forward, as well as of losing autonomy and authority to the formal dictates of the machine:

mama!  
a fine  
a cyaan get nutten  
write  
a cyaan get nutten really  
rite  
while a stannin up hey in me years & like me  
inside a me shadow  
like de man still mekin mwe walk up de  
slope dat e slide  
in black down de whole long curve a de arch  
i  
pell  
a  
go  
some  
times smile.  
in nice  
some  
times like e really laughin after we &  
some  
times like e helpin we up while e push

in we black dung  
again (108-110)

*Salut*, IMF. In the punning language of the poem posing as typographical errors, Caliban not only fears he can't write, but that he can't get something like a rite of passage toward a sustainable future, a way of making sense of the "bootstrap" operation that supposedly elevates his condition while continually pushing him down again like so much "black dung." The image develops further into a nightmare vision of powerlessness:

like when yu rumbellin  
dung  
into de under  
grounn  
on one a dem move.  
in stair  
crace &  
like yu fuh.  
like yu wallet or some  
ting like  
dat  
& yu cyaan nevva turn  
back  
nor  
walk back up  
nor  
even run back  
up  
outta there  
cause de stair.  
crace  
crazy &  
creak.  
in & snake  
skinn. in  
it  
down  
down  
down  
&  
how. ever  
yu  
runnin up runnin up runnin up runnin up

it still  
goin down  
goin down  
goin down  
goin down  
like sa.  
hell  
like syphillis  
like the edges of the desert (110-113)

“X/Self” ends, however, on a note of hopefulness, even redemptive prophesy, and it manages this by reasserting the groundedness and materiality of the act of writing:

Yet a sittin dung here front a dis stone  
face  
eeee  
lectrical mallet into me  
fist  
chipp in dis poem onta dis tab  
let  
chiss. ellin dark.  
ness writin in light  
like i is a some. is a some. is a some  
body  
a X  
pert or some  
thing like mozes or aaron or one a dem  
dyaam isra  
light  
&  
mama! (115-116)

If Rimbaud’s “I is another” represents a founding moment in the poetics of Relation for Glissant, Caliban’s “i is a some/ body” marks a similar juncture in the context of Brathwaite’s poem, where despite the seeming evanescence of pixellated characters on a screen, the “i” gains corporeality and density—even opacity—in addressing itself to the tools of self-inscription. At the same time, the experience of reading the poem, with its phonetically deviant spelling, its visual scoring on the page, and its elaborate repertoire of puns, neologisms, and hybridized references, practically enacts the alteration in consciousness that Glissant seeks in evoking the method of Caribbeanness. “X/Self” dramatically filters a portion of the swarming frequencies in the *échos-monde*—allowing us, requiring us, to sound them out.

Any comprehensive attempt to further sound the claims and implications of Caribbeanness within a globalizing context would have to address a series of questions. To what extent is any practice of Relation possible under conditions of radical inequality? Are the methods of Caribbeanness as Glissant outlines them exportable, and if so, are there limits to the usefulness of the archipelago metaphor when applied elsewhere? Does archipelagic thought itself conceal conditions of power and oppression that severely distort its capabilities? (In this respect one is reminded of the media use of the term “archipelago” to describe the outcome of Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories.) In what sense does a utopian scanning of the horizons of possibility in Relation, the source of much of the theoretical energy in Glissant’s thought, entail a blindness with regard to the nightmarish recursion of imperial ideologies in the West, and particularly the renewed emphasis on integrating systems of border control, surveillance, and international profiling?

Pending further elaboration of these lines of questioning, one can turn to consideration of another metaphor for global relatedness, this one drawn from Franco Moretti’s provocative essay “Conjectures on World Literature.” In attempting to account for what might be called the uneven development of the literary world-system, Moretti invokes two images for the study of all national literatures: the tree and the wave. The tree, as he puts it, “describes the passage from unity to diversity: one tree, with many branches” (67)—that is to say, one national literary tradition (think of insular root-stock) with many developments and offshoots from a central, canonical trunk. Trees, in Moretti’s formulation, “need geographical *discontinuity*,” whereas waves, moving across diversity to produce unity, “thrive on geographical *continuity*”—a literary form like the novel, originating in the West, spreads outward and over a myriad cultures initially foreign to it and is transformed in the process. The products of these two mechanisms of cultural history are, Moretti writes, “always composite ones: but which is the dominant mechanism in their composition? The internal, or the external one? The nation or the world? The tree or the wave?” (68) As a comparatist, Moretti votes for the wave, and many of us might be tempted to do likewise. After all, what could be more stultifying, not to say ideologically blinkered, than focusing solely on the singular accretion of a national tradition? Yet Moretti’s formulation conceals, as Glissant and Brathwaite in their varied output do not, the relative difference of effect produced by waves depending on their origin. “All Ireland is washed by the gulfstream,” quips Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*, but a ripple on the Thames or Hudson can become a hurricane in Kingston or Havana. “Ethnotechnology,” writes Glissant, “will not have enough ‘natural’ apparatus to force itself anywhere: its agents are neutral and powerless; its aim runs out of steam and in the long run wears thin in the dazzling diffraction of [international] flash agents” (179). The persistent apocalypticism in much Caribbean literature—not to mention the paranoidias set loose after the attacks of September 11, 2001—serves as a dark



backdrop to Glissant's generally sunnier perspective on the effervescently reactive condition of a creolizing world.

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There was an image in my mind  
of what I wanted to be.

And here I am—or there I was—

marked by what limitations  
of imagination, or

    glass on a table, afternoon  
traffic and people, how lovely  
against the street and shop fronts?

Plain. Physical. Warmth of feeling.

What is American? My mind?

Jerusalem? Wagadu?      What  
have you?

In the air over Egypt the pyramids  
stood out of the sand and Cairo  
sprawled among delineations of  
highway.

When you see what you see  
it's inside your seeing, how the image  
settles its quickening

to your nature.

A goat or a goal, a moon or a cross,  
some form takes hold, to do good,  
find god, seek fortune or fame,  
the bleeding heart or cold brain—  
I took my coffee each morning  
in a glass in a kitchen  
by the sea.

Nothing more tedious than the self  
importance of a foreign correspondent  
whose range of human contact  
is forced by grim choices  
of a job.

Diplomats or oil scouts are clean  
about the cultural pig-out.

Nail the local  
art to their walls. Dress with native  
flourish.

Somewhere between,  
western agents like me  
were mostly young, naïve and  
hungry as ever  
to do good.

But I won't speak  
for Americans — whatever we are.  
    Right away it was plain —  
I didn't trust what I did  
    was good. And even that  
failed conceptual tedium of *result*  
misses the practical outlines of experience.  
The animal smells of the market.  
    Turkish windows on houses by  
the boardwalk. The long line of sea  
to the port where ships  
    dropped western goods.  
Even then all I wanted was to see,  
    and take it with me.

**RED AMERICANISM  
STRUGGLING TO CONTROL THE NARRATIVE:  
CONFLICT, DISJUNCTURE AND PATRIOTISM IN THE ORAL LIFE  
STORY AND TRIAL DOCUMENTS OF A MINNESOTA COMMUNIST**

Mark Soderstrom

In the summer of 1964, World War II veteran, labor activist, and Communist Party member Joseph Benson<sup>1</sup> was summoned before the House Un-American Activities Commission to make an account of his life and defend his identity against impossible odds. The result of the Committee's decision to subpoena Joe reverberated throughout his life, as first his employer (Viking Chevrolet) and then his union (the International Association of Machinists, or IAM) cast him out in response to the HUAC allegations. In the course of these events two distinct and incompatible narratives of Joe's life and political activities were constructed: one by Joe, who, in his increasingly embattled responses to the accusations and expulsions, insisted that his Americanism, unionism, and Communism were a unified whole in the American story; the other narrative, propagated by the Committee and the dominant social forces arrayed against him, recast Joe's patriotism as treason, his unionism as threatening, and his community activism as antisocial. Overall, the summer of 1964 remains a focal point for Joe's lifestory, and the narrative disjuncture he suffered in the three short months following his appearance before HUAC is still evident thirty years later in his actions, outlook and rhetoric.

I first met Joe Benson in the summer of 1984 at a Minnesota Communist Party rally to honor members who were WWII veterans. Joe, five other WWII vets, and an Abraham Lincoln Brigade member each stood in the ceremony and spoke with gratitude for the recognition of their community, of their pride in their military service, and their abiding patriotism. In this community of Communists and fellow travelers, Joe was able to control the narrative of his life as an American radical. The manner in which the ceremony was staged framed and explained Joe's life as a Communist Party member, union activist, and veteran as a unified part in the larger American story. Twenty years before that summer, in a different ceremony and under different circumstances, Joe's unified narrative was contested and ultimately its public production was controlled by social and political forces beyond his control: first, HUAC; then, his employer; and finally, his own union.

While the Summer of 1964 was a crucial period for the life story of Joe Benson, it was also a defining point in the course of the nation's story. In the same week as Joe was brought before HUAC the Civil Rights Act passed the senate; three civil rights workers disappeared in Philadelphia, Mississippi; St. Augustine, Florida erupted in racial riots; Barry Goldwater was running against Lyndon Johnson for the Presidency; and the situation in Vietnam was escalating. It is in this context that the HUAC hearings should be examined and understood. In all important aspects, the HUAC hearings should be considered as a theatrical

performance, their purpose being not to uncover Communists but rather to create a text of a new version of Americanism in the context of a changing United States.

In essence, the HUAC hearings were an orchestrated spectacle calculated to produce a new definition of Americanism. This text was a politically useful tool to rally the right and tarnish the moderate left and progressives by insinuation and association. The targets of the Committee for such slander were broad and encompassing, including the Minnesota Democratic Farm Labor Party, civil rights groups (in particular the NAACP), the University of Minnesota (which was investigated separately by the Minnesota Senate the same week, and whose president, O. Meredith Wilson, told a relieved Senate panel that the University would never knowingly hire a Communist),<sup>2</sup> peace groups which were accused of diverting the country's attention from the imperialist threat of Soviet expansion, and even the PTA. In essence, any group that promoted a progressive domestic agenda could be tarnished as tainted by accusations of potential Communist infiltration. The subpoenaed witnesses brought forward in the hearings were the raw materials of this production. Through the mechanism of the hearings their lives and persons became the blank slate upon which the Committee, through its informants (who supplied the content), could write the text of their version of Americanism using the Red Scare as a pen.

Through the use of three cooperative witnesses, two FBI plants and one Communist Party defector, the Committee in Minneapolis was able to create and publicize a text in which Communists in general, and Joe by inclusion in the proceedings, were mere tools of the Soviet Empire and its internationalist conspiracy. (One informer went so far as to divulge that the local Communists were developing plans to seize utilities and blow up bridges.)<sup>3</sup> Thus, the people brought before the Committee no longer would be individuals with agency and freedom or independence of thought, but rather the drones of an outside power. Inasmuch as Communists were both unwitting and cunning, subservient to authority and yet dangerous, emasculated by the USSR and yet the potential rapists of freedom, they were portrayed as pathogens to the American democratic system that hypocritically hid behind the institutions of the Constitution. The mechanism of the hearings itself justified these conclusions and demonstrated them through its process: since any engagement of any charge was grounds for possible arrest and an extensive criminal trial, the defendants, though described by the Committee as having the right to refute any charge, in fact had no real choice but to invoke the 1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Amendments as their sole response.<sup>4</sup>

One of the people called, prominent lawyer Ken Tilsen, went so far as to specify that he invoked the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment solely with regard to the due process clause.<sup>4</sup> This made no difference to the Committee or the local newspapers, who painted all the subpoenaed with the same brush, implying that use of the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment was nothing less than a tacit admission of guilt to all charges:

I think it is interesting to note that those who were named in secret testimony by FBI undercover agents, not one of them, not one of them

either in the opportunity to voluntarily appear and give their evidence, [or] produce their witnesses, took advantage of it, and not one, not one contradicted the testimony of the FBI undercover agents before this committee.<sup>6</sup>

The Committee made use of the opportunity to ask defendants questions which linked each person individually, however tenuously, to the highest levels of conspiracy and subterfuge—implying again, at the end of the hearing, that the invocation of the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment was a silent assent to every innuendo. In Joe's case, they assigned both his city activism and his union work to a larger Communist agenda; they took any shred of remaining self-determination away with the following:

MR. NITTLE: The committee has been informed that a national Communist Party farm conference was held in 1960 at the Andrews Hotel in the city of Minneapolis, attended by all the national and leading party officials. Were you in attendance at that meeting or farm conference...[Joe pleads the 1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Amendments]...<sup>7</sup>

Since Joe does not refute the first question, although he also does not affirm it, the speaker implies Joe's tacit affirmation when he asks the follow-up question:

MR. NITTLE: Did not at that meeting Gus Hall, the general secretary of the Communist Party of the United States, advise the national and local leadership of the Communist Party line to be adopted in relation to its activities pertaining to farming and farmers?<sup>8</sup>

The same process, of asking one question and then using the assumption of an affirmative answer as a framework for the following question, had been used throughout Joe's hearing. However, in this particular instance another rhetorical mechanism is in play: by placing Gus Hall at the party (which Joe did not deny attending), and by having Hall push for 'the Communist Party line to be adopted,' Mr. Nittle draws a direct connection between Joe himself and the heavy hand of the national/international Communist conspiracy. Since Joe could not respond in kind without risking his personal freedom, he used the standard reply to each; according to the Committee and the papers, the fact that he did not take the generously provided opportunity to refute the charges proved his culpability beyond question. His extensive activity in the union and community were thus recast from an exemplary exercise of civic virtue to a sinister infiltration of upstanding organizations, performed at the will and by the agenda of a threatening international conspiracy.



HUAC was careful to maintain a duality in which the use of the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment was clearly a statement of American superiority and freedom—and, at the same time, an obvious indicator of guilt.<sup>8</sup> By extension, implication, and direct statement, other US rights and privileges also were prerogatives of American freedom which must be protected, and yet for their protection must be abrogated and denied to Communists and subversives.

Joe's appearance before HUAC and this public creation of his narrative in late June 1964 was only the beginning of his troubles that summer. On July 3<sup>rd</sup> he was fired from his job at Viking Chevrolet; the reason given was:

Within the last few weeks we have noted that our employee morale is becoming worse and we are told that this is a direct result of their feeling that you are undesirable to work with... We are now left with no choice but to discharge you.<sup>10</sup>

The state of Minnesota denied the validity of his unemployment claim. The business agent of the IAM refused to contest this dismissal; later that month five members of the union brought charges against him, and in his union trial on August 11<sup>th</sup> he was expelled from his union. Over the next two years he pursued redress through litigation against the state, his former employer, and the IAM; all of his suits were unsuccessful.

Implicitly the Committee, and later Viking Chevrolet and the IAM, attacked Joe's masculinity, impugning such traditionally masculine values as his status as a worker, his loyalty to his union and community, the honor of his testimony, his patriotism, and most importantly, his agency as an independent actor. His trial documents and his oral history are most interesting in their defense and rewriting of these traditional virtues.

Joe did not allow these forces to dominate his narrative without a fight. At every turnover throughout the last thirty-plus years, he has struggled to re-assert an interpretation of his life which could provide him with his personal pride, his integrity, a recognition of his sacrifice as a veteran, his pride in his country, and his masculinity. Joe's rhetoric, both in records of his 1964 ordeal and in his life story as I recorded it in 1993, is epideictic and hortatory, and operates with a logic that unifies his radicalism and patriotism into a subjective whole of national history and character. Its conventions and devices are striking, emotionally stirring, and sophisticated in their use of a canon of classic American heroes and ideology, both as a tactic of claiming the power of the dominant society and as a reflection of Joe's true belief in his own subjective unity as an American Communist—of the indivisibility of his radicalism and patriotism. He describes what he believes to be the true promise of America and the labor movement, and consistently addresses a broad audience whom he exhorts to share in his utopian vision. Joe's rhetorical strategy embodies a stirring example of a rank-and-file Communist party member's conception of the unity of Americanism, unionism,

and a home-grown Marxism which for Joe is rooted in his Popular Front childhood and adolescence.

While HUAC cast Communists as dangerous and anti-social, Joe's response attempted to write him into the very heart of his community. In his defense at his union trial he uses the device of his "record of service" to correct what he calls the "ill-informed" charges. He begins his story with his military record, as proof of his patriotism and masculinity, both of which had been denigrated by the Committee. He then cites his activity in community organizations such as the PTA and 4-H and notes his participation as a Trustee in the IAM's local lodge, describing his work therein as responsible and worker-oriented:

I am presently serving my first three-year elective term as a Trustee in Local Lodge 737. As a Trustee I am expected to attend all Local and Executive Board meetings, and my attendance record is very good. My duties include verification and approval of bills, voucher approvals and auditing of the Local's financial records. There has never been any dissatisfaction expressed to me about my discharge of these responsibilities.<sup>11</sup>

Further he castigates the HUAC accusations as "an inane interpretation of the deranged charges of a paid informer,"<sup>12</sup> placing himself among working American people and his accusers as servants of moneyed interests who are the enemies of all unions. Joe emphasizes the fact that he holds an elected office within the union, the duties of which he has discharged to all evident satisfaction. He goes on to emphasize his community activism and the testimonial support of neighbors.<sup>12</sup>

In the course of Joe telling me his life story, he enacted a mock conversation with a co-worker accusing him of Communism. While Joe does not admit to being a Communist through the conversation, the rhetorical strategy and choices show how Joe's Communism is expressed in terms of his traditional American values.

That was after the HUAC; before that, it wasn't that way. But the FBI was in the shop. The bosses spread the word. Some of my work-mates would come up, and they'd ask me—you know—if I was a member of the Communist Party. And I'd say, "well, I don't know, unless I know what you mean by a member of the Communist Party. If I was a Communist, I got to know what you mean by a Communist. Do you mean because I fight for peace, fight against racism, fight for a good shop committee—to resolve grievances, to make our working conditions better? And these things—is that why you're calling me a Communist? Or why you think I'm a Communist?"

“Well, no, that... you know—I know you do a good job on that—you know—in the union and so on, you’re always supporting the workers. Always teaching unionism on the floor. Always telling us the union is in the shop.”

“Well what makes you think I might be a Communist?”

Some guy said—after I went through this kind of a thing— he says, “the main reason is you supported the Cuban revolution all the way through the revolution.”

I says, “I’d support a strike, that’s a revolution—a people’s revolution. I support the peace movement, that’s a people’s revolution. I certainly support any revolution of the working-class. And Cuba was a revolution of the working-class.” I says, “I still support the original principles of the American Revolution. I support the main principles of the American Revolution. I don’t necessarily support the outcome. Is that why you think I’m a Communist?”

“Aw,” he says, “Fuck ‘em.” He says, “I don’t care.” Most of them would end up and say, “Aw, fuck them assholes, I don’t care.” ‘Cause I was doing everything that they believed in. They just didn’t take affront. That’s the way I’d answer this question.<sup>14</sup>

Conversely, Joe’s Marxism clearly shapes his Americanism in his life story; when talking about HUAC, he recounted:

They...called the people calling for peace, they called them unpatriotic. They called Communists unpatriotic. They called women that spoke for their rights unpatriotic. You know the term “unpatriotic,” and to me, to be unpatriotic is, to deny the Bill of Rights to people is unpatriotic. It’s unpatriotic to discredit the good things in the Constitution of the United States. There’s many things that need adjusting and correcting and intensifying: that human rights also includes health, employment, education, and recreation. The rights to all of these things, they’re not a privilege; they’re a right, to have these things, this has always been my concept.<sup>15</sup>

Joe’s analysis of the HUAC era implicitly argues what Paul Robeson stated explicitly in his own HUAC appearance: namely, that the Committee and the ultra-right were tools of monopoly capital and it is they who were truly the ‘un-Americans’; that the purpose of the McCarthy era and the Red Scare was merely a tool to subvert the progressive gains of the CIO and the New Deal.<sup>16</sup>

The union wasn’t the problem. But it was the McCarthy scare in the leadership of the union that was the problem. And the membership become—when leadership takes an anti-Communist position so the

membership gets scared to speak. And this is ideologically what McCarthyism was about. Is to change the union attitude of union people. To not utilize what unions are about. And if the labor movement would have been so educated in the early beginnings of unions this wouldn't have flown. They couldn't have done this during the organizing period, and especially the beginning of the CIO. The AFL was more company union. The CIO was the left-wing of the unions. And during that period of time it would have been much more difficult to instigate and make a McCarthy period fly. And I think it relates to... it relates to that there was a lot of throwback.<sup>17</sup>

And at the time I was involved, we had a solidarity to some extent still hanging on. The McCarthy era hadn't really damaged the union attitude of union workers, until the fear when they started bringing union members before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee when they started to ply anti-Communism, and the bosses took full advantage of all anti-Communist structure, were they finally able to dislodge and dismember the real meaning of union. And then in the same terms the internationals of the union fell short on their obligations to the working-class. They no longer taught unionism as it is. And they put all these things, and the younger union people had no idea what the union was except they paid dues—you know. And they got to taking a very anti-union attitude within the unions.<sup>18</sup>

In this sense, Joe's Americanism stems from the worker-based Americanism of his childhood, the version of Americanism that fed the CIO and flowered in WWII as the US embraced the immigrant and the unions supported the war against fascism. Joe's Americanism clearly shows the influence of the Popular Front (and what Michael Denning describes as the Cultural Front) in opposition to the backlash (or 'throwback') of the Fifties.

For both Joe and HUAC the antithesis of their respective Americanism was a conspiracy: for HUAC, the conspiracy of Soviet Communism; for Joe, the international conspiracy of capital. While HUAC posited a Communist 'conspiracy' working to infiltrate organizations and capture leadership, in Joe's construction the anti-American element is money and power, and it is the interest of capital which fought him, not the 'people' (his work-mates, his neighbors and community). While HUAC denied the individuality of Communists and ascribed their actions to be solely motivated by directors in Moscow, Joe, in order to maintain his optimism for the eventual independence of the American working class, ascribed their anti-Communist attitudes and actions to the direct agency and influence of the FBI.

In many ways the dominant elements of Joe's Americanism predate the version of Americanism promoted by HUAC. Joe celebrates the populism of

Jackson, the independence of Jefferson as opposed to the machinations of Hamilton, and the construction of true Americans as contrasted to elements of money and the oligarchy who would threaten democracy. In this, Joe concurs with a dominant trope in American historiography from Bancroft, Turner and Beard. This creation of the other (whether east coast bankers or the moneyed bosses) as the conspiracy which threatens the independent democracy of the pure, usually western Americans through conspiracy is featured in Joe's construction of monopoly capital which, in Joe's usage, figures back to notions that grew out of the American populist movements. By contrast, HUAC's constructions of a foreign threat to American democracy in comparison are a rather recent construction that serves in a postwar context to bypass the older debates of democracy versus capital that had dominated the earlier writings of American historians and thinkers.

In the narrative of Joe's life created for public consumption by HUAC and adopted by Viking Chevrolet and the IAM, Joe's Communism was seized upon as the agency of his banishment from the social fabric of America. This construction of Joe's life employed a rhetoric of Americanism in which the identities of American and Communist were binary opposites, and which defined Joe's unified story as a deceit untenable to right-thinking Americans. As a result, this experience has become a badge of honor inside his particular group and even a speaking platform which has given Joe personally a degree of enhanced credibility, as well as increased confidence in the effectiveness of the Communist Party:

Why was it the Communists first they was after? The Communists is the true Marxist-Leninist party. There was many Marxist and Leninists prior to the putting together [of the Communist Party] because I believe it went clear back to Christ. You know, that his ideology had to be somewheres [sic] along these terms — and, of course, they executed him.<sup>19</sup>

In tracing Marxist/Leninism back to Christ, Joe claims the legitimacy of history, again using the weapons of the Anti-Communists. By posing his opposition as an eternal 'they,' Joe creates a historical dialectic in his Americanism, placing Christ, the people, himself and the Party on one side and the Pharisees, bosses, capitalism and HUAC on the other.

Overall what I am suggesting is that Joe's Communism, patriotism, and unionism are inextricably linked in his world-view. It is impossible to understand Joe without appreciating all three of these elements. His vision of Communism is shaped by his American context, as his vision of America is shaped by his union philosophy and his Communist politics. His political work both in the present and as a historical actor cannot be understood in the light of Communist ideology alone. Indeed, while in the halls of academia we may consider Communism to be a strictly internationalist project, for Joe — and, I believe, the majority of his rank

and file cohort—it is an internationalism shaped by their nationalist convictions and optimism. As a result, Joe has been consistently called upon to defend against a border drawn between his ideals of Communism and Americanism, a border imposed upon him by hegemonic social forces which, with the power of the state and a broad social tacit agreement, were able to write Joe as a hypocrite and a traitor rather than a patriotic veteran; through this, his alternate version of Americanism was denigrated and denied a space on the social stage. Even though the excesses of HUAC have been revealed and publicized, the legacy of their framing of Americanism continues to dominate our social discourse and deny to Joe and many others a legitimate space in the national arena, thus silencing alternative voices in the public debate.

*(Endnotes)*

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper, the pseudonym Joe Benson is used. Five years ago I would not have felt this necessary. But given the current political climate under John Ashcroft and the Patriot Act, anonymity seems essential yet again.

<sup>2</sup> Richard P Kleeman, "'U' Would Not Knowingly Hire Red, Probers Told." *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 25 June 1964, sec. A, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Jerry Kirshenbaum, "St. Paul Attorney Refuses to Answer Probe Queries." *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 26 June 1964, sec. A, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> United States of America, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Communist Activities in the Minneapolis, Minn., Area* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1964).

<sup>5</sup> United States, 1681.

<sup>6</sup> United States, 1922. Statement by Representative Ichord.

<sup>7</sup> United States, 1862.

<sup>8</sup> United States, 1862.

<sup>9</sup> United States, 1921-23.

<sup>10</sup> Joe Benson, Open letter to Union Brothers, 6 July 1964. In possession of the author.

<sup>11</sup> Joe Benson, Statement Before IAM Local 737 Trial Board, 7 August 1964. In possession of the author.

<sup>12</sup> Joe Benson, Statement Before IAM Local 737 Trial Board. In possession of the author.

<sup>13</sup> Joe Benson, Statement Before IAM Local 737 Trial Board. In possession of the author.

<sup>14</sup> Joe Benson, personal interview by author, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 25 July 1993. In possession of the author.

<sup>15</sup> Joe Benson, personal interview.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Bauml Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988) 442.

<sup>17</sup> Joe Benson, personal interview.

<sup>18</sup> Joe Benson, personal interview.

<sup>19</sup> Joe Benson, personal interview.

# REVIEWS







**BEYOND THE BARRICADES:  
NICARAGUA AND THE STRUGGLE FOR  
THE SANDINISTA PRESS, 1979-1998**

Adam Jones  
Ohio University Press, 2002

For the contemporary left, whether economists, political activists or cultural workers, revolutionary Nicaragua (1979-1990) remains ambivalently sedimented somewhere beneath the ebb and flow of the global order and the lengthening shadow of U.S. empire. Nicaragua's Sandinista experiment was the last national revolutionary program to consolidate state power before the dystopian turn of events inaugurated by the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and the New World Order proclamations of Bush I. Importantly, the heterodox left politics and cultural discourse of Sandinismo and revolutionary Nicaragua emerged in the 1980s as the moral equivalent of the Spanish Republic of the late 1930s: i.e., a radically democratic project bucking the growing global tide of reactionary politics on the one hand and an entrenched Stalinism on the other. Throughout the 1980s, amid Reaganism and Thatcherism and the dinosaur-like descent of the Soviet system, the Sandinista revolution flickered on as a kind of beacon of hope for the forces of the left, and spawned far-reaching internationalist solidarity campaigns. As a consequence, during the Sandinista period significant scholarship was instigated by the political energy, international profile and high hopes for the Nicaraguan revolution. The collapse of the Sandinista regime following the 1990 elections debacle, and subsequent news of political corruption and infighting among the Sandinista leadership, brought a parallel decline in scholarly interest in Nicaragua. Adam Jones' *Beyond the Barricades* is one of several recent academic books that have taken post-revolutionary Sandinismo and its institutions as their object, beginning the necessary task of a critical retrospective on the institutional legacy of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista National Liberation Front, FSLN).

In *Beyond the Barricades*, Adam Jones traces the historical trajectory not of Sandinismo per se, but of one of its key cultural institutions, identifying and assessing the points of conflict between an incipient radical journalism and the directors of the Sandinista party apparatus. At the center of it all is *Barricada*, the FSLN's daily newspaper and flagship of the party's several media holdings. Founded in July 1979 less than a week after a Sandinista-led popular insurrection culminated in the overthrow of the dictator Somoza, the paper began inauspiciously as a four-page bulletin carrying news of revolutionary events. Over the next decade, the staff and content of *Barricada* would expand as the paper settled into its role as the print medium of record for the FSLN. What interests Jones, and what will doubtless interest the reader, is the course of the daily's development into a first-rate journalistic enterprise during the nation's decade of U.S.-sponsored

economic crisis and war, promising a new kind of journalism for the Americas. Jones argues persuasively that *Barricada* was never simply a cog in the partisan propaganda machinery, even though its editors and reporters maintained a clear commitment to both party and revolution. Instead, the paper's staff balanced two competing principles governing their reporting: Sandinista partisanship and journalistic professionalism, or what Jones terms the "mobilizing and professional imperatives."

The paper's balancing act had its detractors among the FSLN's National Directorate, who were uncomprehending of the political value of an independent journalism. Despite a decade of unresolved tensions on this score, however, when the FSLN lost the 1990 elections to an opposition coalition financially backed by the U.S. the context for weighing partisanship against independent journalism changed dramatically. The FSLN was set back on its heels amid dismay at the electoral results and the general discrediting of socialist politics in the post-Soviet world. Prevailing FSLN sentiment was that the movement needed to reflect and reorganize in the hopes of regaining its popular support in the long term, and stake out an effective opposition role in the interregnum. In this context, *Barricada*'s director Carlos Fernando Chamorro and others successfully lobbied for a "de-officialization" of the paper, establishing for the first time a formal autonomy from the party's National Directorate.

The chief critics of *Barricada*'s autonomy were Tomás Borge (Minister of the Interior in the 1980s) and Daniel Ortega (President from 1984-1990 and perennial candidate thereafter), who believed the paper should serve almost exclusively as a political tool for the promotion of FSLN political campaigns. These and other Sandinista politicians would begin to reconsolidate a centralized hold on the FSLN apparatus in 1993, articulating what became known as the *ortodoxo* (orthodox) current of post-revolutionary Sandinismo. Under pressure of this dominant FSLN faction, *Barricada*'s autonomy experiment, begun in 1990, came to a halt on October 25, 1994, with the "defenestración" (defenestration) of the editorial staff and their replacement with *ortodoxo* loyalists. With little journalistic experience on the staff and the strict partisanship of its "reporting," the paper's readership predictably declined. The FSLN's political woes continued as well, as Ortega lost his second presidential bid in 1996. By 1998, *Barricada* was no more.

Jones weaves a compelling narrative of the institutional trajectory of *Barricada*, from its inception as a revolutionary appropriation of the Somocista daily *Novedades* to its eventual demise under the pressures of the FSLN directorate's tactical political demands. The story Jones presents is a fascinating one, told on the basis of dozens of interviews with the key players in *Barricada*'s development and decline. The author's rigorous field work, carried out in 1991, 1996 and 1998, allows for the newspaper's history to be narrated collectively in the voices of Sandinista politicians, party functionaries, journalists and militants, each providing perspective, however tendentiously, on the unfolding events. The

narrative quality of *Beyond the Barricades* is perhaps its strongest feature. Like any good narrative, the book offers not only a chronological sequence of events but a feel for the personalities and agency of the main players, developing along the way a tangible sense of the stakes and strategies behind the story. Jones' mustering of anecdotal evidence provides dramatic punctuation to his own broad observations regarding tensions within the FSLN directorate, or between professional and political imperatives bearing on the newspaper's mission. And, as with any good story, the reader's main complaint about the narration may center on details left tantalizingly to the imagination. To give but one instance, FSLN junta member Tomás Borge is described as upbraiding a member of *Barricada's* editorial staff for failure to report an item of special interest to him. What that item was is never mentioned, and although the reader might imagine reasons for such a teasing omission of detail, none is provided by the author.

For the reader already familiar with recent Nicaraguan history, it's the moral of the story that is mostly wanting. Chief among the political liabilities of the organized left has been a failure to develop a viable working model of cultural production to suit the insights of Antonio Gramsci's discernment regarding hegemony, i.e. the cultivation of national moral and political leadership through strategic cultural institutions. Early on in the book, Jones suggests that the question of hegemony served in many ways as the guiding principle for *Barricada's* staff in its effort to chart an institutional course between the necessities of political party mobilization and the ethical requirements of independent truth-telling. The principal weakness of Jones' account is the unanswered question at the center of the entire affair. Did *Barricada* become during the autonomy experiment, as ortodoxo critics alleged, an organ of the neoliberal status quo? Or did its autonomy from the party apparatus represent, as Carlos Fernando Chamorro insisted, a concrete gain for the Sandinista project, a critical civil societal institution fomenting a culture of loyal opposition in the national interest?

These questions appear especially vital given the relevance of Gramscian criteria introduced in the first chapter of the book. Answering them would require moving beyond the personal testimonial accounts and into an ideological analysis of the newspaper's reportage. Jones does not adequately evaluate or answer these questions, choosing instead to treat them mainly as reciprocal accusations and rhetorical posturing by individual actors in the drama of the "defenestración." There are moments in the discussion when Jones adduces a limited analysis of content, as when he usefully (but briefly) compares the use of sensationalist photography – containing graphic violence or sexualized images – in pre- and post-defenestración *Barricada*, concluding that under the National Directorate's control the news daily mobilized violent imagery with significantly greater frequency. However, Jones' only effort to directly address the issue of the paper's ideological orientation relies on an admittedly schematic survey of *Barricada* editorials and national political coverage for only those months immediately preceding the defenestración. The conclusion he draws – that ortodoxo criticisms

were belied by clearly oppositional reportage – is undermined by the limited scope of his news analysis. In fact, the only reasonable conclusion that can be reached on this basis is that *Barricada*'s reportage was anti-governmental during the period in which the Sandinista Assembly and National Directorate were debating whether or not to purge *Barricada*'s editorial staff.

The ideological issue embedded in the maneuvering around *Barricada*'s journalistic (and, in fact, political) autonomy is further obscured by Jones' consistent suspension of the evaluation of the enterprise between the mobilizing and professional imperatives. These are fundamentally useful categories in framing the special character of *Barricada* as a left newspaper, and they underscore the newspaper's distinctiveness in comparison to traditional journalistic media. These opposing categories are also crucial in understanding the special challenges facing the newspaper's staff and its prospects for development—serving as poles of orientation for the reader's navigation of the complexities of the *Barricada* story. Nonetheless, Jones' presentation of the dilemma of professionalism versus mobilization leaves some of the ideological stakes unattended. In chapter one, in an apparent effort to enliven and more explicitly politicize this tension, Jones introduces the idea of what he terms the “moral economy of journalism.” This term remains underdeveloped, however, and the brief related discussion leaves the reader wondering what a concept developed to understand the political behavior of peasant communities (see James Scott's *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*) has to do with journalistic practice. The author never usefully distinguishes this normative ingredient from the professional imperative that, as he argues convincingly throughout, serves as an ethical counterweight to political doctrine, mobilizing rhetoric, or propagandizing aimed at gaining tactical advantage in the political field.

The awkward attempt to insert the “moral economy of journalism” as a critical concept may be a symptom of the author's overly inert understanding of the tension between the professional and mobilizing imperatives. In many respects, Jones is dealing with the ideological issue all along, but is unable to render explicit the ideological freight of the competition between partisanship and journalism because he doesn't consistently treat these as “imperatives” in the proper, moral, sense of the term. Treated properly as imperatives (as what one should/must do), these poles of tension open up to more useful political evaluation of the fate of *Barricada*. The mobilizing imperative, for example, was not absent from *Barricada*'s editorial line during the autonomy experiment. In fact, ortodoxo accusations included the charge that the paper was in fact mobilizing the moderate renovationist sectors of the FSLN. The real point of contention, it seems, remained the post-revolutionary question of who to mobilize and how – fundamental political concerns from which the professional imperative and its journalistic ethos were arguably never really separated at the newspaper.

For its part, the ortodoxo position did not merely subordinate journalism to mobilization, but to a particular variant of the mobilizing imperative – a

centralized and hierarchical model of political command and response that was equal parts Leninist vanguard and old-fashioned political clientelism. In contrast, the position of the editorial staff was, according to Jones' interlocutors, centered on the truth and a kind of dialogical responsibility to a broad readership. Jones makes a brief foray into ideological analysis with respect to this latter variant of professionalism, but does not draw any enduring conclusions. The professional imperative articulated by *Barricada's* editors in the "New Editorial Profile" preceding the autonomy experiment is at one point characterized as fundamentally liberal-pluralist along the lines of the mainstream U.S. model, and at the next as simply healthy professionalism. Despite Jones' inconsistent evaluation of the editorial practice of the autonomy period, he does not appear to believe that political considerations were ever absent from *Barricada's* version of the professional imperative. Indeed, some anecdotal asides provide concrete evidence of a tendentious mobilizing edge to *Barricada's* relationship to its readers, an edge that reflected independent journalism as much as a clear politics. Ortodoxo attacks on feminist Sofía Montenegro's widely popular weekly *Gente* supplement, which they denounced for "promoting hatred of men by women," offer an especially intriguing case in point given the Frente directorate's reputation for machismo, and the fact that the women's movement in post-revolutionary Nicaragua represents one of the more important civil societal phenomena in Central America in the 1990s.

The epilogue to the *Barricada* story has already been told: ortodoxo Daniel Ortega's disastrous third electoral bid for the presidency in 2001 took place against the backdrop of widespread fraud and corruption in the country's political class, the cultural dominance of reactionary Catholicism and neoliberal discourse, and a national economic development strategy organized almost exclusively around the super-exploitation of the transnational maquiladora sector. The Sandinista project has been all but buried under the weak fiction of neoliberal globalization as worldwide cure-all. Despite massive unemployment and widespread poverty, and despite the FSLN's status as the largest political party in Nicaragua, the Sandinista leadership has proven incapable of expanding its base to include a majority of Nicaraguans. Is there a moral to this story? Jones seems to suggest that *Barricada's* uncommon blend of journalistic integrity and refusal of political neutrality might have served as a new kind of model. The *Barricada* story, epilogue and all, suggests that the FSLN and Nicaraguan civil society are no longer reading from the same page. Minimally, an Aesopian version of this tale would include a reminder that unilateral political control of a cultural resource often cancels out the political values of critical truth-telling, democratic participation in the creation of collective meaning and purpose, and dialogue with those broad social sectors whose political allegiance can be won only through, well, dialogue.

**Bruce Campbell**

## ITCH LIKE CRAZY

Wendy Rose

University of Arizona Press, 2002

*Itch Like Crazy* is a collection of often stunning poems that comprise a rich personal testament of how one woman seeks to understand her complicated cultural genealogy. Billed as a book by a Native American writer, what is most striking about these poems is that in their depiction of cultural confrontations, incompatibilities, and diversities they also tell a typical American story. That is, the U.S. American's journey (whether native or otherwise) towards understanding "who one is" in terms of one's genealogy.

The poems from this collection that seem to work best are those in which Wendy Rose, though perhaps speaking to a genealogical ancestor, focuses on universal human experiences (though sometimes within cultural or class contexts). These poems read less metaphysical meaning (for Rose herself) into what she learns about her genealogical ancestors. In other poems, Rose respectfully addresses animals and other elements of the natural world as human relatives and ancestors. "Grandmother Rattler," which will be discussed later, is a fine example of this. The poems that search for identity through biological connections to ancestors are those that work least well. The problem is compounded in poems where Rose relies on shorthand images (i.e. the "noble Celt") of the cultural groups with which she hopes to make a biological connection.

Following is a passage from one of the first poems in the book, "The Itch: First Notice":

I am looking for my People.  
As I find the names  
I write them down,  
encasing the letters between  
the pale blue lines of my ledger,  
then draw them in the margins,  
give them wings or hooves or horns,  
make bloodlines snake  
from one to another  
and wonder  
if the green eyes on paper  
know they can climb the pen  
and pierce my veins.

In "Hugh Massey Barrett" the protagonist addresses one he calls "Daughter" and speaks of leaving Ireland. Yet Ireland remains in his blood:

Castle or cottage,  
feudal lord or farmer,  
tacksman or baron,  
pauper or prince,  
all of them tumble  
together in my blood.

I leave them to you . . .

Proceeding through the poems in this book it becomes obvious that for Rose, this is not a straightforward task of tallying and graphing family names in order to have a sense of who was born where, who begat whom, and who died where. Rather, she is focused on knowing “bloodlines” or, in the newer language of inheritance, keeping track of genetic connections. For Rose, these are the crux of knowing oneself culturally and metaphysically.

Historically, “blood” has been used in the English language both metaphorically to represent kin and literally to mean the physiological substance. However, over time these two notions have combined in the English language understanding of inheritance. Blood as physiological substance came to signify biological authority in determining kin.<sup>1</sup> Native peoples in the United States have not been outside this history. As we have negotiated for our survival with the dominant culture and begun to operate chiefly in English, our notions of kin have been affected. Within this historical and cultural trajectory, the concept of biological races solidified and blood as substance of inheritance has been welded to that of blood as metaphor for kin.<sup>2</sup> Like many other Americans, Rose’s exploration, her searching for herself in her bloodlines, is a culmination of this history.

The connection between biology and identity is made in “Aborigine and Queen.” In this poem, Rose imagines herself the “cousin from the colonies, the part you let go” curtsying before and speaking to the Queen of England. She speaks of having “shared genes” presumably with the (white?) English for whom the Queen is emblematic. The poem continues with Rose listing a series of European names—individuals frozen in portraits in “the great hall” in which “signs of [her]self are suspended.” She compares her various body parts or physical characteristics with those in portraits. Following the “shared genes” concept, it’s difficult to see Rose’s body imagery as purely metaphorical. Rather, culture resides in body and is transmitted in “part[s]” through genes.

In addition to making biological connections, aspects of Rose’s genealogical search risk cultural romanticization of ancestors. In “The Itch, Second Notice,” Rose addresses four grandmothers and attempts to convey the essence of the women with abbreviated ethnic signifiers. To Grandmother Rachel, Rose asks to be taught “what it means to be in the circle/ irrevocably, beautifully,/ impossibly.” She asks Grandmother Henrietta if she hears “a Highland echo” and



Grandmother Sarah looks east “praying in a Protestant way/ for the thunder and mist of Niagara to part/ so you can remember/ Inverness.” Grandmother Margaret “rode the ocean to the other side of the world.” Rose then makes an appeal to the “Elders of the world”:

Red Gold Ebony Alabaster Elders,  
tell the children the truth.  
Tell them that if they give in  
to the insatiable itch,  
their roots will break open,  
expose tender flesh  
to blowing dust and searing heat,  
may not set seed  
in the crumbled dark earth  
of other lands.

The colors listed have been used by some native cultures to signify four directions or the four seasons of the year. Since the 1960s and the crystallization of pan-Indian political movements, the four colors have been used within the American racializing project by many natives and non-natives alike to signify four over-arching human races. Rose addresses all elders of all the races and pleas for them to convey their wisdom about the dangers of migration. She speaks of roots “break[ing] open” and possibly not being able to “seed” in other lands. It seems to me that this poem is a plea in part to her immigrant grandmothers (of different races) that they should convey the difficulties or mistakes of their immigration to this land. But while it’s clear that these grandmothers had personal hardships, it’s never clear that they found immigration politically problematic. Regarding natives, which I assume are at the forefront of Rose’s mind, many immigrants did not, and still do not, express doubts about the wisdom of moving into lands already occupied by Indians.<sup>3</sup> The elders may have no agreeable wisdom to offer on the subject.

Likewise, in “Turning,” Rose turns to a shorthand of ethnic and geographic signifiers (“Gaelic” song, “red-haired women,” “rattlesnake,” “mesa,” “cornmeal,” “bog,” “soft sandstone,” “the ship . . . midway across the Atlantic”) to tell the story of both native and emigrating women and “the breaking of one last thread to ancestral land.” New World images or those in the passages about native women are soft, meaty, ripe and hot while Old World or European women images are thin, ragged, and icy cold. In “Captain Andrew MacInnes of the Norfolk Militia,” Rose wrestles with newfound knowledge of a great-great-grandfather. In this poem, the object of Rose’s biological connection has been romanticized by her attributing only positive cultural attributes. She had previously imagined MacInnes as a “native man” and:



freedom fighter, resister of Brit domination, victim of Clearances,  
wearer of tartan . . .

However, she came to know his secret (the fact that he does not fit her cultural ideal) and asks if she should then let his “blood run back into [her] veins. . .”

You were the one who bought other men  
to work so you would grow rich  
beyond measure; you stole them from their land,  
their people, took their names, their languages,  
turned them into blank slates upon which you would write  
with the flick of your whip. . .

You were not the noble Celt  
with roots twisted into elaborate knots  
beneath the cold surface of the Oban shore . . .

I’ve left out significant text. But Rose depicts, as an alternative to a particularly noble man, a particularly corrupt man. It is romanticization for any of us to imagine a human being as purely noble or corrupt. It is probable that many who lost land, fought against British tyranny, and thought themselves to be “noble Celts” also eventually engaged in capitalist slave trade and other unsavory behavior—such as settling stolen Indian land, becoming Indian haters and Indian killers. While MacInnes himself may have been much more corrupt than he was good, the larger point is that the noble Celt, like the noble Indian, is never a good representation of human complexity. Where he does not obscure history, he disappoints. Rose divulges her mistake in looking for the noble Celt in MacInnes. However, she also seems to hold on to her noble Celt as a true measure of cultural integrity. Rather than being a complicated (yet still Celtic) human, MacInnes was a traitor.

Lists of names, bloodlines graphed on genealogy charts, genes, and standard ethnic imagery enable us to know our ancestors as symbols. This is one aspect of knowing. But it seems misdirected to use those symbols to stand for personal, cultural, and political knowledge of ancestors. Along with the cursory ethnic signifiers peppered throughout the book such as “sweetgrass,” “blue Hopi corn,” “White Buffalo Calf Maiden,” “small fat peyote,” “Highland,” “tartan,” “clans,” “Scottish boulders in your bones,” elevating personal genealogy to the mythical noble character or to the four races concept seems to attest to a lack of personal, political and cultural intimacy with grandmothers and grandfathers. That, in itself, is not a criticism. Many of us lack such intimacy with our ancestors. But if this is so, is there a fundamental understanding of oneself to be had in searching so intently for life details of such people?

The recommendation on the book's back cover refers to Wendy Rose as a "Native American [writer] of mixed-blood heritage." Overall, these poems reveal a familiar struggle of the "mixed-blood" attempting to reconcile what are believed to be the bloods and cultural essences of the oppositional genealogies within.<sup>4</sup> However, some of the poems ultimately convey how complex, painful, and affirming any human being's simultaneous self-inheritance and self-creation can be. These are the poems that work best. "Joseph," written to another great-great grandfather, is a breathtaking example of how Rose grapples with this human curse:

I dream you better  
than you dream me.  
You balance from one broken rib  
to the other on my back  
and you become the secret pain,  
the mystery in my bones.

Spring rains have gone crazy this way;  
south wind is inconsolable.

The bruises and cuts fade from me as I sing.  
They are rising on you, they are rising on you.

In "Genealogical Research," names are again gathered:

She carries a small pouch.  
In this she puts the names,  
nothing more. Collecting names  
like pretty leaves in October  
or shells swept into her hand  
by the receding sea or picked  
like peaches from a hardwood tree.

In this poem, Rose is again making comparisons of herself with the physicalities and idiosyncrasies of individuals who comprise her biological ancestry:

Names rattle at the bottom of the pouch  
where bruises are kept blue, wounds  
are held open. Here ghosts glow and seethe,  
pull one another  
maddened by jealousy.  
Some names float to the top  
no matter where the future should perch.  
There is always someone to judge her,

how very light or very dark she is,  
how fat or bony, how stumbling and lost,  
how resolute or uncertain,  
how very much or very little  
she seems like them. They slip beneath  
the surface again.

Yet this poem is subtly different from others in this collection. It does not seem to aspire to reconcile different cultural and racial lines or meta-histories. Rather, it is reminiscent of stories about adoptees searching for birth parents or siblings. This poem conveys the pain in searching for one's physical likeness, for the source of it, and in that believing that a greater sense of belonging to oneself will be found. The subject of the poem searches simply to see shades of herself in the face, body, and gait of another human being. It is poignant precisely because the connection is destined to disappoint, the project destined to fail.

"Grandmother Rattler" is an arresting, sorrowful poem that draws its strength not from any explicit familial or cultural connection but from Rose's personal struggle to be more human among those that would murder without understanding:

Oh Grandmother.  
What did I become?  
The German mother who closed her ears  
to the sound of neighbors  
as they choked and burned?  
Uniformed boy in a silver room,  
his finger hovering over one small button  
to kill thousands he will never see,  
elders and infants he will only know  
by the magic devil word "enemy"?  
I know only this.  
I took the shovel  
wanting to spare you death  
at their hands, brought it down edgewise  
on your soft red neck, cleanly sliced  
the head from the body,  
felt a shadow pass  
over my womb.

The book's last section begins with a short essay and contains seventeen photographs of Rose and her ancestors with explanatory text. In the essay, Rose notes that "[m]uch of the impetus for [her] to write this book is more personal than political," that she had to come to terms with "a family that could not keep

its own secrets straight.” She then briefly discusses the predicament of being “multiracial.” In this she reaffirms that her book is indeed a political project within an American tradition in which we attempt to biologize racial and cultural lineages and to state with fractional precision our personal identities.

However, the final section also contradicts the political project of many of her poems and situates Rose as an individual *among* her ancestors rather than *within* the bloodlines of those ancestors. Not that it might matter to Wendy Rose, but her introduction of herself in this way has made me more comfortable with her and her offering of this book. When I am among Indians I do not know, I am often asked where I am from or who are my relatives. In being able to situate myself I give them some clue (albeit incomplete) to my geographical, cultural, and political commitments. If they know anything about my tribe or my family—and someone usually does—they can assess me in all my messiness. Wendy Rose is not cowardly. She lays down her commitments in all their messiness and her abundant talent before us.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For more on changing meanings of “blood,” see Melissa L. Meyer, “American Indian Blood Quantum Requirements: Blood is Thicker than Family,” in Valerie J. Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger, eds., *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998). This article traces the meaning of “blood” in the English language since the middle ages in an attempt to convey the varying symbolic and physiological meanings of the term.

<sup>2</sup> For more on beliefs about and critiques of the idea of biological races, see Carleton Stevens Coon, *The Origin of Races*, New York, Knopf, 1962; Carleton Stevens Coon, *Races: A Study of the Problems of Race Formation in Man*. Springfield, Illinois: C.C. Thomas, 1950; Joseph L. Graves Jr., *The Emperor’s New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race in the Millennium*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001; Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West*. Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996; Alexandra Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities around Puget Sound*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998; Ales Hrdlicka, “The Race and Antiquity of the American Indian.” *Scientific American*. July 1926: 7-9; Jonathan Marks, “Science and Race.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 40: 123-33 (1996); Ashley Montagu, *Man’s Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1997; Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York: Routledge Press, 1994; Pat Shipman, *The Evolution of Racism: Human Differences and the Use and Abuse of Science*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994; Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1950*. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1982; George Stocking, *Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> While there is criticism of the term “Indian” to denote native peoples in North America, in my experience, this is a pervasive and acceptable term in predominantly Indian communities in the United States—both reservation and some urban communities. “Native American” is a more widely held to be a politically appropriate term. However, in my childhood experience of the 1970s-1980s growing up alternately between a South Dakota

reservation and the urban Indian community of Minneapolis and St. Paul, “Native American” is not a term that I heard often or learned to use naturally. Particularly among reservation communities where affiliation with a particular tribe is more easily assumed, “tribe” or “tribal” might also be used. Depending on the context, I use each term in this essay where it seems most appropriate.

<sup>4</sup>I use quotation marks around “mixed-blood” because I am uncomfortable with that term that seems to contradict the social construction of race and culture by inferring that they are biologically determined. Some might argue that the term can be used symbolically, but it also reinforces the belief that there are racially distinct bloods that can literally mix or not mix. More recently, gene-talk has been used in addition to or in place of blood-talk and it infers much the same idea—that there are substantial differences in the genes of two racially different individuals that can “mix” to form a multi-racial person. However, given that all human beings derive our genes about 50/50 from each biological parent, we are all “mixed” genetically. Where and how we derive our culture(s) and our race(s) is a much more complicated and less scientifically definitive matter.

**Kimberly TallBear**

# RACISM AND CULTURAL STUDIES: CRITIQUES OF MULTICULTURALIST IDEOLOGY AND THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE

E. San Juan Jr.  
Duke University Press, 2002

Reading E. San Juan Jr. is at once a necessary act of deciphering the possible and realizing, once and for all, the nightmare of its continuing loss. This is the incomparable hope—and ostensibly the terrible specter of hope’s vanishing—that one gains yet again from San Juan’s most recent labor titled *Racism and Cultural Studies: Critiques of Multiculturalist Ideology and the Politics of Difference*. Perhaps such is the desire that only a constantly displaced and beleaguered presence can ever try to fulfill, and witness. Possibly this is why one always finds San Juan, wherever he may find himself in the labyrinth spanning America and the Philippines, striving to speak to power where power may be. For San Juan, this condition of disruption, this state of belligerent in-betweenness thrust upon him by History’s own compulsion is the font of his kind’s wounding. “If history is what hurts,” writes San Juan, “then only the callous or insensitive can escape it.”

History is what hurts indeed and this hurting, interestingly, has its distinctive history. One realizes that this chronicle of ache is something specific to becoming a diasporic Filipino who suffers spells of dislocation in the unfamiliar spaces of transnational capitals—lost in the bright cities of America and elsewhere. In 1942 for example, Carlos Bulosan, Filipino immigrant turned radical labor organizer and writer, inscribed in one of his loving letters that to call oneself a Filipino in America was to summon the sharpness of the name that cut deep into one’s being. Full of hope and sorrow, Bulosan observed that it would take years to blunt the severity of such a tormented designation, to overcome what he felt was its notorious connotation. According to Bulosan, only an immense faith in some collective aspiration can restore to the Filipino name its proper fullness. Fittingly one can declare that this is the history of the dislocated, at once material and felt, whence San Juan obtains the emanations of the possible. Thus at a time when everything that is fondly called home or town or country or continent melts into air, the sole defense against solitude, warns San Juan, is the encompassing solidarity of all rendered homeless and vanished. This vanished history becomes a site therefore, a common one, where those who witness and wish to testify to their history’s vanishing can enact a far-reaching collectivity for the ultimate restoration of the history of the vanished. San Juan suggests that central to the notion of witnessing a vanished history is the Other’s position, indubitably fraught and complex, as the teller of the events of history’s disappearance.

In *Racism and Cultural Studies*, San Juan takes pain to articulate the danger of misrepresenting the Other and, at the same time, the corresponding

necessity to enunciate the representation of the same. San Juan cites here the example of Nobel Prize-winner Rigoberta Menchú, a Quiche Indian from Guatemala whose classic testimonio *Me Llamo Rigoberta Menchú y Así Me Nació La Conciencia* has come under ruthless attack from the likes of anthropologist David Stoll for its supposedly bogus character. San Juan admits that at the heart of the question of knowledge is the problem of what is real, legitimate, and relevant. “Much more than this, however, in the secular/technological milieu of late modernity, what concerns us,” clarifies San Juan, “is the usage to which such knowledge, whether of the natural world or of society, is put.” Needless to say, it is imperative to lay bare the procedures of such and such knowledge’s deployment and articulation: who, for instance, speaks now? For whom? For what purpose? More importantly, San Juan suggests the inevitability of attending “to the problem of power, the knowledge it produces and that legitimates it, the uses of such knowledge in disciplinary regimes, and its mutations in history.” San Juan makes an immediate and significant correspondence here and locates this problematic of knowledge production within the similar mechanism of the controversy that the American area studies specialist Glenn A. May has recently instigated. May accuses generations of Filipino nationalist historians of doctoring certain documents and attributing them to the Filipino mass revolutionary hero Andres Bonifacio. In other words, May implies that a whole revolutionary tradition is constructed on the lies of nationalist historians in order for them to render coherent the heroic aura of Bonifacio as an invented symbol of the masses, the sham quintessence of the people’s struggle for self-determination. For San Juan, the assaults on testimonios like Menchú’s and on symbols of nation-states like Bonifacio become symptoms themselves of American racial polity’s internal political antagonisms that reproduce and make manifest the overall unconscious narrative of U.S. interventionist policy. Accordingly, such attacks on people of color, silenced for centuries, and on their capacity to speak for themselves make the Other’s articulation all the more fundamental and decisive. The question then, is no longer what is true but what is authentic, ultimately, for the uses of the people and valid, in the end, according to the needs of their struggle. As San Juan argues, “the purpose of speech is not just for universally accepted cultural reasons—affirming their identities and their right of self determination—but, more crucially, for their physical survival. Such a capacity to speak entails responsibility, hence the need to respond to questions about ‘truth’ and its worldly grounding.”

Certainly San Juan is bound to validate the speech of the Other because such an affirmation is profoundly fundamental to his position as a “third-world” academic who speaks to power in power’s own terrain: a seditious body in the belly of the beast, as it were. San Juan, therefore, is justifiably the spectral figure of liminality fading in and out among the flashing images of what the Philippines must be and what America is not. As San Juan cogently maintains: “Ultimately, Filipino agency in the era of global capitalism depends not only on the vicissitudes of social transformation in the United States but, in a dialectical sense, on the fate

of the struggle for autonomy and popular-democratic sovereignty in the Philippines...” The evident usefulness of this dialectical positing of the process of emancipation, one that neither divides the contingency of the local from the collective nor reifies such categories, lies in its envisioning of the collective that recognizes the permanent possibility of multiple collectivities. It is one of San Juan’s virtues that even as he is made distant from the country of his beginnings, he persists to remember his people’s democratic aspirations that are not entirely separate or entirely different from his own: necessarily mutual but not necessarily the same in other words. San Juan’s example reminds us, thus, that the engagement between center and periphery and between periphery in center and center in periphery, far from being unproductive and ambiguous, is in fact a functional and purposeful one if not completely crucial. San Juan’s presence in the imperial center, accordingly, does not make his politics less. As a matter of fact, San Juan’s advocacy of a Filipino agency in the time of global capitalism serves as a point of antagonism precisely because it is at this moment where categories of culture and race interfuse. As the globalization machine globalizes its desire via culture among other things, it simultaneously localizes the experience of Otherness. Interestingly, San Juan himself demonstrates this condition: a “third-world” academic and at the same time a person of color in a transnational space. As such San Juan’s experience is indubitably bound up with the process and practice of culture and “race,” immediate to the vehemence of their effects. Not surprisingly, one identifies the preponderance of the question of “race” in San Juan.

The structure of “race,” without a doubt, delineates the everyday life of people of color like San Juan in a way that is achingly felt and eviscerating. This everyday experience of “race,” needless to say, is not the kind of everyday beloved of tenured philosophers but the day by day of the daily, like clockwork. To illustrate the extent of such an everyday anxiety stemming from an experience of “race,” it is worthwhile to recall here San Juan’s case regarding the violence of institutional racism. Recently, San Juan resigned as Chair of the Department of Comparative American Cultures (CAC) at Washington State University (WSU). In a letter to the editor published in the 29 May 2001 number of the *Asian Reporter*, San Juan (2001) cited various reasons for his resignation. Among these is racism, as San Juan claims. He states further, “all the WSU claims of supporting ethnic diversity and education to promote diversity ring hollow—mere lip-service, empty propaganda... Racism, subtle and covert, pervades WSU. This is of course,” contends San Juan, “a reflection of the larger society.” In spite of and precisely because of this institutional racism, San Juan maintains in the same letter that it is the character of Ethnic Studies departments like CAC to position themselves as oppositional and critical in their examination of “race” and ethnicity. It appears thus that Ethnic Studies departments are inherently utopian in that they always imagine a sense of space and time different from what currently exists. One may safely infer from San Juan’s pronouncements that one’s subjugation because of “race” serves as a personal though not an individual site where the methodology



of “race” and the ways of its functioning can be magnified and analyzed as a system. That is why San Juan elaborates extensively in *Racism and Cultural Studies* that “race” as a mode of recognition is instantaneously implicated in the structures of power and privilege in any type of social formation. As San Juan explains: “Its signifying power comes from the articulation of a complex of cultural properties and processes with a mode of production centered on capital accumulation and its attendant ideological apparatuses to rationalize iniquitous property relations.” In other words, class, gender, and other social and symbolic relations function collectively in order to mediate, or more crucially substantiate, the latency of “race.” One, correspondingly, becomes more aware of one’s color as one realizes that one lives with countless others with the same skin in a community ghettoized by dispossession, removed from the ways of one’s country left behind and haunted, quite infinitely, by the scented memory of homeland’s winds, fields, mountains, beasts, fishes, and seas. One observes, hence, that by dialectically merging the questions of lived culture and “race” San Juan effectively unifies the penultimate utopias of the politics of recognition and the politics of redistribution without necessarily erasing the productive antagonisms and contradictions that inhere in these two seemingly opposed but mutually productive systems. San Juan: “We need to examine not only the diverse cultures of ethnic groups vis-a-vis the dominant society, the solidarities and conflicts among them, but also how ethnicity itself is linked to and reproduces the market-centered competitive society we live in; how ethnic particularisms or selected cultural differences are mobilized not only to hide systemic contradictions but also to defuse the challenges and resistances integral to them.” It is disconcerting indeed to realize that the notion of difference so central to the struggle of people of color has been co-opted and evacuated of its oppositional potential, even ghettoized and reduced to rituals of empty recognition. This is no more apparent than in the example of Ethnic Studies departments in the university. Used as emblems of political correctness, San Juan writes that such departments are made in the end to validate the ideological rationale of the university, and by extension that of the neoliberal state in order to conceal the structural contradictions of a racial polity such as the United States of America.

It becomes imperative therefore to engage in what San Juan calls a critique of institutions as well as of the political economy of differences built in the material histories of interrelated groups, classes, and sectors within a global field of conflicting political forces. It goes without saying that a radical cognition of culture is fundamental to this performance of resistance. A culture that is able to demolish the house of established meanings and imagine new collectivities, one that redeems the Other from the unkindness of othering and envisions an emancipative future at the hour of the interregnum. San Juan readily concedes for example that a new “cultural war” has swept the United States and that this clash “involves antagonistic set of norms, values, and beliefs expressed in institutional and discursive systems open to differing critiques and interpretation.” In what way, then, can culture be located as a site for maneuver and positioning? What explains the fact that culture

has performed critical tasks in the scheme of the present battle? Definitely the value of culture in the current “cultural war” lies in its indispensable efficacy for those who are constrained from actively participating in a war of maneuver. Thus San Juan contends that culture in its numerous countenances—say performative, popular, transmigrant, and so on—becomes the key matter, if not the strategic locus of ideological and political battles. If culture is a relational site of group antagonisms characterized by permanent dialogue, then the ideal object of inquiry, suggests San Juan, is cultural production and practice. Certainly the notion of cultural practice is at the heart of San Juan’s theory in such a way that San Juan hazards putting forward the idea, even if it may seem unacceptable and outrageous to his peers, that Ethnic Studies program may have to be phased out eventually in order to give way to other more urgent modes of resistance such as teach-ins inside and outside the university, or organizing movements. Other critics will no doubt sneer at San Juan’s proposition and will perhaps mouth Harold Bloom’s admonition that hypocritical Marxists critics, as the magisterial Bloom describes them, should abandon the impertinence of the academy and go live out there to toil among the factory workers. But no. San Juan’s expression of solidarity confirms all the more his character as a “third-world” intellectual in the center of the knowledge industry who has not forgotten the disemboweling paradoxes that unfold daily—as surely as the exodus of close to 2,500 Filipino bodies seeking employment or migrating elsewhere in the world every day—in the country of his beginnings. San Juan’s comradeship is therefore nothing short of a testimony to the inspiring durability *and* viability of his “third-world” politics. If San Juan’s politics strikes other “first-world” intellectuals like Bloom as something tremendously out of sense, it is because San Juan goes against the very grain of what we have come to see, in the context of our present society, as “common sense.” It is without question that capitalism has so permeated and disciplined our desire, our most cherished and held secret wish fulfillment, in ways beyond counting that we have become inured to the scandal of its apparent disproportion. What San Juan does is to work against this form of control and forgetting—what he does is to refuse to adhere to this idea of “common sense.”

Rightfully, San Juan’s refusal of this “common sense” extends to his important critiques of multiculturalist ideology and the politics of difference as a kind of “common culture.” Following Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek’s notion that multiculturalism is the cultural logic of transnational capitalism, San Juan intimates that a multiculturalist ideology may just be a politically correct form of terrorism. For San Juan, the gospel of multiculturalism obscures the uneven power relation that obtains in a profligate idea of pluralism—that differences are permissible as long as the reigning dispensation is able to control these differences by containing them as an undisruptive complex of disciplined differences known also as a “common culture.” Another concern for San Juan is what he deems as the compromising character of the liberal brand of multiculturalism. As San Juan puts it: “This pragmatic species of multiculturalism, color-blind and gender-blind,

elides the actual differences in systemic power relations immanent in the lived experiences of communities, peoples, and nations. In fact it apologizes for the institutional racism, sexism, heterosexism, and overall class exploitation that prevail, sanctioned by the instrumentalities of government and the realpolitik of international agencies.” Thus it may be said, discloses San Juan, that liberal multiculturalism legitimates and supports the status quo. This vogue of identity politics, in other words, does not really address the fundamental questions of status and class. Moreover, the ethos of a liberal multiculturalism works in fact to organize differences in such a way as to render them docile and malleable. Consequently, it undermines and neutralizes any attempt to interrogate systematically the systemic process inherent in the logic of multiculturalism as, ultimately, a function of transnational capitalism. A systemic violence, thus, necessitates a systemic analysis. Hence San Juan questions the underlying purpose of anti-teleological visions of Derridean deconstruction, Foucaultian genealogy, and Lyotardean anti-totalism. Whose interests, asks San Juan, do they serve?

It is most fitting therefore that in San Juan’s desire to restore the telos of the future, its inevitable project and dream, he returns to the scene of the diasporic Filipino whose agency disseminates silently yet surely from the boondocks to the cities of the world. Recognizing the inadequacy of ideas of postcolonial syncretism and hybridity in illuminating the problem of forced and at the same time government-encouraged diaspora of Filipino migrant workers that reached nearly 4.8 to 7.7 million bodies in 2000, San Juan inquires into how diasporic Filipinos can be conceived of as ethnic cosmopolitans who can assert their integrity and dignity and overcome their prostituted, quarantined, and stigmatized collectivity. San Juan properly acknowledges that the Filipino diasporic consciousness is a peculiar species for it is not preoccupied with returning to the roots of its existence where shared histories and monuments of its past are recollected and exalted. This peculiar diasporic consciousness, San Juan observes, “is tied to a symbolic homeland indexed by kinship or particularistic traditions that it tries to transplant abroad in diverse localities.” San Juan’s concern here is how to see the possibility of enabling the infinitude of the Filipino diaspora-in-the-making in the context of its specific historical contingencies and in relation to the abiding principle of national liberation being waged in the homeland. In other words, how the aspirations of the geo-political Philippines can meet with the aspirations of the Philippines of the mind, variously conceived and speckled around the globe, in the absolute horizon of a transformative and emancipative theory and practice for all—the enduring theories-practices of struggle, sympathy, and solidarity: *pakikibaka*, *pakikiramay*, at *pakikipagkapwa-tao*. San Juan concedes, however, that these idioms of love and liberation may just be addressing a slowly vanishing audience, his book “a wayward apostrophe to a vanished dreamworld—a liberated homeland, a phantasmagoric refuge—evoking the utopias and archaic golden myths and legends.” But one can say equally that San Juan is actually making a dialogue with an unconscious majority. The mass that will inhabit the singing

spheres of the possible: the spaces of not what will be but those of what must be, justly. Ultimately San Juan and his labor are neither for America nor for the Philippines, but rather, they are for the impending present of the possible.

**Charlie Samuyaveric**

**FORGOTTEN READER:  
RECOVERING THE LOST HISTORY OF  
AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERARY SOCIETIES**

Elizabeth McHenry  
Duke University Press, 2002

*Forgotten Reader* appears to be an apt title for Elizabeth McHenry's in-depth and incisive account of the "historical invisibility" of early nineteenth-century black readers and writers. Yet, *Invisible Reader* might be better, for McHenry's arduous "...task of locating [and piecing together] these widely scattered fragments of African American literature and cultural history..." strongly suggests that preservationists did not value the literature or literary activities of black people. And, though African Americans themselves attempted to save documents, many were lost. With few exceptions, evidence of black literary practices was omitted from the official record of the antebellum literary landscape. Consequently, such historical invisibility has paved the way for the pernicious assumptions about the literacy of African Americans.

A primary assumption McHenry confronts is that black people are "traditionally" weak in literacy skills. Although low test scores highlight the problem persisting over generations, usually resulting from antebellum laws that prohibited literacy among enslaved African Americans and segregated schools that offered less than adequate educational opportunities, only part of the story is revealed. For example, McHenry asserts in her introduction:

According to United States Census data, by 1880 70 percent of the black population was illiterate; by 1910 30 percent of the black population remained illiterate. What these and other figures document is the slow but steady rise in black literacy in the United States in the decades of the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

These statistics bring to mind the struggle for self-representation that has historically plagued African Americans. Therefore, one of the chief objectives for the antebellum black literary societies was to grasp control of the representation of black people.

In challenging the assumption that blacks are traditionally weak in literacy skills, McHenry cogently and provocatively argues:

Although African American expressive art forms developed in the context of a diversity of experiences, the attention of scholars of African American history and literature have largely been arrested by the experience of the southern slave and the fugitive slave narrative.

Focusing on the slave that was forced to be illiterate and situating the slave narrative as *the* representative standard of antebellum black literature have generally caused historians to overlook the simultaneous literary activities of free blacks in the urban North and in the southern cities, like Charleston and New Orleans. While escaped slaves, notably Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, wrote to white northern audiences to protest the inhumane institution of slavery that affected approximately 90 percent of black people, free African Americans used literacy mainly as a tool to prove their humanity to white society, attempting to secure citizenship. As she ardently discusses the complex differences between slave communities and free communities and their varied approaches to resisting white oppression, McHenry maintains one key point: Despite their relatively small population, the experience of free African Americans is noteworthy and underscores the heterogeneity of black communities.

Unfortunately, for a reader who may have already dispelled “the myth of the monolithic black community,” whether in an historical or a contemporary context, McHenry’s point appears to have been made ad nauseam. In many texts regarding educated African Americans, one often encounters the lamentation that society, including black people themselves, denies the individuality of African Americans. However, McHenry’s study unearths the fascinating origin of the myth: From the end of Reconstruction (1877) to the “Red Summer” of national race riots (1919), a “mulatto” aristocracy was considered a separate race apart from “Negroes” until the government removed the category “mulatto” as a racial group from the U.S. Census after 1920. This action disconnected the biracial class from the white ruling class, reinforcing the notion of white racial purity and forcing the light-skinned population to reconnect to the darker masses. Consequently, as McHenry states, “...all African Americans became subject to ever-stricter lines of racial demarcation, and it became increasingly obvious that the tendency of white America was simply to lump all blacks together regardless of their racial heritage, color, or social and economic standing.” This significant bit of history clarifies the phenomenon of “passing,” the decision of many fair-complexioned individuals to “become” white during this period.

The undermined biracial group faced further displacement by the rise of the new black elite that was disinterested in assimilating into the dominant culture. As a result, the cultural priorities and aesthetic values of the two groups clashed. According to McHenry, “...the new black elite increasingly came to value subjects that related to the Negro’s slave and folk past and cultural forms...” Apparently, this divergence in priorities and values contributes to the assumptions about African American illiteracy. As McHenry empathically points out, in valuing oral forms of expression over written forms, African Americans have relegated reading and writing to the margins.

In tracing the historical movement of black vernacular forms of expression (from folktales, sermons, and spirituals to rapping and performance art), McHenry illustrates how African Americans, in defining themselves in terms of their

relationship to their verbal arts, are complicit in reducing their culture to an oral one. Although she acknowledges the pivotal scholarship her senior colleagues (e.g., Henry Louis Gates, Jr.) have done to link the oral tradition to literature and cultural production, McHenry boldly takes them to task:

This work has been critical and salutary. But celebrations of the black oral tradition and black vernacular have unwittingly undermined historical evidence that points to a long and complex history of African Americans' literary interaction, not only as readers of the "canon" of European and European American authors, but as creators and readers of their own literature as well.

It's thrilling to see such a dauntless critique. McHenry's contention should lead to a spirited discourse among her colleagues in African American literary studies and history.

In weaving together the long and complex history of black literacy, McHenry delivers, for the most part, an engaging and enlightening study that fills in some major gaps in nineteenth-century literary history. Chapter 1, "'Dreaded Eloquence': The Origins and Rise of African American Literary Societies," focuses upon the courage and intelligence of free African Americans, who understood the power of literacy and organized to use it to their benefit. McHenry zooms in on specific activities, offering the reader a blow-by-blow account of how members of various organizations used print for self-expression, for development of community and national and racial identity, for self-improvement and moral and intellectual growth, for proof of their intellectual equality, and for the fight against injustice. For instance, in her analysis of David Walker's and Maria Stewart's controversial literary practices, McHenry shows the diligence and force free blacks displayed in using literacy as a political tool.

Speaking of political documents, at this point it would be important to note that McHenry makes a good argument for what constitutes a "literary text" for antebellum black readers and writers: "Although fiction and poetry were included in early African Americans' definition of literature, so too were treatises, declarations, letters, appeals, and, perhaps most significantly, journalism of every variety." According to contemporary criteria, these texts would be considered nonliterary and, therefore, unworthy of scholarly attention. Thus, here's another factor contributing to the assumptions about black illiteracy. As McHenry explains:

It has seemed equally reasonable to assume that because most black people were not in a position to own bound books, they did not read. But rather than bound books, newspapers were the primary sites of publication and sources of literary reading for African Americans in the nineteenth century... These texts survive as both a remarkable record of



the wide variety of writing done by early black Americans and evidence of what they were reading as well.

Historical records attest that the black newspaper became the heart of the antebellum African American community.

In Chapter 2, “Spreading the Word: The Cultural Work of the Black Press,” McHenry presents a stirring account of the coalition between black newspapers and literary societies. The first black newspaper, *Freedom’s Journal*, began in 1827, the *Colored American*, and *Frederick Douglass’ Paper* (which was initially *North Star* also edited by Douglass) followed along with others. While their focus and design might have differed, each paper considered self-representation to be instrumental in determining the future of black Americans and viewed their columns as a venue in which African Americans could learn; publish; debate; shape, promote, and control their own imagery; and, influence public opinion. Autonomous, free from white control, these publications played a major role in fostering self-empowerment for blacks. As Douglass declared, when he published *North Star* in 1847, he set out to:

attack SLAVERY in all its forms and aspects, advocate UNIVERSAL EMANCIPATION; exalt the standard of PUBLIC MORALITY, promote the moral and intellectual improvement of the colored people; and hasten the day of FREEDOM TO THE THREE MILLION OF OUR ENSLAVED FELLOW COUNTRYMEN.

Douglass’ *North Star* and *Frederick Douglass’ Paper* were especially beneficial to black authors during the emergence of American literature. Daringly, he aimed to prove the artistic parity of black and white writers and American and European writers by placing them beside each other. This action sparked lively debate and discussion among the black readership about race, nationhood, intellectual subjects, and current events.

In Chapter 3, “Literary Coalitions in the Age of Washington,” and Chapter 4, “Reading and Writing in the Woman’s Era,” McHenry’s examination of key activities, events, and individuals continue to draw the reader’s attention and verify the existence of black literacy. For instance, Chapter 3 highlights the Boston Literary and Historical Association that staged protests against lynching, Booker T. Washington’s racial policies in 1901, and the showing of *Birth of a Nation* before its Boston premiere on April 10, 1915.

Chapter 4 pays homage to the “literary activism” of the black women’s club movement in the late nineteenth century after Reconstruction, when racial violence and discrimination were rampant. In this section, McHenry praises the members of the Woman’s Loyal Union, who set out to use literature, among other things, to improve the quality of black lives. The organization also supported black writers by establishing “...a library and reading room, where may be



gathered, primarily, works written by colored authors, or those that discuss the race question'." As McHenry shows, the black women's club movement had a major impact on the lives of African Americans in a turbulent time.

Wrapping up the book with a meditation on the powerful club women would have been best, for Chapter 5, "Georgia Douglass Johnson and the Saturday Nighters," runs off course. On the last page, McHenry concludes, "Those at the forefront of literary culture in the 1920s recognized that the work of the smaller literary societies outside New York City and their independent publications were essential to ensuring the success, the overall effectiveness, and the impact of the black arts movement." If McHenry would have remained consistent with the previous chapters by emphasizing the impact of these literary societies on the Harlem Renaissance authors, this chapter would have worked well. Instead, she places Jean Toomer and Georgia Douglass Johnson in the foreground of her discussion, offering intriguing biographies and pointed literary criticism of their works. Although this chapter yields insightful information to readers interested in the literature of the 1920s, the last 43 pages belong in another text.

McHenry fittingly wraps up *Forgotten Reader* with an epilogue that offers a contemporary view of black literacy. She credits Terri McMillan for materializing today's black reader in the eyes of major publishers and sets Oprah Winfrey at the helm of Middle America's current literary movement. Overall, McHenry's research proves influential in debunking the insidious assumptions about black illiteracy.

**Pamela R. Fletcher**

## SELECTED POEMS: 1950-2000

Nathaniel Tarn  
Wesleyan University Press, 2002

When a book such as Nathaniel Tarn's *Selected Poems: 1950-2000*, covering the span of a career at significant length (over 300 pages), is published, you can't help but call it an "event." Tarn's book is one of the major life-collections of American poetry published in 2002 (along with Lorine Niedecker's *Collected Poems*, George Oppen's *New Collected Poems*, and, just recently, Kenneth Rexroth's *Complete Poems*), and its appearance gives palpable relief to have so much of his long-unavailable poetry at hand. Furthermore, for those so inclined, *Selected Poems* gives an opportunity to assess his ambitious, prolific career retrospectively. For me, because of Tarn's distinctive placement between the British and American modernist poetry of the first half of the twentieth century and the post-modernisms that ensued, as well as his personal and academic pursuits of anthropology and religious studies, his volume allows for timely speculation about the value and importance of an understudied feature of poetry in modernity: classification. Through Tarn's writing, I think we can safely call the need to classify in poetry less a feature and more a foundation.

Taxonomy defined the Enlightenment; or, maybe, the reverse, such that taxonomy is Enlightenment's ultimate expression. Rationalism yields to organization, to the desire to classify, arrange, quantify, comprehend through arrangement. Taxonomy in poetry might seem the least poetic thing about it: aspects of meter and rhyme; names of shapes and forms. Looking at modern poetry in English, looking at modernism specifically, we might presume its principal, spectacular features to be those lacking taxonomy: from Poundian sprawl to Williamsian hobble to H.D.-vaticisms, at its best, modernist poetry shuns classification. Or does it?

One of the great taxonomists was Goethe. Strolling the paths of the Villa Giulia, the public botanical garden in Palermo, he came upon an ancient aloe plant, its dinosaur fronds rooted it seemed to him in divine memory. A detailed sketch of the plant shaped in his imagination a holy zoomorph: the *Ur-pflanz*, the proto-plant from which all other forms descended. He published his findings—he considered this a "scientific" discovery—in *Versuch, die Metamorphosen der Pflanzen zur erklären* in 1790, perhaps the first work of a poetics of morphology. Goethe's quest was, of course, purely poetic, utterly romantic, even as it "enlightened." If we've learned anything from Linnaeus, it's that archetype does not yield ancestor: to delineate or discern an imaginary proto-form does not provide a missing link, does not show us a history, even as Linnaean structures insinuate this possibility. Taxonomy is, after all, an elaborate hobby of the mind, like stamp or badge collecting (both of which Tarn does avidly; see, for instance, his essay on habits of collecting, "The Heraldic Vision: Some Cognitive Models for

Comparative Aesthetics,” in *Views from the Weaving Mountain*). Taxonomy doesn’t explain the cosmos even as it allows us to move through it more cogently.

But is this entirely true? The poet wants to explain things; at least, to express them, meaningfully. Even poets schooled in rampant modernism. Tarn, a poet shaped in Goethe’s image, has spent over fifty years writing a poetry invested in the lessons of modernism, yet informed by the disciplines of anthropology and ethnography. Among his teachers in this field was Claude Lévi-Strauss, codifier of structuralism. Radically simplified, Lévi-Strauss’s writings have shown us that the matrix out of which our thought, ideas, culture and above all myths emerge is a series of opposites held in tension. Lévi-Strauss’s structures don’t explain things; however, they express the meaning of things, or at least where meaning comes from. Take myth: in Lévi-Strauss’s system, myths make visible contradictions held inherently in our thought or behavior. For instance, the possibilities of incest revealed in the Oedipus myth. The myth neither explains nor condemns incest; instead, it reveals its contradictory meanings (desire and tragedy, let’s say) so that they can be recognized for the social/cultural structure they provide.

Poets have used myth (or been used by myth) much more often than structuralism. Even Goethe’s botanical writings drip with myth, to speak nothing of *Faust*. A morphologist treats even poetry as a foreign language, creating lexicons and systems prior to understanding. Yet it is the determinations of a post-modern taxonomic imagination in the field of modern poetry in English that makes Tarn so interesting. His poems, carefully and amply selected by the poet himself in *Selected Poems*, are replete with classifications, taxonomies, and languages, from both the “natural” and the “cultural” worlds. Tarn has spent extended amounts of time conducting his poetic researches—like an Artaud with a PhD—in the highlands of Central America, in Burma, in Alaska, in Russia, and most recently in Central Asia, always returning to America, where he has made his home since 1970. In his travels, and in his work, Tarn has kept his observing eye sharply focused, especially on that most ephemeral animal class, birds. An alternative title for this selection might have been “Ornithography.” At one point, in the midst of “Narrative of the Great Animal,” a riveting hymn to Denali from *Alashka*, his book of Alaskan poem- and mythology-collaborations with his wife Janet Rodney, Tarn simply presents a list of birds he’s spied (the Denali parkland, in such proximity to the Arctic, hosts a number of rare passerines and plovers):

our — minute — preoccupations  
under Denali:  
horned lark (American first)  
eagle (repeat); eagle (but immature)  
wheatear (American first)  
phalarope (American first)  
(continue as per notebooks,  
list climbing, x% of total record).

Tarn makes the list-keeper's fetishizing visible here, with his indications of "firsts" and with his "confession" of the length of his list, its necessary presence in what is clearly also his poetry notebook. Introducing this sequence, Tarn emphasizes vision, the sight and insight allowing him to witness:

And, had we not seen this,  
would not have seen, either,  
in any sense of the word "seen,"  
since only this mountain gave the world eyes  
and senses

to apprehend it with

Following the list of birds above is another list, one comprised of "invisibles," which are birds he heard in the Denali wilderness but didn't see there (No slouch, Tarn indicates parenthetically where he spied these birds later in his travels; for instance: "harlequin duck (later: St. Paul)/ arctic warbler (later: Point Hope)," etc.). He completes his list by returning to vision, not as one of the senses, but as insight joined to knowledge:

and the great animal,  
even greater than  
*this* animal,  
(Denali god-beast,  
with hips of stone,  
rock haunches),  
waiting for the next occasion also  
to get us before another sighting,  
another chance at this vicinity  
among the thorns and dangers of this world—  
BUT WE HAVE SEEN IT

and thus, by implication, also the other  
as dark as this is bright...

The resolution of the taxonomic list, Goethe-like, is archetypal, a deified mountain (augmented by the lovely buddhistic image of its "hips of stone"). The "other," at least at this instance of the poem, appears to be the shadow form of Denali itself, its imaginary being rising up in the interior vision of the taxonomer-poet. A pull of opposites held in tension out of which the meaning of his experience arises.

In one of the later meditations that make up the masterful *Architextures*, Tarn declares: "Sure there must be a place from where you can depart. From

where you go into your head toward that other space.” Compelled by this inwardness, which he understands through a metaphor of ascent, the poet’s vision lapses, such that even birds elude his ken, except by their menacing sound:

And our eyes are so blind, the why rattles its cages like a raucous bird to so many a why. If eyes could see, there would be no why—only assent. Up we go into the mountains—feet accumulate by thousands; breath comes short on short; just tying up a shoelace you collapse from great heights. Up there the prayer-flags slap birdless air, songless altitude. Though there is always a raven to croak what seems the time and chat you up with some small prophecy.

As taxonomy requires vision, the visionary requires transformation. Nathaniel Tarn’s poems are transformations of a classifying imagination into visionary utterances.

A few words about the selections here. Despite its generous size (at 335 pages, the book is significant), *Selected Poems: 1950-2000* represents a portion of the poet’s output. Tarn is responsible for over thirty-five volumes of poetry and translation. Nonetheless, *Selected Poems* has a comprehensive feel to it, a sense of a life’s-worth of accomplishment. Some of the books it picks from are in print, such as the magnificent Kabbalistic poem of the Shekinah, *Lyrics for the Bride of God*, or the recently published *Architextures*; but others have long been unavailable, including such early collections as *The Beautiful Contradictions*, *A Nowhere for Vallejo*, and *House of Leaves*, each represented in this volume. Added to this are forty pages of work from the 1990s never before collected. For these reasons alone, *Selected Poems* is worth acquiring. More importantly, this collection of Tarn-the-assembler/morphologer’s poems is a radiant inventory, a testament to the poet’s commitment to a poetry of transcendent experience, mythic understandings, and a collector’s pleasures. Throughout this book, Tarn demonstrates that making it new means *seeing* it new by understanding it newly through a grid of the structuring imagination.

**Peter O’Leary**

## SACRED REVOLUTIONS: DURKHEIM AND THE COLLÈGE DE SOCIOLOGIE

Michèle H. Richman  
University of Minnesota Press, 2002

“This privileged moment is what Durkheim qualified as sacred because it occurs when the group becomes aware of itself as something other than a mere juxtaposition of individuals and as a result forges social solidarity.”

In *Sacred Revolutions: Durkheim and the Collège de Sociologie* Michèle Richman explores the antecedents and descendants of Durkheim’s sociological study of the sacred, tracing its roots to the essays of Montaigne, and its influence on the cultural theory of Georges Bataille, Roger Callois, Michel Leris and other inter-war avant-garde French intellectuals organized under the loose banner of the *Collège de Sociologie*. In turn, she outlines the influence sociology has had on post-structuralist thought as well as cultural and political practice. While the impact of Marxist and Freudian analysis on theory and cultural production is hard to overstate, Richman makes the compelling case that sociology, emanating from the breakthroughs of Emile Durkheim’s “ethnographic detour” in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915), may subsume these spheres of influence, and provide a more appropriate dynamic with which to understand human behavior. In that volume, Durkheim enlists the example of festivals, gatherings, and customs held by Australian Aborigines and other non-western societies to provide pictures of the transformative energies collectives can set in motion. By choosing these examples, Durkheim sought to illustrate the social power of effervescent assemblies in all societies, arguing that in festival, “reality [is] transported into a special world entirely different” from the ordinary or profane, “a special world inhabited by exceptionally intense forces that invade and transform...” To his audience, the Aboriginal culture was exotic and removed from the industrial society of France. To Durkheim, however, it is not the culture’s distance, which calls attention, but instead the sharpness demonstrated by its divisions between the sacred and the profane. For him, the interactions of these equally irreconcilable categories perform the drama of social meaning, both in Aboriginal Australia and Paris. Richman relates other examples of effervescence assemblies elsewhere in Durkheim’s work, including the Dreyfus Affair, and Carolingian scholasticism, which further illustrate his thesis: that society is irreducible to the sum of its parts, and that *it* enables a distinct moral and temporal consciousness in its participants. The group, in communion or communication, provides “what the individual cannot; a consciousness of kind, where individuals are “projected *hors de soi*, beyond their immurement into a recognition... of their ‘imbrications’ with each other.” For Durkheim, this hearth of social forces distributes the sacred, and as such, is the source of moral concepts (including self concept) and even language. The totem for Durkheim does not represent its likeness, but instead is a conceptual form

which has *taken on* social meaning. Durkheim's theory about the consubstantial nature of language in the social is expressed by a quote from a Dakota Indian he employs in *Elementary Forms*: " 'Everything as it moves, now and then, here and there, makes stops. The bird as it flies stops in one place to make a nest, and another to rest its flight. A man, when he goes forth stops as he wills. So God has stopped. The sun, which is so bright and beautiful, is one place where he has stopped. The trees, the animals are where he has stopped and the Indian thinks of these places and sends his prayers to reach the place...' " In other words, the "*wakan...* [Durkheim continues] comes and goes through the world, and sacred things are the points upon which it alights." (*Elementary Forms...*)

In his effort to understand the social, Durkheim was concerned with how the sacred happens, and how it is profaned, or better, how it becomes invested in the ordinary. His sociological revolution is not distinct from the practice of ethnography or study of ethnology and anthropology. These distinctions, which developed out of neo-colonial programs, served only to exile the experiences of the periphery from the experiences of the metropole. Instead, Richman contends, ethnographic exploration is responsible for the sociological revolution in that it requires reflection, it requires seeing the self through the other.

Toward this goal Durkheim and later the *Collège de Sociologie*, drew on ethnographic description as a form of critical analysis. According to Richman, if ethnography is to be put in the service of social critique it is necessary "that ethnographic examples enlisted no longer be treated as a different stage of development." (Durkheim is accused of this, she admits.) "Conversely, the primitive or archaic should not be the object of nostalgic projections or inverted ethnocentrism." (The nostalgia, like kitsch, is fundamentally disempowered by its hermetic nature.) "Furthermore, it is crucial that comparisons not be effected between what appear to be two relatively homogenous social formations... thereby applying or importing the example of one for the purpose of imitation of the other."

The last piece of advice is a soft admonishment Richman issues against Marcus and Fischer's *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (1986), but it is something which would not stand up against the *Collège*. Their examples and comparisons were stark and bold, specifically chosen to make liable a high degree of tension along the sacred/profane axis. For example, in the *Story of the Eye*, Bataille describes a bullfight as "a center of social space where sacrifices occur... a nucleus of violent silence, where the sacred concentration of destructive forces is delineated through the increasingly profane circles drawn around it." Bataille along with Durkheim would also cite the "example of the Irish wake" where the open effervescence of mourning transmutes itself into celebration. The subjects of Durkheimian sociology, however differed from the *Collège* in that the latter seemed more trained on the psychic transformation of the individual. Whereas both camps explored how energies were distributed along the sacred and profane axis changed a group into a community, the *Collège's* declared intention was to explore "the

points of coincidence between the fundamental obsessive tendencies of individual psychology and the principle structures governing social organization,” for instance, how the isolated individual could become a self-conscious (or sovereign) actor. Towards this goal the *Collège* sought out rare, fleeting and violent moments of intimate experience to reveal processes at the very heart of social existence. (“Introduction,” *The College of Sociology, 1937-39*). Sacrifice, eroticism, Paleolithic cave paintings, Dogan ritual, all were investigated by the *Collège*, as they were seen as junctions along this axis, and capable of inducing a social transformation and a *prise de conscience*. Richman describes how Jürgen Habermas reproached Bataille and his followers for stepping outside of modernism: “They remove into the sphere of the archaic... To instrumental reason, they juxtapose, ...a principle only accessible through evocation, be it will to power or sovereignty, Being or the dionysiac force of the poetical.”

Richman’s effort, to tie Bataille and the *Collège de Sociologie* to Durkheimian sociology works to counter this perception—that the *Collège* was exclusively a literary or philosophical society, concerned only with aesthetics and limits of language and thought. Her motive is to display the work of the *Collège* in a way that will open up participation in the study of the social in a way that will open up participation in the study of the social and reinvigorate social science as a means of mediating political crises. She does this by tracing the reception and institutionalization of Durkheim’s sociological imagination.

Richman’s relates a 1911 campaign by Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde to expel the field of sociology from the Sorbonne under the charge that the “new discipline” usurped “the moral precepts imparted through literature to preceding generations and replacing them with the mores” of non-western societies. By subjecting the “high culture” of letters, or the culture of science, to ethnographic description, sociology was seen as destabilizing the aesthetic foundations of French thought, a paradigm, which valorized style over substance. While the campaign had little direct effect on diminishing Durkheim’s influence in the university, Richman’s chapter “Savages in the Sorbonne” provides an allegory for those interested in the interactions “cultural studies” provokes between literature and the social sciences in the contemporary university. For Richman, the “ethnographic detour” is the beginning of deconstruction in that it complicates the reductionism of what Durkheim called *simplisme*, the detached analysis of culture based on universal measures. By the 1930’s the study of “effervescent assembly” was being replaced by a greater attention to the structural critiques of institutions and the rise of a Parsonian sociology that “took the individual as real or actual, whereas the social was ultimately devalued as an epiphenomenon.”

Richman also relates the contest of Gustave LeBon, whose *Le psychologie de foules* [*The Psychology of the Crowd*], diverted sociology’s understanding of assemblies by overlaying the qualities and characteristics of an individual’s emotions on to the group. She asserts that LeBon’s thesis may have been informed by political intentions, exposing his conservatism as motivation to



“denounce socialism as mass hysteria.” This being so, the popular appeal of *The Psychology of the Crowd* continues to this day, eclipsing the transformative energies of effervescent mass assemblies by projecting the psyche onto social phenomena.

For the *Collège de Sociologie*, “the exploration of the psyche” was “irreducible to individual pathologies.” Richmond writes that this was why many of the participants were dissidents of the surrealist movement (a movement to which they were indebted). The *Collège* sought to avoid the charge of Habermas, that their encounters with the sacred took place in an imaginary realm which could only be induced or evoked through meditation and trance. The *Collège de Sociologie* postured itself as a scientific community, much like Durkheim who insisted that the social exists, and by opening it up to investigative analysis a critical awareness of its effect on human behavior was possible.

Bataille, according to Richman, enlisted sacred sociology to gauge the demise of collective experience in modern society. One example, on the history of slaughterhouses, elucidates this process. The movement of the arena for the slaughter of animals from temples to festivals to markets to factories, where upon the animal is distributed in cellophane to individual shoppers, moves from a highly ritualized performance to a profane or ordinary occurrence. Paralleling this movement, from one arena of slaughter to the next, is the incidence of progressively less social cohesion at each change, terminating in the anomic and alienating experience of meat dispensing vending machines. But it is not that the sacred has been eliminated, or even that it has been converted to the profane. According to the *Collège de Sociologie*, eruptions of an effervescent quality are permanent social phenomena of the lived experience. Nolie Vialles in a recent book, *Animal to Edible* (2002), relates this. For Vialles, ritual continues when animals are slaughtered, even through the process of factory meatpacking and marketing. Instead of prayers and honors of sacrifice, Vialles contends, tensions between the profane and sacred produce “vegetalising metaphors” which transform the process of social consumption and the individual dining experience.

Richman concludes with a Postscriptum entitled “Effervescence from May ’68 to Present.” Here she asserts that theories of the *Collège de Sociologie* were vindicated by the effects of the effervescent events of the 1968 “revolution” in Paris. These, she writes, amounted to a “totalizing character of the events” which were credited with permanently changing social relations in the society. She also invokes Victor Turner’s *The Ritual Process* (1969), which argues, as she does in this volume, that social scientists and others have overly invested in the static notion of social formation and have neglected the process of social change.

*Sacred Revolutions* is an important work, for it uncovers Durkheim’s contribution to critical discourse, while demonstrating that ethnographic awareness can continually affirm the human community and the dignity of the social self by locating the volatile kernels of the sacred scattered across the landscapes of our disillusionment and multiple layers of predetermined rationalism. ’

**David Michalski**

## FROM THE WARRING FACTIONS

Ammiel Alcalay  
Beyond Baroque Books, 2002

Ammiel Alcalay's latest book of poetry, *from the warring factions*, comes up twice in a Google search among dozens of links to information about and *from* warring factions that span the globe. Peru. Afghanistan. Somalia. Ireland. East Timor. Congo. Rwanda. Angola. Columbia. Bosnia. How does one respond? From afar? What about other factions we reckon with? The personal? The poetic? How do we distance ourselves while a commodified version of war enters our living rooms as discrete dispatches from the front—articulated and framed by CNN? *from the warring factions* is a detailed interrogation of how history collides and accumulates around us. It documents what we regard and remember, how we remember it, and what we discard or silence. *from the warring factions* is an intricate meditation on what it means to be part of the *act* of humanity—what it is to witness our collective history, regardless of our longitudinal, latitudinal, political or cultural fix.

*from the warring factions* is a form of translation. It exhumes narratives and histories in a book of poetry which is not afraid to delve directly into the political. While it deals largely with the genocide in Bosnia (the dedication reads: “for Srebrenica”—the site of the massacre of 7,000 Bosnian Muslims in 1995), it widens in scope as an indictment of human atrocity stretching back to the Romans and Greeks. Alcalay remarks in the insightful interview/coda with Benjamin Hollander, “...I was not writing about something that happened ‘over there.’ This has always been the problem of sojourns – one does not always look at the ground upon which one, or all of us, is standing.” *from the warring factions* places the reader inside ideas of situating. “Inhabiting the world means there is no “other” not already in us, no capacities outside the human that can be attributed to anything outside what we ourselves are individually and collectively capable of.” The first section, “Old Bridge,” opens up ideas of placing, of fixing—in time and space—where we are, who we are, and how it informs our complicated present.

Miró is in The Museum of Modern Art.

Miró is in Sarajevo.

A famous playwright is on stage at Symphony Space and over the air on NPR.

The announcer calls me twice during a break to find out how to pronounce the name Izeta.

Izeta is Miró's wife.

They have a dog.

It is December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1993.

The conundrum of situating veers into deeper histories a few pages later. Through fluid shifts in perspective, location, and temporality, *from the warring factions* locates us as it implicates the ground we walk on as a largely ignored site of genocide. Using Native American imagery and text, Alcalay illustrates the subtle quieting of history; here in the land we call America:

my neighbor found an arrowhead in  
his backyard 385 10<sup>th</sup> st. Brooklyn

Complicated surfaces contain the subterranean history of our inherited, named world:

our park just souvenir feathers drawn across states skin taut  
across manifest destiny listening ear to the ground for what  
isn't there evidence of beauty evidence destroyed everywhere  
desire and hunger taxis with amulets evoke wounds across  
time within earth underground too slow to penetrate too  
late to spawn such a chaste upbringing such sheltered  
accents no language escapes

Beyond Baroque Books has designed a beautiful textual object in *from the warring factions* that maintains aesthetic integrity while steering clear of the precious. A grainy black and white photograph of Alcalay's childhood backyard in Massachusetts wraps the book; his baby carriage is visible tucked into the garage that served as his father's studio and the site where Charles Olson, Vincent Ferrini, Mary Shore, and other Gloucester luminaries gathered for parties. Inside, a second photograph of an open door appears to reveal a courtyard or street. It's remarkably ambiguous. It could be an adobe courtyard in New Mexico or Spain. It might open onto a street in Algeria or Iraq. In actuality, it's the courtyard to Alcalay's former home in Jerusalem from the 1980s. These shifting landscapes, this ambiguity of *situating*, and the placement of the self within contradictory converging worlds is significant. *from the warring factions* cinematically constructs a careful interrogation of what it means to place oneself in relation to human history. It examines how poetry might articulate the only cogent response to complicated layers of self, culture, language, and our shared experience of war—regardless of which faction we claim as our own.

Ammiel Alcalay is a poet, translator, critic, scholar and insistent voice for investigating and documenting neglected narratives, literary and historical. He has published internationally. Alcalay spent most of the 1980s living in Israel

and maintains strong personal and professional relationships with people in Bosnia, Israel and other parts of the so-called Middle East. He has actively used translation as a tool for inculcating American literature with global voices of resistance. His extensive work in translation, including books such as Semezdin Mehmedinovic's *Sarajevo Blues*, and Josè Kozer's *Projimo's / Intimates*, navigates the realms of possibility between languages and among cultures. *from the warring factions* effectively expands the idea of what American poetics might encompass:

I've looked for work that I would like to have seen somebody write here, but they can't, or haven't, or wouldn't be able to because the circumstances for that writing don't yet exist – that is, there hasn't been any kind of collective, historical moment to use as a reference point.

Divided into five sections, *from the warring factions* employs an extensive textual sampling from diverse sources: John Wieners, the Quran, UN Documents, Emily Dickinson, Black Elk, Virgil, Hippocrates, Hannah Arendt, Chaucer, Lisa Robertson, and his own writing going back, in some instances, twenty-five years. The final section of the book, "A Note on Materials and Processes," provides a fascinating survey of the source texts. This is significant in several ways, particularly in thinking about *from the warring factions* as an extension of Medieval Hebrew poetry called *shibbutz*, which means "to embroider, inlay, ornament." Alcalay cites ancient Near East poetic traditions as strong influences on his early writing style. This foundation is evident in this latest book, which employs lines of lyricism, prose and what might be called postmodern, innovative, or avant-garde formal choices.

As a conscious investigation, or testimony, of genocide, Alcalay uses specific formal choices for attributing lost narratives to individuals. By including lines inside quotation marks, as well as tacitly referencing the actual documents which served as source texts for these sections (UN documents, documents from the International War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague and other site-specific records of the genocide in Bosnia), Alcalay maintains both his own integrity as well as demarcating respect for the voices of the unnamed individuals whose suffering we are drawn into. He effectively draws a distinct line to ideas of who speaks, for whom, and how, and the implications of such an act, as a poet and cultural worker. Through shifts in form, style and content, *from the warring factions* implicates complexities of what we might remember and how poetry can delineate spaces of cultural dislocation.

The second section builds on meditations of place, placement, and history kept in "no place / not rome." Using the text of forensic anthropologist William Haglund, and responding to Jerry Estrin's poem, "Rome, A Mobile Home," Alcalay shapes ideas of the collective ownership of our history: as human beings in a shared world, a shared context.

## O ROMEO

where art thou  
if I kiss this wall  
does it not stain this soil  
these bricks *my* palestine  
these bricks *my* olive-trees these  
bricks *my* figs these bricks  
*my* wild thyme

Alcalay's idea of collectivism is perhaps larger in span and scope than what most poetries ever achieve. By working with multiple source texts, *from the warring factions* returns us, again and again, to questions of where are we now (geographically, politically) from where have we come, and what/who are we among? What do we construct from this story of our shared dispossession? And dispossessing? It is impossible to read *from the warring* factions without a side cast glance toward what is happening, right now, in the historical regions that are cited in the book. What are we witnessing, now? And how do we choose to respond? The irony of the following passage is hard to overlook, in light of the current situation in Iraq: ““they should be soaking in oil” / “olives?” / “birds?” / “A line drawn in the sand, a line / To arrive.””

The sections “migration/hegira” and “borrowed time” widen in both time and space, cutting across centuries and cultures to describe, to name the dailiness, the minutiae of our shared horror. Alcalay collages Native American and Ancient Near Eastern material with documentary precision to explicate the nouns of diaspora. As if genocide could be ordered, rendered sensible. As if objects could extend us further *into* the lived experience of war: ““not so much the house but the roses: / they tear me apart.”” How does one approach speaking, writing about genocide in the midst of our media blinded and violence blunted culture? From UN documents, the nouns of incursion:

lillies scarves olive fatigues beards and green berets black  
clothing with a round unit patch on the sleeve a black  
swan penetrating a woman lying on her back Special Unit  
in white letters above the picture and underneath in black  
letters the words Black Swans no insignia except a metal  
plate on the shoulder bearing the name Captain Dragan

What Alcalay achieves, through the use of official documents, cutting and pasting source texts into a collaged world of history, of placing, of questioning, is the creation of a poetry that refers back to itself, as a made thing—an intentional examination, exhumation, of these facts. And a text which ultimately debunks any notion of whether poetry can matter. It also raises questions of history—how

much of what we currently accept as history is also a made thing? Ammiel Alcalay has created a work which posits a confluence of Eastern and Western history and our personal situating within our collective history. Have we become so inured to the sheer bulk of our history that we engage in selective acquisition of the facts? Selective cultural memory? Factioned poetics? Or, do we, in the United States, accept a diminished vision of possibilities for what poetry is allowed to contain? In *from the warring factions*, an insular glance at history and humanity as kept through language is impossible. The personal, the poetical, the political is always present.

Coursing throughout everything is the simple question of transmission – how does memory survive? To what materials do we entrust it?

If transmission is to become more than media sampling, it will require texts such as *from the warring factions* to assert critical cultural understanding and engage us in a process of assessing our accumulated past and our potential future together. Ammiel Alcalay's work is a testimonial strategy for how we might approach our legacies of history, humanity and poetry with a sense of looking forward, back and all around – simultaneously.

**Jane Sprague**

## RE/COLLECTING EARLY ASIAN AMERICA: ESSAYS IN CULTURAL HISTORY

Edited by Josephine Lee, Imogene L. Lim, and Yuko Matsukawa  
Temple University Press, 2002

How do we construct a collective cultural memory when what seemingly binds us (“Asia” “America” “history”) is often complicated by contested and/or misunderstood ways of re/discovering and re/framing the past? Is the past really ever passed? *Re/collecting Early Asian America: Essays in Cultural History* is a book that challenges us to understand the heterogeneity of Asian America and its origins which the editors define as a period spanning the nineteenth century and the 1960s.

Edited by Josephine Lee, Imogene L. Lim, and Yuko Matsukawa, the book is separated into four Parts, with five essays in each. The sections—Locations and Relocations, Crossings, Objects, and Recollections—present the essays along a loose path mimicking a “well-known trajectory: the pattern of immigration, settlement, objectification, and self-expression that is frequently evoked in models of ‘minority’ or ‘immigrant’ culture in the Americas.”

What sets this book apart is its determination to go beyond the obvious and over-traced broad analytical paths that pose race/class/gender against a normative and dominant whiteness. The essays within re/collect and reinterpret lesser-known documents (and secondary research), locations, and phenomena specific to early Asian American history, such as the master narrative that tells a story of unidirectional immigration, or that ethnography of Asian American “communities” was/is most effectively performed and explicated by “insiders.” The essays also disrupt and challenge positivist, earlier recoveries that created celebratory paradigms of Asian America by, for example, placing literary works in a canonical grid by emphasizing sameness at the expense of understanding difference.

In “Face-ing/De-Face-ing Racism: Physiognomy as Ethnic Marker in Early Eurasian/American Women’s Texts” Helena Grice gets to the heart of the human boundaries: the body as “a cultural text that can be rewritten to project a particular identity.” Grice explores the construction of the self by deconstructing the way early, prominent Eurasian/Amerasian women constructed semi-Asian selves by reifying (or reacting to reification) of their visible but ambiguous race markers, “Skin color. Hair. Eyes. Body type. Far as most whites are concerned, Chinese are Chinese—for that matter, any Oriental is Chinese—and blacks are black. No difference where they were born or what language they speak,” says Maibelle Chung in Aimee Liu’s recent novel *Face*.

A brief history of physiognomy is given by Grice and its centrality in the annals of racism and racial classification. Though we now are in an era in which race is accepted by social scientists as constructed, by no means does that scholarly

consciousness mitigate the influence of race on almost all aspects of (American) life, both institutionally and in fluid, highly contextualized/located informal social transactions. What is the inheritance for Asian Americans from the phenotypic expression of one's biology and our social and psychological past? Of early Eur/Amerasian women writers, Grice says, "because of their recognition that any theory of physiognomic difference works as an ideological apparatus that preserves both racial hierarchies and stereotypes, and that racism continues to work in as physiognomic currency, many Eur/Amerasian women writers have often investigated the imagined correlation between physiognomy and behavior in their work."

How did mixed-race Asian women writers define and deal with these problematics? What is the task of the racialized ethnic subject in terms of various gazes and glosses? What of any culture/s can or should be appropriated, assimilated, rejected, transformed, ignored? Grice writes about Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong who asked "When subject and sign have both been altered by the gaze of white society, how is a Chinese American writer to represent his/her own experiences?" Grice argues that "The ethnic subject therefore lacks agency to control self-representation; and as the controlling white gaze 'marks' the ethnic subject as ethnic, other, the body becomes the dominant signifier. Thus, being caught in the racializing gaze of another constitutes a crisis of self and self-representation." Grice calls this *specular interaction*, a kind of doubled consciousness well known to Americans of African descent.

Many readers familiar with Asian American women writers know that the dominant white cultural gaze is preoccupying, as is the body, which might be said of many women writers in general. Kristeva said that the woman is where culture and nature collide, and Grice writes, "the Eurasian, like the mulatto/a, constitutes a threat to essentialist theories of racial superiority precisely because, as Nancy Bentley writes in relation to mulattos in antebellum fiction, 'the person of mixed black and white parentage stood precisely at the place where nature and culture could come unbound'." Grice re-analyzes fiction and autobiography by and about Eurasians, such as the then-famous (writing between 1899 and 1925) sisters Edith Maude Eaton (pseudonym Sui Sin Far) and Winnifred Eaton (pseudonym Onoto Watanna) and their preoccupation with miscegenation. While they chose to mask and unmask at different times/places to their advantage, it was not without a sense of contradiction and inferiority—but in their writing they were in control of subjectivity, however fragmented. Grice writes, "It is not surprising that is is not Anglo representations of Eurasians, where there is a vested interest in preserving racial hierarchies and classifications, where we find such rehabilitative writing, nor that it should be the project of Eurasian women themselves to rescue Eurasian subjectivity from association with anti-miscegenation arguments." By addressing the past, Grice contributes a new understanding to the racialized mechanisms of voyeurism, masks, dissimulations,



passing, the technology of racial representation and their consequences for mixed Asian American identities and cultural production.

In “Exotic Explorations: Travels to Asia and the Pacific in Early Cinema,” Jeannette Roan recovers and reinterprets early use of motion picture technology by travel lecturers, especially E. Burton Holmes, who though obscure today was “immensely popular at the height of his career” in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Holmes’s lectures are socio-historical documentation of one popular apparatus by which America’s imperialism (particularly in Asia) was furthered. White Eurocentric supremacy was justified and its cultural superiority reified through touristic image for the entertainment and “edification” of curious, leisure-class Americans.

Roan argues that “Holmes’s enthusiastic embrace of the exotic, the importance to his work of certain Asian and Pacific nations—including Japan, China, Korea, the Philippines, and Hawai’i—and his use of moving-picture technology all had important consequences for the store of representations of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the American imaginary.” Roan describes Holmes’s visit to Hawai’i “at the very moment the nation was officially annexed in Washington,” and how his subsequent lecture belies “a Hawai’i conceived entirely in relation to the fulfillment of U.S. needs and desires, as an idyllic tourist paradise filled with ‘local color,’ and as a mid-Pacific military command post. What is extraordinary about Holmes’s lecture is the way in which it recognizes the former status of Hawai’i as a sovereign nation, even as it participates in the project of transforming Hawai’i into one of the United States.”

The leisure and the pleasure of the colonizer as he paces himself through the colonized or subjugated nations as though it were a savory meal is one of a mediated reality in which places are seen through the unconscious veil of privilege and mobility. Writing about Japan, Holmes becomes the “author” of a kind of static fairy tale presented for his reconsumption: “Through that land of magic pictorial beauty I travelled... feasting my eyes on scenes that had for me the charm of something *deja vue* (already seen) as Pierre Loti put it.” Roan notes that “this repetitive and referential structure of travel narratives is, of course, a key mechanism of what Edward Said has famously theorized as ‘Orientalism’.”

As a whole, *Re/collecting Early Asian America* is remarkable because it highlights rather than homogenizes troubling questions about the who, why, what, and how of early Asian American history. The way we continue to ask (or not ask) these destabilizing and re/visioning questions has potential for profound transformative effects on the social, cultural, and material way that Asian Americans remember their geneology. From those collective memories we may more fully re/inscribe the multiplicity of our pasts/futures.

Sun Yung Shin

## PATAPHYSICS: THE POETICS OF AN IMAGINARY SCIENCE

Christian Bök

Northwestern University Press, 2002

Christian Bök's exquisite critical study of *Pataphysics* (Jarrry's character Faustroll spells the word with an apostrophe) successfully carries out a number of very difficult tasks. It presents what might be called the anti-philosophy of composition of the flamboyant Alfred Jarrry (1873-1907), shows why it represents poetry's own kind of critique of metaphysics, and provides a survey of three avant-garde movements which took up Jarrry's legacy: Italian Futurism (especially Marinetti), French *Oulipo* (Queneau, Perec, Roubaud) and the Canadian Jarrryites (McCaffery, Nichol, Dewdney). What allows Bök to sketch such an international map of peripataphysics in slightly over 120 pages (!) is an ingenious theory of exception bringing together heterogenous elements long enough for his readers to realize what is at stake in pataphysics—before they (elements and readers alike) dissipate in 'ethernity,' Jarrry's collapsible nomer for the continuum between fiction and reality.

Pataphysics is defined by Jarrry as "the science of the particular," and as such it belongs with the *Journal of Irreproducible Results*, or the *Museum of Jurassic Technology*, Bök opening the book with the latter. Such playful spoofs of scientific institutions raise nonetheless what Bök rightly sees as an unrecognized "theorematic" issue obscured by the simply "problematic" question of whether Jarrry is nuts. The theorematic quandary, which Borges (and Foucault quoting Borges) knew very well, as Bök indicates, lies in the relation of science to the particular. Specifically, the problem is the uneasily constitutive reliance of science on the singular, the hapax, the exception in order to construct a rule that will then wipe said particulars. This reliance is uneasy because there would be no science, no will to truth or epistemophilia, if it weren't for the peskiness of particulars in the first place. In other words, as Bök elegantly puts it, "The praxis of science always involves the parapraxis of poetry." Pataphysics not only admits the pesky particulars, it reserves the realm of literature to their quasi scientific cultivation and preservation. This is why pataphysics is neither a science nor not a science—but the poetics of an imaginary science, as Bök's subtitle aptly puts it.

Because Ubu rather than Faustroll has been generally considered Jarrry's exemplary creature, pataphysics has been received as a grand political satire rather than as a radical contamination of the claims of physics or science. To be sure, Ubu still rules in our age of Bush's (*Ubush's*) confiscation of the throne of Poland with the truly Ubuesque clause of a democracy where less votes is more. But everything was decided, let's not forget, by the physics of chad pregnancy which is entirely Faustrollian. Bök mentions Faustroll's discovery, as he shrinks to the size of a pea, that at this scale the capillary surface of water makes it a solid. If voting, like the mechanics of fluid, is essentially a matter of positioning (spatial or social), there is no universality of laws. Scale belongs to perspectival esthetics,

not universal truth, and pataphysics then opens a Nietzschean aeon. In 1894, Jarry writes: “Today we behold, alas, a universal substitution of Science for Art, and it is the Machine that may achieve the great *Geste Beau* in spite of our esthetic will...” (*Selected Works of Alfred Jarry*, eds. Roger Shattuck and Simon Watson Taylor, New York: Grove Press, 1965 [still the reference for Jarry]). Such a politico-esthetic regime of machination, mutated into our situation of today, motivates renewed appeals to pataphysics.

Bök distinguishes this Faustrollian pataphysical critique of physics from the anti-rationalism of avant-garde poetic movements that preceded or followed it, like Symbolism or Surrealism. Pataphysics, he asserts, is not irrationalist (as he perhaps a bit hastily makes Breton to appear) so much as surrationalist. This is a trait pataphysics shares precisely with the potentiality for errancy always inherent in a scientific law: not only do laws miss existing exceptions (water at ambient temperature is much less ‘liquid’ for Lilliputians), but they must generate a variety of objects of exceptionally fictive status to insure their universality, i.e., extra planets, ether, dark matter, the unconscious, dimorphic genders, ‘health,’ or even ‘electricity.’ A perfect illustration of this is the spectacular downfall of generative grammar in linguistics. The problem wasn’t that generative grammar couldn’t find all the rules presiding to the formation of utterances—it exhaustively did and no utterance was left unexplained. The problem was that, subsequently, it couldn’t formalize the fuzzy meta-rules directing the application and especially suspension of these generative rules. They seem to allow way too many deviant utterances. Scientific rules couldn’t be stopped from being unruly, excessive, neoplastic, ‘poetic.’

Although Faustroll is in epistolary contact with Lord Kelvin, it was Jarry’s early exposure, as Bök points out, to Nietzsche’s perspectivism that lead him on the path of a radical critique of knowledge as will to truth. It is in this sense that Bök can assert that “both thinkers [Jarry and Nietzsche] lay the groundwork for an antiphilosophy, whose spirit of reform has come to characterize such alternatives to metaphysics as the grammatology of Derrida, the schizanalysis of Deleuze, or the homeorrhetics of Serres.” The core of Bök’s argument follows this *dopplegänger* of Nietzsche with Jarry. He demonstrates how pataphysicians have consistently sought to craft very similar kinds of quasi exceptions as those which critics (also indebted to Nietzsche) such as Derrida, Deleuze and Serres have variously theorized as the non-simple, the event or the parasite. This doesn’t mean that pataphysics precedes, announces or does the same as poststructuralism. It means that what poststructuralism does can be done in another key, through another engagement with metaphysics, and was done by the pataphysician text makers of at least three separate movements.

To differentiate between the pataphysical legacies of Futurism, *Oulipo* and the Canadian Jarryites, Bök comes up with two series of distinctions. One, which I do not find particularly helpful because overly schematic, distinguishes four historical phases in “the conflict between science and poetry,” depending on the kind of economy of signs constituting truth. It is the other series which I find

truly enlightening, the characterization of three principal types of exception: variance (*anomalos*), alliance (*syzygia*), and deviance (*clinamen*). Variance or anomaly is the most philosophical and discursive exception. It is based on transgression and thus constitution of the norm, as Nietzsche de/reconstructs it in the *Genealogy of Morals*. The avant-garde is the enactment of the anomaly, not against, but enmeshed with, the bourgeois norm, although it hopes to keep if not evading it at least constantly jarring it. Jarry, Marinetti, Perec, McCaffery all practice distinct oscillations of what might be normatively literary. The second type, alliance or chiasm, has a more cosmic dimension—the *orbi* to the *urbi* of the *anomalos*. What *syzygia* refers to is the astronomical as well as alchemical conjunction of opposites that presides notably to the conflation of metaphysics with pataphysics. It represents as a tension the essential duality or dyad of the exception umbilically tied to the rule it disobeys, showing the universe to be made of relations and collisions, not self-inhering particles or particulars. The principle of the *as if*, which plays a central role in Bök’s exposition of pataphysics, is such a dyad, and as Ricoeur recalls in *The Rule of Metaphor*, the key to metaphoricity is the inaugural formula storytellers of the Azores use: “it was and wasn’t.” The “rational geomancy” of Canadian Pataphysics is the systematic exploration of the dyadic or syzygic nature of what is and isn’t (in) any given text. The third principle Bök outlines, the *clinamen*, quite apart from being the name of Faustroll’s automatic painting machine, is probably the more important, especially in the context of a marked resurgence of pre-Socratic atomism in contemporary currents of counter-deterministic thought (Deleuze, Agamben, Massumi, McCaffery, et al.). Bök defines the *clinamen* as “the unimpeded part of a flow which ensures that such a flow has no fate,” that is, a freely swerving energy path or tropism. Marinetti identified somewhat literally this swerving with the Eureka revelation of his car crash, while the Oulipians seek the *clinamen* in the much more minute dysfunctions of the aleatory constraint with which they generate their texts.

Bök suggests throughout his study how the promise of the *clinamen* generalizes the more restricted Kantian *anomalos* or binomial colliding erotics of the *syzygy*. Yet, I wonder if the corporeal dimension of the *clinamen* of Lucretius or Deleuze is not under-represented in Bök’s account of pataphysics, taking as clue for instance Jarry’s incommensurate love of absinth and the bicycle as generators of borderline kinesthetic events. I would have been curious, in fact, to see Bök cross-reference his theory of exceptions with the heterosexual and masculinist embodiment running through pataphysics. Whether it be Jarry’s *Supermale* martyr (who spectacularly spoofs the emergence of a vitalistic ‘new man’ in reaction to Symbolism’s gynophilia or the new turn-of-the-century visibility of homosexuals), Marinetti’s hyper-violent rhetoric against women and concurrent erotic addiction to (literal) speed, or *Oulipo*’s nerdy asceticism via a fetish for disembodied combinations (the chess player François Le Lionnais is the co-inventor of *Oulipo*), the male body is foregrounded as deflated. What

pataphysicians might share—and they are not all straight males: Stein is certainly a pataphysical sympathizer, and *Oulipo* advertises its (few) female members—is perhaps an inclination to *except* themselves from the hetero-masculinist economy. This could be connected to what might be called a *patacolonial* regime of male embodiment in the carnivalesque, Ubuesque and tyrannical structure of *commandement* recently theorized by Achille Mbembe in *On the Postcolony* (Routledge, 2001). I am less pointing out a flaw or blind spot in Bök's already very capacious study, than showing further horizons it opens onto. One such horizons which Bök explicitly gestures towards is the intriguing genealogy from Jarry to Marinetti, from Marinetti to Khlebnikov and thus Jakobson (as Constructivists and Formalists hung around one another), then from Jakobson to Barthes and Kristeva. This is a puzzling illustration of the dynamic syzygies at play between apparently opposite types of poetry and philosophy—Marinetti and Kristeva!

Bök's book belongs to a fairly new genre of critical writings on poetry, as does Steve McCaffery's also recent but weightier *Prior to Meaning: The Protosemantic and Poetics* (also from Northwestern, 2001). This genre might be characterized as responsible perversions of academic criticism by poet-academics, in the name of the poem as event. Formally subversive academic discourse is nothing new since the late 1970s (think Galop, Ronell, Taylor). Yet by and large, critique is critique whereby literary works are made to serve as empirical terrains of extraction of discourses. Whatever formal contagion from poetry transpires in 'subversive' academic writings is repurposed according to the narrative demands of some (often highly respectable) ideological program or call for self-exposure. In short, the exceptionality of literature is bracketed in order to derive a narrative. Bök, who is also a poet, endeavors to remain open to contagion, what he defines as "a virtually untenable ambiguity between the noetic mandate of scholarship and the poetic license of 'pataphysics.'" This noetic mandate is equivalent to providing a certain kind of story accounting for literary exceptionality, what Crispin Sartwell in *End of Story: Toward an Annihilation of Language and History* (SUNY, 2000) shows to be coextensive with a pervasive demand that we must live cogently in order to live ethically (for Ricoeur and MacIntyre, against whom he pits Kierkegaard and Bataille). Bök's proliferative prose purposefully undermines the putting into narrative of pataphysics: that is its responsible perversity. The poetry of Jarry (including his prose, since this is not a formal opposition), of Marinetti, Perec, Queneau, Roubaud, Bènichou, McCaffery, bp Nichol, or Dewdney swerve through the order of knowledge, constitutive of our episteme, on a par with philosophy's taking on projects and self-instituting programs of study for itself. Bök's *Pataphysics*, and McCaffery's *Prior to Meaning* with which it can usefully be read, point towards the inevitable tropisms emerging from philosophy's search for rules, complicating its and our stories with poetry's pesky exceptions.

Christophe Wall-Romana

## NEGRIUDE WOMEN

T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting  
University of Minnesota Press, 2003

“[T]heir genius and Negritude credentials . . . have been characterized, in the few works that do mention them, as movement midwives rather than architects.” —T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting

“This review, this movement, it was something that had to happen. It happened like that, like a sudden dawning.” —Paulette Nardal

This was my dream (recurring): *I was dressed all in yellow, wandering the streets of Paris. Not wandering because I was lost —I belonged there—wandering as a form of tracery. After every couple of steps, I would lay down a yellow card covered with scribbling—words and spaces. Party invitations. Prophecy. Banana skin. Without an address, I was making a trail to reach me. A black female expatriate, I am smiling, determined. I wake up, Negritude Women before me.*

Let me begin like this:

If you are a professor, a student, or an intellectual curious about international black culture, black feminism, literary theory and history, you should read T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting’s *Negritude Women*. This slender volume (140 pages) is “an essentially female-centered history whose goal is to provide a corrective to male-centered analyses of Negritude.” The five chapters introduce and then singly analyze the intellectual breadth, depth and dynamism of three Martinican women: Jane Nardal, Paulette Nardal and Suzanne Césaire. More importantly and usefully, Sharpley-Whiting includes a glorious appendix of original translations of their work. A recuperation and reclamation of women’s contributions to Negritude, *Negritude Women* reframes the key black francophone movement of the 1930 and 1940s.

Not that I don’t have critiques and questions, or even worse, not that I won’t first connect this text’s project with my own romance and black feminist ardor, but if you need to stop reading now because you have a poem on the stove or you’re planning a new development phase for black consciousness, you get the gist. Get the book.

*banana traces*

The larger dream is about something else. For many years black expatriatism in Paris has loomed as a rite of passage. Black soldiers fought World Wars and came to feel like men. Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, James Baldwin all traveled to Paris to engage and transform African-American consciousness. In

the francophone colonial tradition, scholarship boys Aimé Césaire, Leopold Sédar Senghor and Léon Damas traveled to Paris to study and forge Negritude, a literary, social and political movement that prefigured decolonization and nationalist movements around the world. Or so the story goes. Where are the black expatriate women?

Josephine Baker comes to mind. The banana festooned queen of the night made white modernists like Hemingway sweat. More than any of the black women students, artists or writers who came to Paris (like Augusta Savage or Jessie Fauset), we think of la Baker. And as the diva who ruled the City of Light, her appeal is undeniably alluring. Yet her iconography points to a popular and problematic characterization. In black expatriate experience, black men are creators, and black women are sex goddesses or invisible.

In her 1928 essay “Exotic Puppets,” Jane Nardal writes: “What a deception for him who evokes exotic princesses in your honor, if you were to tell him, just like a little French girl of the middle classes, that you are in Paris pursuing studies that you began over there in the Tropics, in high school”? The deception is not that Nardal aligns herself with the “little French girl” and intellectual pursuit. The deception here is the (white) (male) disbelief in this possibility. The fantasy of black female “exotic puppets” created by and for colonialism and modernism shadows Nardal and me today. While Josephine Baker is not a professed part of her project, I feel her trace; Sharpley-Whiting’s *Negritude Women* tries to dispel Baker’s shadow to offer a different perspective of black female expatriatism.

### *Tracées féminines*

In her introduction “Caliban’s Women,” Sharpley-Whiting retraces the genealogy of Negritude. Briefly examining accepted definitions of the movement, she recalls the neglected work of Suzanne Lacascade and Mayotte Capécia. She introduces us to the Clamart salon of the Nardal sisters and the literary activism of Suzanne Césaire, topics she will analyze more closely in the following chapters. Sharpley-Whiting’s main thesis is clear: these women did not merely participate in Negritude; they created it. She writes:

In correspondence... dated 1960 and sent to Senghor’s biographer... Paulette Nardal ‘complained bitterly’ of the erasure of her and Jane Nardal’s roles in the promulgation of the ideas that would later become the hallmarks of Césaire, Damas, and Senghor. The trio “took up ideas tossed out by us and expressed them [.]” Essentially, Nardal wrote, “we were but women, real pioneers-let’s say that we blazed the trail for them.”

Sharpley-Whiting supports this thesis by beginning her analysis of Negritude not with the conventional benchmark of 1932’s *Légitime Défense* (or the male trio’s acclaimed 1934’s *L’étudiant noir*). In Chapter One, she discusses the 1928 journal *La dépêche africaine*, the *Journal of the Comité de défense*



*des intérêts de la race noire*. With diverse, multi-racial collaborators and input from figures like Rene Maran, Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. DuBois, the journal was popular for its four year run, offering an “interesting patchwork of militant colonial reformism, assimilationism and cultural Pan-Africanism [was] found in its monthly columns.”

Sharpley-Whiting also asserts: The sections of the newspaper entitled “La dépêche politique” et “La dépêche littéraire owed their cultural and literary pan-noirisme to the global literacy of Milles Jane and Paulette Nardal.” Important editors and collaborators on the journal, they were women of means, education and connections whose words circulated around Paris and the black world. “Their race conscious finishing school was the salon of Rene Maran where they met various African American artists and writers such as Augusta Savage, Mercer Cook, Alain Locke, Claude MacKay and Langston Hughes.” The sisters displayed, published and commented on the work of these and other figures in *La dépêche africaine*. They also established a highly influential salon of their own.

### salons

I think a lot of salons as I read *Negritude Women* in Paris. I am there co-teaching the course “Americans Abroad: Expatriate Writers Between the Wars.” Here again the specter of Josephine Baker and white male modernism. Here now the traces of other important salons: Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, Natalie Barney. Here too the realization of other neglected women: Janet Flanner and Sylvia Beach. Here also a pernicious fact about U.S. literary history:

The Nardals transracial, ethnically diverse, and gender-inclusive salon certainly demonstrated a progressiveness that Left Bank salons set up by white American women expatriates who had fled the puritanism of American culture failed to acquire in the 1930s. The salons of women like Natalie Barney and Gertrude Stein in some respects replicated the race/ gender divide they left in America.

So while French writers were frequent visitors to both Stein and Barney’s salons, no francophone blacks were ever reported. Indeed, as Sharpley-Whiting points out, the only African-American to wrangle an invitation to Stein’s salon on Rue de Fleurus was poet Gwendolyn Bennett.

Yet the similarities bear noting. These salons all took place in Paris between the two wars. The description of the Nardal sisters’ salon by their cousin Louis Achilles could certainly apply to both those of Stein and Barney: “They were discovering a common manner of being, of feeling, of hoping and soon, of acting! [ . . . ] A feminine influence set the tone and the rites of these convivial afternoons.” The key difference of course is that at the Nardals’ salon, “they simply called themselves “Black”; they enacted a new racial consciousness in tandem with art and ideas. At the same moment, Anne Spencer’s New Negro



salon in Washington D.C. was doing the same thing.

Négritude *Women* highlights the role of women in the development of modernist literary movements. Across the world, literary women opened new space for discussion and possibility only to have their own contributions overshadowed. We can extrapolate links between modernism, the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude, contemplating complicating factors of race and gender in literary history.

### *New Negresses*

While *Négritude Women* celebrates the significance of salons, Sharpley-Whiting refuses to confine the Nardal sisters to mere hostesses, germinating and circulating (men's) ideas. She will not conflate Suzanne Césaire to mere wife. She reports: "Domestic duties, fiercely independent critical thinking, ethereal beauty and a famous husband all combined to eclipse Suzanne Césaire's literary career." Sharpley-Whiting comes to the rescue, insisting on the intellectual proclivities of these women. While a few short stories by the Nardal sisters are included, none of Césaire's poetry is here. Overall, the work is theoretical, literary historical, both prescient for its own time and surprisingly current.

I have heard horror stories about (black) (male) professors who refuse to include women's theoretical work in courses about black diaspora or culture. Women can tell stories and be theoretical in storytelling (or weaving, etc.), but for real theoretical work we must turn to Fanon, Glissant, Césaire, etc. The commentary and appendix of *Négritude Women* destroy any excuse for professors of international black writing, postcolonial theory, French Caribbean literature, or cultural studies not to including important work by women.

Attempting to build connections between high modernism, the Harlem Renaissance and Négritude, I actually used Nardal's excellent short essay "Black Internationalism" (1928) in my Paris class. An articulation of the new black consciousness emergent after WWI, Nardal imagines "the merging of a Frenchness/Latin-ness and an African/blackness into a new identity, a new self consciousness'." This syncretism disallows the essentialism of Senghor's later Négritude and resonates with both DuBois' idea of double consciousness and Alain Locke's vision of the New Negro.

Jane's sister Paulette continues this theme in her expansive, groundbreaking and utterly neglected text "The Awakening of Race Consciousness" (1932). In this essay, she reconsiders African heritage and the possibility of new pride and diasporic understanding. The optimism of the Nardals sisters' early work is tempered by Suzanne Césaire's lovely rallying cry "The Malaise of a Civilization." She urges other Martinicans to forego literary, cultural and political imitation for new independence. Prefiguring the Créolité movement, her final piece "The Great Camouflage" evokes the hide-and seek of Caribbean identity.

Sharpley-Whiting's chapters serve as introductions and exegeses of these and other texts featured in the appendix. The work is all here, glistening, waiting

to be read, discussed, employed.

*musings*

*Negritude Women* continues the work of Sharpley-Whiting's earlier *Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears*. Yet centering more on the elision of three particular women, *Negritude Women* is closer to Askia Gloria Hull's black feminist landmark *Color Sex and Poetry*. Focusing on Georgia Douglas Johnson, Anne Spencer, and Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Hull's text approached gender, and genre, circulation and reception in the Harlem Renaissance. While Hull largely employed literary biography, Sharpley-Whiting doesn't fully narrate the lives of the Negritude women. No pictures appear in the text and little information beyond the context of Negritude historiography. At the same time, the scope of her project does not include a full analysis of gender in the conventional historiography of the movement. Why was it necessary to elide these women? Was it careless sexism or something else fundamental to Negritude ideas of race and nationalism? Clearly, this is not the project of *Negritude Women*. Yet it does put the text in a difficult spot. Not a full-scale analysis of gender in Negritude, nor a lively, personality-driven study, it is best read as a series of annotations and commentary for a treasury of great texts collected in the appendix.

I strongly recommend *Negritude Women*, but some questions linger: What was the Clamart salon really like? What happened to these women after the war? What precisely is their legacy?

**Gabrielle Civil**

## YOUR ANCIENT SEE THROUGH

Hoa Nguyen  
subpress collective, 2002

It's nice to find repose in a book of poems that reads as a cubicle to climb into, familial and warm. It could be that *Your Ancient See Through* reminds me of the poetical aesthetics particular to my various homes, the three hotbeds of twentieth century experimental writing — Buffalo, New York; San Francisco, California; and New York, New York. It could be that Hoa Nguyen's work reminds me of my early favorite poets—Joanne Kyger and Ted Berrigan, with a sprinkling of Jack Clarke, Diane diPrima, Anne Waldman, and Alice Notley. It could be that it's simply reassuring to meet up with a fine new collection of poems by a talented young writer. This is Nguyen's first full-length collection, and it is a handsome book, divided into six sections of thirteen poems each, graced with illustrations by artist Philip Trussell, and bound in an austere grey letterpressed cover—I've been carrying it around with me, enjoying simply looking at it.

But all of this is the window dressing of what I mean to say: there is something remarkable in the depths of the book that bids the reader in—deft turns of the line, deft transitions of thought, sweet sing-song metrics—and don't worry, there are blood and guts ideas in here too. Nguyen is a quick thinking poet of the Olsonian variety, and for those concerned that the post-language generation is slinking toward abstract apathy, this poetry is a bright spark to the contrary. Nguyen's work as a writer addresses the current hegemonic nightmare known as the United States of America on several fronts. Now a resident of Austin, Texas, the author previously found footing in the energetic poetry scene around the New College of California in San Francisco where a community of politically-minded young writers (including Anselm Berrigan, Mary Burger and Renee Gladman) flourished during the mid-1990s. This particular collection, edited by Berrigan, is another in the series of challenging, diverse and well-produced books originating from subpress collective, a coalition of nineteen American poets who over the last five years have successfully funded, produced, and distributed works by their contemporaries. An example of Nguyen's own engagement in the social world comes with the magazine *Skanky Possum* and its online offshoot *Possum Pouch* (“an irregular publication of essays, notes and reviews”) both edited by Nguyen and her husband Dale Smith, and both lively forums for poetry talk and criticism. As Nguyen says of *Skanky Possum*, “It's down-home, street level, serious but funny at the same time, and personal. The personal part is why we paint each cover—we invite friends over, listen to music, talk, and paint possums all day. It's also a kind of political gesture, a reaction to a mechanized and increasingly administered world.” The tone of that project parallels the tone of her poetry—

Find & fund            It's a prison oven  
(U.S.)    sterilized and smells good like  
chemicals engines manufactured  
houses

                                 Hey vingpie!  
I'm great and so are you  
grooving on Armageddon gas...

Rather than stagnating in a hit-you-over-the-head dogma, the political and poetical resonate in multiple layers throughout the book, as in “Baked Alaska”:

It is possible            You can  
take whole parts of land    chunk  
of ice cream (pink) ice cream  
mysterious meringue  
Stuff it in a hot box hot            How  
is the trick of it    baking  
igloos with kin inside  
They are they    not real    ice  
cream    white and pink  
It's complicated

*Your Ancient See Through* is complicated, geo-politically, and metaphysically, with a crisp charged language “holding the filcher of alder ember.” Hence, Hoa Nguyen’s poems are Promethean, funny, multifaceted, and to the point. I think that she writes what Shakespeare would write if he were around today—

Roll in your skull gone green  
like a mossy cog that wings  
sing the good times  
you seem a tiny wrecked thing to me  
something scared            where time has gone  
old and green            Norse  
hymns bringing dawn

What shouldn't be overlooked in this collection is the complexity of form play and sound play. I always have the most faith in experimental poets who know their conventional forms and Nguyen is one of them. She bounds around in the lyric, the collage, the lyrical collage, the prayer, the nursery rhyme, the sonnet, and the sonnet with the somber and beautiful couplet— “Like the moon, like your mom: fly children/The light and shade—a sort of black brightness.” The playfulness is easy to enter into— the language runs with fluidity on the page—

Grow baby            grow a brain with curly  
 hair    blow a leaf        a leaf  
 shaped love    hold the swirling  
 life-lasso       draw pretty bubbles baby  
 (soft rabbit)            the center is  
 light green    the tender part  
 is the newest part

Throughout, the book tempts the reader to join in its tone-leading noise-making —

Bells gathered like bells    What are  
 captive and able            thin clapper clapping  
 cast in bell            in a jealous bell

Regarding the internal mechanics of her work, Nguyen says in an online interview: “I tend towards certain clotty beats (stress patterns) and prefer non-Latinate or monosyllabic words. I’m inclined toward words rooted in Old and Middle English — am pulled there because I write in English and, for me, that’s where the language throbs. Small and, hopefully, packed (as opposed to dense)...” In this way artist Philip Trussell’s illustrations serve as apt complements to the poems with their quick semi-Mayan etch-strokes, compelling in their paradoxes of control and frenzy. Nguyen likewise is a master of quick sketches. She crafts brush strokes of poems with an economy of language echoing an economy of image —

house on fire            my mom’s  
 past house            a child    she  
 lost the tea pot shaped  
 from a big hard fruit  
 Gone too the rain  
 trees        how they curved  
 in to bring water  
 for store (drink)        wash  
 in the river

What occurs in Nguyen’s work is a joyous balance of what I’ll call gender-tones. The work is tough and brainy and sensual. That complexity resonates throughout and makes the book all the more exciting in its variousness of voice. Nguyen’s studies with Bay Area poet Tom Clark peek through, as do the influences of the New York heavyweight women Bernadette Mayer, Alice Notley, and Nguyen’s near-contemporary Lee Ann Brown. In “[Love Calls For Hades Cold Cream]” Nguyen writes:

Love calls for Hades cold cream  
Love talks in picture code  
and Valentines

Let's eat red for fun  
eat tragicomedies

Epic red-love  
washes all Valentines  
and gets my shoes wet...

These are all the thing I love about *Your Ancient See Through*—its Bashoesque location of the profound in the mundane, its New York School/San Francisco zen wit, and its underlying recognition that poets and poems are part of the ecosystem. That particular attention is explained by Nguyen in this way: "...I've come to realize that I want poems that conduct and transmit, use knowledge/experience of the species, and are generous to the reader." Nguyen negotiates all the systems—erotic, ecological, political and poetical—and puts them together generously, with a smart sense of balance and clarity.

**Lisa Jarnot**

## BEYOND THE COLOR LINE AND THE IRON CURTAIN: READING ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN BLACK AND RED, 1922-1963

Kate A. Baldwin  
Duke University Press, 2002

In the introduction to this fascinating study of Black intellectual travelers and sojourners in the Soviet Union, Kate A. Baldwin explicitly situates her project within the terrain previously staked out by such theorists as Paul Gilroy, who in his influential *The Black Atlantic* proposed a reformulation of a Black modernity, and by historians like Robin D.G. Kelley, Gerald Horne, and Mark Naison, who in recent years have endeavored to reassess African-American Communism and its complex linkages with official Comintern ideology and policy. Focusing on four major Black creative figures whose fascination with Communism's emancipatory promises led them at various times to travel to the Soviet Union as prominent guests of the regime—Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Paul Robeson—Baldwin shows the ways in which their encounters with the Soviet Union not only affected their own intellectual trajectories, but also the Soviet authorities' responses to their presence and contributions to ongoing discussions on the "Negro question." In the process, she offers a useful corrective to and extension of Gilroy's emphasis on Black American-Western European networks of transcultural exchange

Since Russia, as Baldwin points out, is not easily assimilable to conventional understandings of Europe and European culture, the relationships of Black American intellectuals to it have tended to involve a comparative analysis of the prevailing conditions faced by African Americans in the United States and/or the Caribbean and the social status of the Russian peasant and/or Soviet ethnic minority. The achievements of the Soviet regime were in many respects taken as potential models for the kind of radical social change envisioned by African American activists and intellectuals: this involved *inter alia* the assertion of a kinship between Russian serf and Black sharecropper. Further, the internationalist vision put forward by the rhetoric of world revolution and socialism proved a powerful attractor to those African American intellectuals seeking to project their talents beyond the constrictions of the institutionalized racism of the United States and onto a world stage, a vision made even more appealing by the evident absence in the Soviet Union of color-based discrimination in daily life.

Baldwin's perspective on what each of these four intellectuals found in the Soviet Union, and what the Soviet Union saw and made use of in them, is especially interesting because her training as a Slavacist and consequent command of Russian—a distinct rarity among African-Americanists—have enabled her to carry out relevant research in the archives of the former Soviet state and thus overcome many of the barriers and boundaries established and reinforced during the Cold War and thereafter. On the United States side of the Cold War equation, she

has rescued from archival oblivion various important documents that as a result of marginalization and censorship have gone unexamined by scholars of Black radicalism, notably Du Bois's unpublished book-length essay *Russia and America* and Claude McKay's two projects undertaken during his 1922-1923 stay in the Soviet Union, *Negroes in America* and the short-story collection *Trial by Lynching*, of which only Russian translations exist, the original English manuscripts having been lost. Indeed, Baldwin's most signal achievement here is precisely her dedicated research and reclamation work, which enables a more detailed critical assessment of the full range of these luminaries' achievements.

The study proceeds in chronological order, beginning with Claude McKay's visit in the early years of the Soviet Union, at the start of the New Economic Project years and following the bloody suppression of the 1921 Kronstadt uprising against Bolshevik control. At that time, Lenin was still alive, and the Third International was beginning to give serious consideration to the condition of African Americans in the United States. What emerges from Baldwin's perceptive and nuanced account of McKay's appearance on the Soviet stage as what he termed a "symbol...a member of the great American Negro group...that the workers of Soviet Russia, rejoicing in their freedom, were greeting through me," is McKay's outspokenly critical and non-dogmatic viewpoint. Although articulated at a historical moment when, at least among the Comintern and the intelligentsia if not among the workers and peasants, there was still room in Soviet society for heterodox views, McKay's speech to the Comintern in which he criticized racist practices within the fledgling U.S. Communist Party and insisted on "historically based assessments of racial divisions" rather than reified affirmations of Black people's inherent combativeness, were, as Baldwin meticulously shows, somewhat blunted and reworked in the Russian-language version that appeared in *Pravda*. Further, McKay's links of Black self-affirmation with a gender-based critique, present in *Negroes in America* as well as dramatically illustrated in the triptych of stories *Trial by Lynching* (which Baldwin subjects to a detailed analysis), point to a more far-reaching consideration on his part of the interactions between race, class, and gender than was customarily put forward at that time and place.

The chapter on Langston Hughes takes his year-long stay in the (at that time newly-created) Soviet Central Asian republics from 1932 to 1933, in particular Uzbekistan, as a point of departure for a reconsideration and close reading of Hughes's creative and journalistic output deriving from that journey: magazine articles on the state-sanctioned abolition of the veil for Muslim women and a group of short stories later collected into the book *The Ways of White Folks*. While pointing to the contradictions of enforced "modernization" of so-called "backward" peoples, and of the Orientalist exoticism that Hughes occasionally deployed in his magazine articles on the dramatic changes engineered on Uzbek culture, Baldwin also explores the complex relationships Hughes establishes in his work between the Jim Crow Deep South of the United States and the newly-"liberated" Soviet Central Asian "Deep South," in which sexual segregation in the form of the



veil had been abolished, and which thus functioned both as a possible foreshadowing of an emancipated United States future and as a way for Hughes to “embrace internationalism as a means of preserving national dislocatedness to combat white hegemony.”

Moving from Hughes’s Signification on the trope of the veil initially deployed by W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* to Du Bois himself, Baldwin makes a case for devoting renewed critical attention to Du Bois’s frequently ignored or dismissed later work. Focusing on the two autobiographical texts from the last decades of his life, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois* and the long out-of-print *In Battle for Peace: The Story of My Eighty-Third Birthday*, as well as the unpublished *Russia and America*, Baldwin discusses Du Bois’s conversionist turn towards the Soviet Union as an alleged exemplar of democracy and egalitarianism in terms of a realization that the United States, which he had struggled for so many years to purge of its racism and its imperial belligerency, was ultimately unreformable and an obstacle to the long-desired liberation of the colonial world. For Du Bois, the Soviet Union was the major bulwark against the complete and thoroughgoing institution of the color line on a global level—not to mention a country that welcomed him, acknowledged his intellectual achievements, and supported his endeavors to found the *Encyclopedia Africana*, unlike his native land, which rewarded his lifetime of achievement with a humiliating arrest and denial of a passport for eight years on the mere grounds of his political affiliations. At the same time, she does not hesitate to criticize Du Bois’s apologetics for Stalinist horrors and the barely concealed egocentrism and masculinist elitism that, notwithstanding his use of Marxist categories and rhetorical devices, permeate his more polemical pages. Counterpointed to this narrow intractability, however, is Du Bois’s more expansive view of autobiography as a record of process and change, and Baldwin quite properly notes: “Refusing the singularity of autobiography, Du Bois gestures toward a space that refutes not only authority but finality.”

Perhaps the Black intellectual most associated with the Soviet Union is Paul Robeson, and in perhaps the most accomplished chapter of the book, Baldwin discusses the ways in which the Soviet press used the image of Robeson both to excoriate American racism and to bolster its own promotion to the masses of a national folk culture. Even as Robeson continually proclaimed his sense of oneness with the Russian people and praised the absence of racism in the Soviet Union, the Communist authorities used such sentiments to burnish its image in a self-congratulatory fashion and present Robeson as a static symbol. This official attempt to create a quasi-mythic, dehistoricized Robeson went so far as to edit or purge some of the more disruptive sections of his key text *Here I Stand*, in particular the entire chapter titled “The Power of Negro Action” as well as “its collective call to organized action,” which was clearly too hot for the closed society of 1950s Russia to handle. It is as if Robeson’s intellectual and physical grandeur, though unreservedly aligned with Moscow, still managed to escape bureaucratic constraint and hence had to be domesticated for untroubled public consumption. Interest-

ingly, as Baldwin notes, this is not too far removed from the depoliticized iconic status conferred upon Robeson in recent years by the United States cultural establishment. But Baldwin also makes clear that, like Du Bois, Robeson drew sustenance for his own internationalist, anti-colonialist position from his lionization by the Soviets, even if this also blinded him to examples of Soviet racism that appeared even in friendly reviews of his concerts in the Soviet press, as Baldwin carefully points out. For Baldwin, however, Robeson's assertion and performance in his concerts of internationalist structures of feeling helped to resist the confinement of American racism and the struggle against it to a strictly domestic context devoid of global ramifications.

It will be clear from the preceding, admittedly cursory and oversimplifying description that Baldwin's project is highly ambitious in its multidisciplinary and historical sweep, engaging some complex, indeed thorny issues of continuing relevance and urgency. This is already a considerable achievement in a time when too many academic studies are denatured, almost dead on arrival or publication as it were. Regrettably, however, there are some serious flaws having to do with Baldwin's historical vision and the political implications stemming from that vision. Part of the problem can be found in the subtitle of the book, *Reading Encounters Between Black and Red*; in fact, there is too much "reading" here and not enough elaboration of the kind of political conclusions that could contribute to a new upsurge of Black radicalism or, as Baldwin herself puts it in her introduction, "open the archive into a space for a newly wrought resistance."

While on the level of "reading," Baldwin's textual analyses are frequently insightful and involving, she also displays an unfortunate tendency, particularly marked in the first two chapters, to repeat her arguments over and over, as if only through reiteration could she convince herself and her reader of their validity. What the reader ends up doing, however, is to call into question the competence of the editors. In passing, it should be noted that, as is unfortunately ever more the case in published books nowadays, the book has numerous editorial slips, e.g., Otto Huiswoud's name is consistently spelt "Huiswood," the word "interpolate" is used in place of the intended "interpellate," and worst (and most unintentionally comical) of all, the word "pratfall" appears in place of "pitfall." And in the interests of flow, even the title of the book—*Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain*—could have profitably omitted the definite articles!

Occasionally, Baldwin engages in interpretive vagaries that appear to be mere pretexts to bring on the obligatory heavy theoretical artillery. For example, when she declares that, with the 1903 publication of *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois's "rhetoric of the veil had established itself in Black American consciousness as *the* phenomenology of black masculinity," I confess to having no idea what she is talking about. This reading manages to be both grossly reductive and inflated at the same time, and in fact she shows her hand by considering Du Bois's description of the Negro as a "seventh son" to be a corrective to Hegel, instead of the folk-Biblical allusion it clearly is. And what of the veiled figure on the King's Highway

that appears at the end of this section of *Souls*, an ungendered being reminiscent of the androgynous crossroad spirit Legba? Nowhere to be found. And there is really no reason for an English professor to perpetrate infelicities like the following: "Uncertainty underwrites this introduction of self into object, however, so that in place of a totalizing absorption of the object of otherness resides a question mark." Such things appear written more for the tenure committee than for the interested everyday reader.

In any case, the major flaws of Baldwin's analyses, as indicated above, are political in nature. She is too well-informed to engage in retrospective apologetics for the defunct Soviet Union, and indeed often formulates trenchant and grounded critiques of both Communist rhetoric and policy, while at the same time taking pains to assure the reader of her distance from Cold War binaries and conventional anti-Communism, which enacts its own repressions and barbarisms. But what this tends to do is show Communism as in some way the *only* revolutionary alternative to capitalism, colonialism, and racism, as if there were no currents of Black radicalism that flourished independently of the Comintern during the forty-year period covered in the book.

In this regard, her omission of the Trinidadian George Padmore from her discussion (beyond a single passing mention) is telling, precisely because Padmore had risen to a high position in the Comintern (and was commissioned as a Colonel in the Red Army) on the strength of his activities both among Africans and among European workers. Rejecting Stalinism's opportunistic support for "democratic" colonialist powers following the ultra-militant "Third Period" of the early 1930s, he resigned his position in 1935 and fled to London, where he continued a tireless campaign of anti-colonial agitation that finally culminated in his collaboration with C.L.R. James and Kwame Nkrumah to help bring about the independence of Ghana (Du Bois's final home and resting place). In fact, it could be stated that the rise of postwar Pan-Africanism was in large part the work of non-Communist Party radicals like James and Padmore, who, while they may have acknowledged the social achievements of the Russian Revolution, were deeply suspicious of Communist bureaucratic manipulation of the anti-colonial struggle.

Baldwin, however, though not uncritical of staunch Soviet supporters like Du Bois and Robeson, unjustly dismisses the later positions of Claude McKay and Langston Hughes, repeating the canard that "McKay eventually parlayed his experience in Russia into the bedrock of what was to become a reactionary political stance." While it is true that McKay denounced Communism and converted to Catholicism in his later years, he also contributed some political articles to the anarcho-pacifist *Catholic Worker*, hardly a reactionary publication. And while Hughes did renege on his earlier Communist views before a Congressional panel in the McCarthy years, his later works, including the sequence *Ask Your Mama* and the collection *The Panther and the Lash* display an even more accomplished and thoroughgoing radicalism than his pro-Communist writings. In fact, of the four intellectuals profiled by Baldwin, McKay and Hughes were the most inde-

pendent and least deferential adherents to the Communist cause.

In her introduction, Baldwin states with regard to Du Bois and Robeson that “some readers may have wished that [they] had renounced the Soviet Union...following Khrushchev’s 1956 denunciation of the Stalinist purges of the 1930s.” But she omits a still more significant event of that year: the Hungarian Revolution, whose radicalism was immediately perceived by C.L.R. James. Whereas James, in his important collaborative 1957 text *Facing Reality*, linked the events in Hungary to the anti-colonial movements in Africa and the civil-rights struggles in the United States, Du Bois, in his *Autobiography*, slandered the uprising as Fascist and celebrated its suppression by Soviet tanks, and Robeson uncomprehendingly equated the Hungarian revolutionaries with the perpetrators of white racist terror in the U.S.

What these differing reactions showed was that Soviet-style Communism had become once and for all, and in the eyes of the oppressed of the world, not only a failed path to liberation but an active agent of counter-revolution. It was the tragedy of someone like Paul Robeson that the vicious logic of the Cold War effectively limited his field of action; as James noted in a tribute that Baldwin partially and tendentiously cites, had Robeson been willing to start an independent Black movement in the U.S., it would have gone faster and further than even the Garvey movement. “The Black movement which could have burst and swept the United States around Paul Robeson did not come because Paul did not see it that way” (*Spheres of Influence*, 263). In the end, this sweeping upsurge of Black radicalism would be incarnated in the Civil Rights Revolution of the 1950s and 1960s, in which individual Communists participated but which went far beyond orthodox Communism in its expansive, non-sectarian, and clearly internationalist vision, even as it acknowledged the immense emancipatory contributions of people like Robeson and Du Bois.

For all its failure to recognize the power of independent Black movements, not just individual intellectuals, to shatter color lines and iron curtains alike, Kate A. Baldwin’s study remains a valuable contribution that is sure to provoke debate among the many readers it deserves.

**Christopher Winks**

**George E. Marcus** is co-editor of the groundbreaking volumes *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (with Michael M. J. Fischer) and *Writing Culture* (with James Clifford). His recent books include *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin* (Princeton UP). He teaches at Rice University.

**Myung Mi Kim**'s recent books include *Commons* (University of California Press) and *Dura* (Sun & Moon Press). She teaches in the Poetics Program at SUNY-Buffalo.

**Ammiel Alcalay** is a poet, scholar, critic and translator whose recent work includes *from the warring factions* (beyond baroque, 2002), and *Poetry, Politics & Translation: American Isolation & the Middle East* (Palm Press).

**Maria Damon** teaches poetry and poetics at the University of Minnesota. She is the author of *The Dark End of the Street: Margins in American Vanguard Poetry*; and co-author (with Betsy Franco) of *The Secret Life of Words* and (with Miekal And) *Literature Nation*. She is a member of the National Writers' Union.

**Adrienne Rich** is the recipient of the 1999 Lannan Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award. She has also been distinguished by an Academy of Poetry Fellowship, the National Book Award, 1996 Tanning Award for Mastery in the Art of Poetry [The Wallace Stevens Award], and the MacArthur Fellowship. In 2003, Rich was awarded the Bollingen Prize for Poetry. Her most recent collection of poems was published in the fall of 2001 by W.W. Norton and is entitled *Fox*.

**Kirin Narayan** is author of *Mondays on the Dark Night of the Moon: Himalayan Foothill Folktales* (Oxford UP), *Love, Stars and All That* (Pocket Books), and *Storytellers, Saints and Scoundrels: Folk Narrative as Hindu Religious Teaching* (University of Pennsylvania Press). She teaches at the University of Wisconsin.

**Duane Niatum** is the author of six volumes of poetry and editor of two anthologies. He's finishing a collection of twenty stories based upon his Klallam peoples' myths and legends. He has started the major task of his writing career, putting together his *Collected Poems*. His last book, *The Crooked Beak of Love*, was published by West End Press.

**Piya Chatterjee** is the author of *A Time for Tea: Women, Labor, and Post/Colonial Politics on an Indian Tea Plantation* (Duke, 2001). She teaches at UC-Riverside.

**Thien-bao Phi** has been a spoken word poet for the past decade. More about him and his work can be found at <<http://www.baophi.com>>.

**Tan Lin** is writer/artist living in New York. His recent writings include *LBG* (Sun & Moon) and *IDM* (forthcoming from Atelos). Recent work has been shown at The Yale Art Museum and the Marianne Boesky Gallery.

**Nicholas Lawrence** teaches comparative literature at the University at Buffalo. His recent essays address the development of global consciousness in the work of Whitman, O'Hara, and small press publishing in the sixties.

**Dale Smith** edits *Skanky Possum* with Hoa Nguyen. His book, *The Flood & The Garden*, was published last year.

**Mark Soderstrom** is a doctoral candidate in the history department at the University of Minnesota and a frequent contributor to *Xcp*.

**Bruce Campbell** is the author of *Mexican Murals in Times of Crisis* (University of Arizona Press). He is on the editorial board of *Connection to the Americas* and teaches at St. John's University in Minnesota.

**Kimberly TallBear** is a PhD candidate in the History of Consciousness program at UC-Santa Cruz.

**Charlie Samuyaveric** teaches at Ateneo de Manila University.

**Pamela R. Fletcher** is a writer, editor, and member of the English faculty at the College of St. Catherine.

**Peter O'Leary** is the author of *Watchfulness* (Spuyten Duyvil) and *Gnostic Contagion: Robert Duncan and the Poetry of Illness* (Wesleyan). He lives in Chicagoland where he co-edits *LVNG*.

**David Michalski** is a Librarian at the University of California, Davis. He is the editor of the *Xcp* Website and the online exhibition *Streetnotes* <<http://www.xcp.bfn.org>>. He continues to write on the cultural implications of information design, and is working on an annotated bibliography of nineteenth-century San Francisco guidebooks.

**Jane Sprague's** poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *Tinfish*, *Can We Have Our Ball Back?*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, and others. She works as a teaching artist and arts administrator in Ithaca, NY.

**Sun Yung Shin** is a Minneapolis writer whose poems can be found in journals such as *Controlled Burn* and the anthology *Echoes Upon Echoes: New Writing from Korean Americans*. She is the author of forthcoming children's book called *Cooper and Mr. Rhee*.

**Christophe Wall-Romana** is a PhD candidate at UC-Berkeley.

**Gabrielle Civil** is a recent recipient of a Many Voices Residency from the Playwrights' Center. She teaches at the College of St. Catherine.

**Lisa Jarnot** is the author of *Ring of Fire*. She lives in New York.

**Christopher Winks** has taught Caribbean literature and African-American studies at New York University, Columbia University, and the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico. His translations from French and Spanish have appeared in numerous publications, and he recently completed a doctorate in Comparative Literature at New York University.



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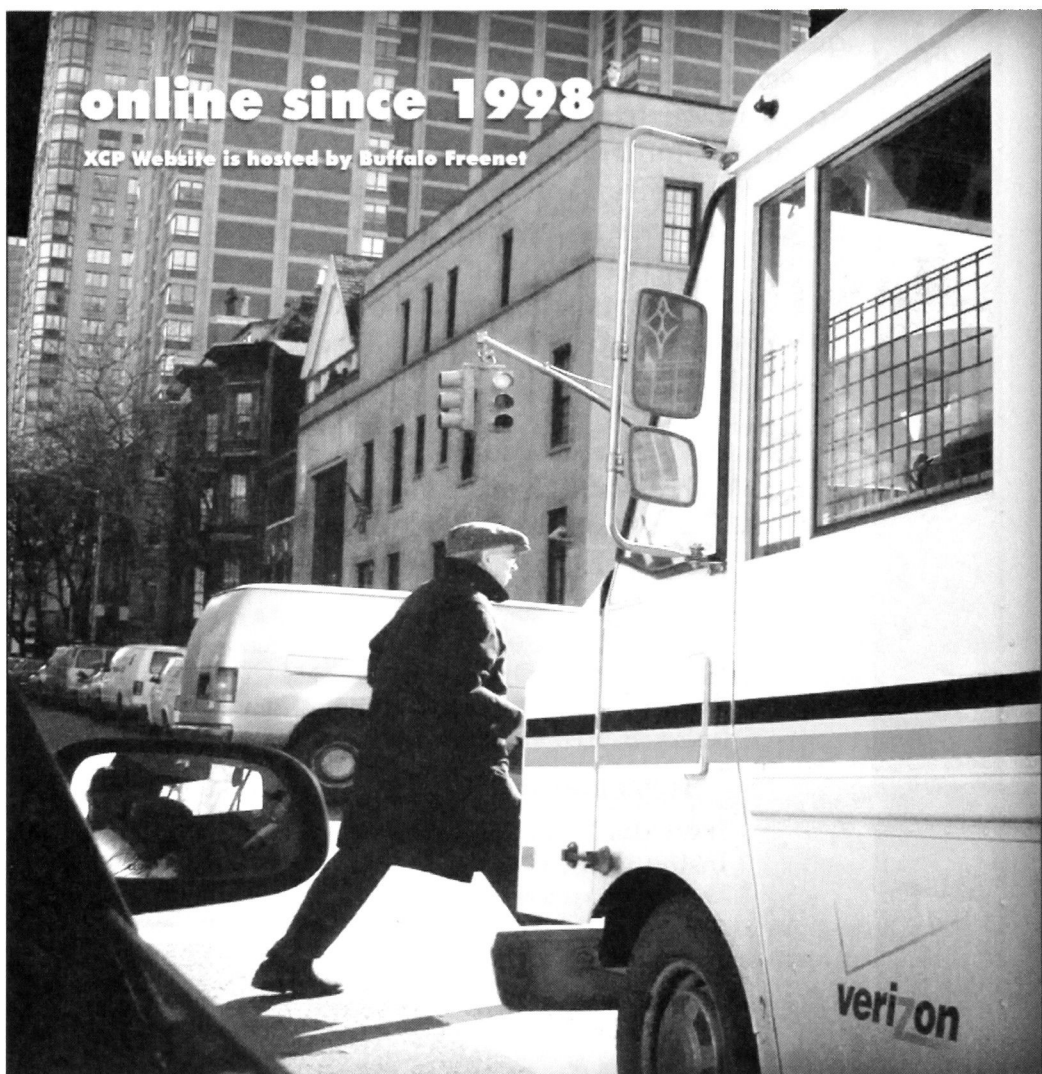




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