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At Home in Pieces: Forms of Fragmentation in Caribbean and Jewish Diasporic Literatures

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by

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ABSTRACT

At Home in Pieces: Forms of Fragmentation in Caribbean and Jewish Diasporic Literatures

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At Home in Pieces examines the traumas of displaced populations, of populations in fragments, through the lens of poetics. Through a comparative framework, I show how formal methods in diasporic literatures embody and make visible the conditions and consequences of displacement and loss. In particular, I bring into dialogue two seemingly disparate communities, Caribbean and Jewish in the U.K. and U.S. Scholars of diaspora have discussed resonances in Caribbean and Jewish histories of oppression and migration, and literary scholars have written on thematic convergences, but little has been said with regard to the significance of shared poetic and linguistic experimentation. My dissertation is organized around an aesthetic logic rather than solely geographic affiliations. Critical connections across literatures emerge when rarely linked writers are released from ossified representative roles based on family background, place, and time—when these writers are instead brought together to highlight creative kinships, as well as shared trauma. The project moves through four pairs of modern and contemporary writers, aligned by parallels in the form and function of fragmentation within their work—Charles Reznikoff and Fred D'Aguiar, Nicole Krauss and Zadie Smith, Grace Nichols and Laura (Riding) Jackson, and Derek Walcott and Joseph Brodsky.

The project considers diaspora through theories of translation—as a performance of a continual imperfect return to cultural heritage that demonstrates a desire for continuity but is still keenly attuned to gaps and elisions. I construe the fragment in diasporic literature as an embodied gift between generations that can be repurposed and modified for new contexts, akin to sampling in contemporary music culture. Like music, the fragmented form creates the potential for a felt encounter with meaning, rather than dictating a specific response, through effects of rhythm and arrangement. Connecting scholarship in translation and music, I present a theory of "fragment sampling," an adaptive aesthetic mode through which the texts I analyze engender a space of "in-betweenness": past and present are contemporaneous, multiple narrative threads weave through simultaneously, and languages intersect and impact each other. I trace similarities in poetic and linguistic experimentation to show how each text confronts intergenerational trauma, imagines a reconstitution of home and self-identity, and illuminates patterns of relation that reject the stringency of national boundaries.

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I. Introduction: Fragment Sampling in Caribbean and Jewish Diasporic Literatures

In "The Task of the Translator" (1923), Walter Benjamin defines translation as recovering what a single language cannot communicate: rather than resembling or mirroring the original, a translation must instead "lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel" (Benjamin 78). Benjamin's image of a broken vessel evokes the Kabbalistic notion of *shevirat ha-kelim*, the vessels of divine light shattered at the creation of the world—humans must collect the scattered pieces in an effort to repair the world. *At Home in Pieces: Forms of Fragmentation in Caribbean and Jewish Diasporic Literatures* takes Benjamin's imagery for correlations and tensions between languages as a point of departure for elucidating connections among immigrant generations, each generation in relation with "fragments" of the previous. The Anglophone works I investigate spill over the borders of a single language or cultural framework: adopted languages are inflected according to other linguistic patterns, and traditions are adapted and recontextualized. I construe the fragment in diasporic literature as a form of gift between generations that can be repurposed and modified for new contexts, akin to sampling in contemporary music culture, and present a theory of "fragment sampling": an adaptive aesthetic quality that translates into verbal expression the perpetual entanglements of narratives, spaces, times, and languages that characterize diasporic experiences. This project offers a comparative framework to analyze formal methods in diasporic literatures that, to varying degrees, embody and make visible the conditions and consequences of displacement.

In particular, I bring into dialogue two seemingly disparate communities, Caribbean and Jewish in the U.K. and U.S., which share some common histories of oppression and migration but are seldom considered together. Moving through four pairs of modern and contemporary writers, aligned by parallels in the form and function of fragments within their work—Charles Reznikoff and Fred D'Aguiar, Nicole Krauss and Zadie Smith, Grace Nichols and Laura (Riding) Jackson, and Derek Walcott and Joseph Brodsky—I trace similarities in poetic and linguistic experimentation to show how each text confronts intergenerational trauma, imagines a reconstitution of home, and illuminates global patterns of relation that extend past national boundaries.

Scholars of diaspora have discussed resonances in Caribbean and Jewish histories of displacement and persecution, and literary scholars have written on thematic convergences, especially in the use of the Holocaust, but little has been said with regard to shared formal approaches. The Caribbean and Jewish communities play a pivotal role in theories that reconceptualize diaspora. Classifications of diasporic identity range between two extremes: evoking narratives of roots and estrangement from a homeland, and at the other end, envisioning what Bryan Cheyette describes as a "state of creatively disruptive impurity which imagines emergent transnational and postethnic identities" (xiii). The classical definition of diaspora concerns the Jewish dispersion, but Stuart Hall's seminal essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1990) revises the term through the Caribbean context and "the aesthetics of 'cross-overs,'" with the understanding of diasporic identity as necessarily hybrid (236). Subsequent studies tend either to move further in Hall's trajectory or to push

back against it, oscillating between traditional roots and fluid postethnicity (Cheyette xiii).[1] Khachig Tölölyan and William Safran both define diaspora based on movement due to persecution and existence of "homeland" and "exile,"[2] but Tölölyan admits the necessity of acknowledging fluctuations in concepts of mobility, noting that sixteen years after the first issue of his journal *Diaspora*, the range of the label's use has increased exponentially: "ethnics, exiles, expatriates, refugees, asylum seekers, labor migrants, queer communities, domestic service workers, executives of transnational corporations, and transnational sex workers are all labeled diasporas" (648-649). James Clifford advocates against the requirement of a real or symbolic homeland, calling instead for a more decentered approach: a "shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin" (306). In *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), Paul Gilroy deterritorializes the African diaspora, stressing its mutability and mobility by detaching it from particular continents. Gilroy also highlights the importance of the continuing relationships and intersections between black and Jewish communities and concepts of diaspora. This relational approach is opposed to a narrative of transcendence in which the "classic diaspora" of Jews is "transcended by newer, more contemporary, diasporic groups," a kind of thinking that Cheyette argues "reinforces the narrative that diasporic Jewish history ended with the European Holocaust" (30). Following the emphasis that Hall, Clifford, and Gilroy place on interaction and relationality among and

[1] Svetlana Boym points out that tradition and revolution need not be diametrically opposed: both words etymologically "incorporate each other and rely on their opposition" (19).

[2] Locating diaspora between these states and spaces of homeland and exile, Tölölyan characterizes "diasporicity" as "manifest[ing] itself in relations of difference . . . The diasporic community sees itself as linked to but different from those among whom it has settled; eventually, it also comes to see itself as powerfully linked to, but in some ways different from, the people in the homeland as well" (650).

within identities, I shift my focus to poetics—to show diasporic writers' dynamic engagement with multiple, interlacing languages and fragmented form.

At Home in Pieces approaches diaspora through contemporary studies in translation—as a performance of a continual imperfect return to cultural heritage that demonstrates a desire for continuity but is still keenly attuned to gaps and elisions. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha elucidates the performative role of translation in cultural communication: it puts into motion and thus decanonizes the original. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls language a "vital clue to where the self loses its boundaries" and describes translation as the development of an "ethical," even "erotic," relationship between reader and text: "translation is the most intimate act of reading," requiring a surrendering and response to "the special call of the text" (180, 183). In this way, translation is a labor of love that embraces the original with a careful, creative awareness of its alterity. Translation reveals something latent but unseen in the original. David Damrosch incorporates this view into his definition of world literature: "writing that gains in translation" (281). Svetlana Boym agrees that some things are "not lost in translation, but conceived through it," viewing a foreign language "an alternative reality, a potential world" (307). Fittingly, Brodsky chooses to write about his parents in English to grant them "a margin of freedom" that may not "resurrect them, but English grammar may at least prove to be a better escape route from the chimneys of the state crematorium than the Russian" (460). These viewpoints reveal an imaginative space of intersection linking translation with the recollection and rewriting of memory and history. Translation, whether intralingual or interlingual, is always interpretation and often subversive rewriting. It is by nature a decentering, the simultaneous acceptance of multiple versions of a text. Rebecca Walkowitz argues for the use of translation as a model for close

reading in general due in part to this simultaneity of existences. She maintains that "contemporary literature in an age of globalization is, in many ways, a comparative literature: works circulate in several literary systems at once, and can—some would say, need—to be read within several national traditions" (Walkowitz 529). These inevitable intersections complicate the notion of a text's origin: is it the country associated with the author's nationality or with the author's native language or language of composition, or is it the location of a text's composition or publication? What if, for the author, the idea of origin or "home," in D'Aguiar's words, "is always elsewhere?" ("Home" 14).

In her work on the notion of a mother tongue, Sophia Lehmann proposes Jewish and Caribbean literatures as offering a productive comparison because "the Jewish-originated term diaspora becomes a significant one for understanding Caribbean experiences, and the Caribbean idea of language as home becomes reciprocally edifying with respect to Jewish American writing" (101). If language itself may serve as a home, Lehmann posits, then "in diaspora, Afro-Caribbean and Jewish American people are redefining the terms of communal identity so that nationality is not the fixed or definitive basis" (103). Gemma Romain's comparative study, *Connecting Histories: A Comparative Exploration of African-Caribbean and Jewish History and Memory in Modern Britain* (2006), brings together the African-Caribbean and Jewish communities specifically in twentieth-century Britain. Within and between the communities, Romain compares memory construction and collective social construction of history by focusing primarily on narrative sequences and structures in autobiographies in order to demonstrate shared qualities in both experiences and interpretations of those experiences (Romain 2). Romain sees her work as filling a gap because even the studies that do exist base comparisons on "generalisations and ahistorical

mythologisation," although the fixed categories into which these communities are often placed have been challenged and revised by organizations such as JCORE and the Black-Jewish Forum (241). Geographically, my project extends past the British borders of Romain's work, taking into consideration as well diasporic authors living in the U.S.

With regard to place, the primary authors I discuss are all somewhat in transition. Some immigrated to the U.S. or U.K. themselves while others respond to generational memory. D'Aguiar was born in London to Guyanese parents, spent ten years of his childhood in Guyana, and then returned to England until moving to the U.S. in his thirties. Reznikoff, the son of Russian immigrants, was born in New York in Brownsville, described by many as a "Jewish Ghetto." Krauss was born in New York to a British Jewish mother (daughter of immigrants from Germany and Ukraine) and an American Jewish father (son of immigrants from Hungary and Belarus, raised partly in Israel). Smith was born in London to a Jamaican mother who immigrated to England and an English father, and she now splits her time between London and New York. Nichols was born in Guyana and moved to England in her twenties. (Riding) Jackson was born in New York to a Jewish father who immigrated from Galicia and a German Jewish mother (daughter of immigrants). She went to England in her twenties and remained in Europe for fourteen years until returning to the U.S. Brodsky was born in the Soviet Union, remained stateless for five years, and then lived in the U.S. until his death in New York. Walcott was born in Saint Lucia, then lived in Trinidad but traveled frequently to England and the U.S., and later in life, split his time between the U.S. and Saint Lucia, sometimes holding university positions in Canada and England. Some of the writers connect across this project's chapters: D'Aguiar and Nichols both reference Walcott's influence on them, Walcott and Brodsky were close friends and sometimes collaborators on

translations, Krauss sent her poems to Brodsky for feedback,[3] Smith is friends with Krauss's ex-husband, Jonathan Safran Foer, and (Riding) Jackson was friends with Reznikoff's wife, Marie Syrkin. Most of the writers also have personal or generational ties to key migration movements to the diasporic metropolises of New York[4] and London.[5]

However, the primary shared quality of these writers' locations is the position of English as the official language—and what the writers themselves hold in common is the existence of another dialect or language informing and affecting their written English words, as well as a heightened sense of living within in-betweenness, always straddling multiple identities along with multiple geographies. Michael Rothberg develops the concept of "multidirectional memory," which "posits collective memory as partially disengaged from exclusive versions of cultural identity and acknowledges how remembrance both cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal, and cultural sites" (11). Rothberg argues that multidirectional memory's "productive, intercultural dynamic . . . has the potential to create new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice" (5). In *A Transnational Poetics* (2009), Jahan Ramazani argues that increasing globalization makes more urgent the need for criticism to examine the enmeshed "circuits of poetic connection and dialogue across political and geographic borders," rather than attempting to unweave "contending and overlapping discourses, forms, techniques, and ideologies" (x, 9). Mobility justice scholar Mimi Sheller asserts that "we cannot afford to study single national histories or even single

[3] Krauss says of Brodsky in an interview that "he taught me more about writing than anyone else . . . I never had any other writing teacher or mentor after him" (Shubert interview).

[4] Immigration wave from Eastern Europe to the U.S. starting in 1881 after the assassination of Alexander II and the ensuing pogroms and anti-Semitic laws until the restrictions enforced with the Immigration Act of 1924

[5] Immigration wave from the Caribbean to England, from the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* that followed the British Nationality Act of 1948 until the restrictions of the 1971 Immigration Act

area studies in ignorance of the connections that span them . . . We need a generation of historians, anthropologists, and social scientists, not to mention citizens, lawyers and political leaders, trained in the critical analysis of transnational processes" (Sheller 199). Therefore, this dissertation's organization is based on an aesthetic logic rather than solely on geographic or diasporic affiliations, and it focuses on writers who are difficult to situate within particular national borders.

Critical connections across literatures emerge when rarely linked writers are released from ossified representative roles based on family background, place, and time—when these writers are instead brought together to highlight creative kinships. Rather than exclusively privileging the content of the writers' works, as is often done with literatures partitioned based on regional or ethnic categories, *At Home in Pieces* focuses on their formal and musical, and often experimental, approaches. The project's organization stems in part from Nathaniel Mackey's *Discrepant Engagement: Dissonance, Cross-Culturality, and Experimental Writing* (1993), in which he brings together writers rarely linked under a common rubric, emphasizing "dissidence and experimentation" rather than asserting any reductively unifying argument or biographical grouping (1, 3). Mackey demonstrates that the academy's taxonomic practices in literature are mere invention—even worse, they "obscure the fact of heterogeneity" and inhibit the potential for interaction and growth through relations among artists and their work (20). [6] My project, in its focus on fragment sampling, strives to embrace the improvisatory and the boundary-blurring mobility for which Mackey advocates.

[6] Mackey addresses the issue of scholarship tending to read black writers "primarily at the content level" as "responding to racism, representing 'the black experience,'" in effect ignoring experimental and innovative engagements with form (284).

This dissertation characterizes the term "fragment" within particular forms in each of the chapters to demonstrate ways in which diasporic writing expands the standard modernist definition of the term as a microcosm, a small element that presumes the whole. Rather than identifying fragments by what they are or could be, the chapters' titles and topics focus more on what the fragments do, how the authors I study use fragmentation in their texts. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) contrasts Kamau Brathwaite's view of recuperating fragments and returning to roots with those of Walcott and Wilson Harris. Brathwaite is invested in gaining the "sense of 'wholeness'" that he feels West Indian artists initially lack, but his description of creolization acknowledges the "syncretic nature of the West Indian reality" (Brathwaite 43; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 35). While Brathwaite considers the return to African roots crucial to contemporary West Indian identity, Harris and Walcott also engage with ancestral affiliations but see "Afro-Caribbean destiny as inescapably enmeshed in a contemporary, multi-cultural reality," privileging the "composite" over the "pure" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 31, 36). The authors that my project brings into conversation vary in their views of roots and ancestral ties—some value them immensely, others harshly reject them—but they all, whether explicitly or not, use and adapt their inherited immigrant pasts in some way within their work to create new realities, reminiscent of Michael Fischer's definition of ethnicity as "something reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation by each individual," as "something dynamic . . . potent even when not consciously taught" (Fischer 1). The writers forge these new realities through newness in language. As Lehmann explains, the "uniformity of a fixed or rigidly bounded culture is replaced . . . the spaces *between* languages and countries become sites of

new creation rather than marginality" (104).[7] Édouard Glissant describes this kind of "Imagining and recreating from traces of memory" as expanding the distance from "any imperative system" ("Creolization in the Making of the Americas" 87). With similar imagery, Rothberg portrays "Memory's anachronistic quality—its bringing together of now and then, here and there" as "the source of its powerful creativity, its ability to build new worlds out of the materials of older ones" (5). Writing about the "history of breaks" in the poetics of the Americas, Charles Bernstein points to the significance of the language being actively transformed by the

> 'bad' or 'broken' English of the European immigrants from the 1880s through the early years of the new century . . . Williams, Stein, Louis Zukofsky, and other makers of a new American poetry were themselves second-language speakers of English . . . for these children of immigrants, English became less transparent, more a medium subject to reforming. Correlatively, on the other side of the Atlantic, the explorations of dialect traditions . . . in the Caribbean by Claude McKay and more recently by Linton Kwesi Johnson, Louise Bennett, Michael Smith, or Kamau Brathwaite . . . become a source of shared language resources among English language poetries. ("Poetics of the Americas" 118).

These linguistic transformations echo the formal fragmentation in the texts I analyze, reinforcing the connections between form and language, specifically polylingualism, for the reader.

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[7] For example, Jerome Rothenberg describes some of his work as "the continuation of an aborted Jewish/Yiddish poetry in another language (American or English rather than Yiddish)" (35). Hana Wirth-Nesher discusses "Yiddish-inflected speech as a vehicle for Holocaust testimony" in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, in which Vladek's story is "transcribed as heavily accented English" (291). She writes that correcting the speech patterns "would erase the speaker. What the reader sees on the page, and then hears in his own mind, is not the language (or languages) of the annihilated Jewish pre-war world, not Yiddish itself, but the accent that testifies both to that lost world and to the efforts of survivors to renew their lives in America" (291).

Psychoanalyst Philip Bromberg argues that the psyche is always a "multiplicity of self-states" rather than one cohesive self, so he associates health with the capacity to "feel like one self while being many," to perpetually "stand in the spaces between realities without losing any of them" (*Standing in the Spaces* 186, 244). Arguably, individuals within diasporic communities feel the paradox of simultaneous existences especially intensely. Smith claims that despite T.S. Eliot's efforts to portray writing as an "objective science," writers have "selves as well as traditions to understand and assimilate," so we might instead view writing as an entryway into the many states of this "elusive, multifaceted self" ("Fail Better" 355). If fragments of the self seep into the text without authorial intention, then close attention to distinctive formal choices can reveal particular unconscious processes that exclusive concentration on explicit content cannot. In other words, investigating formal and stylistic tendencies can help us think about both the effect of the works on us as readers and the resonances of other minds within the worlds of the works. Focusing on particular uses of the fragment helps examine the aesthetic mode of fragment sampling as a form of individual working-through. Recognizing the vital connections between forms and affects helps us become what Smith calls the ideal reader: "open enough to allow into their own mind a picture of human consciousness" that is "radically different from their own" ("Fail Better" 361).

My first chapter, "Spectral Fragments: Mourning and Movement in *Testimony* and *Bill of Rights*," examines repetition, recitation, and haunting in two poetic sequences that forge an intimate relationship with memory. Reznikoff constructs *Testimony: The United States (1885-1915): Recitative* (1934-1978) from witness reports documenting decades of violence, and D'Aguiar narrates the recollections of a fictionalized Jonestown massacre

survivor in *Bill of Rights* (1998). These poets, familiar with the effects of intergenerational trauma, bring to light the "ghosts" for whom people share guilt but reject responsibility. Through the poems' simulated encounters with voices of the past, Reznikoff and D'Aguiar confront the task of learning to "live with ghosts," a duty Jacques Derrida posits as necessary for living justly (Derrida xvii-xviii). The poets gather fragments of history not to feign a sense of wholeness but to feel and hear the complexity of others' memories and emotions as they entwine with their own. *Testimony* and *Bill of Rights* take readers through a process of mourning across time, bearing losses of the past to feel the urgency of a more just future. In the forms of these poetic sequences, memory and imagination converge to create a space for placing the living and the dead in dialogue, for staging and expanding a vision of what constitutes a community.

My second chapter, "Serialized Fragments: Contingent Attachment in *The History of Love* and *NW*," investigates the role of serialized fragments in Krauss's *The History of Love* (2005) and Smith's *NW* (2012) in coping with the effects of rupture. Within these novels' constellations of cross-generational attachments, the narratives of Alma Singer in *The History of Love* and Natalie (previously Keisha) Blake in *NW*, both second-generation immigrants, are formally distinguished by the amalgamation of numbered, titled clusters. The arranged fragments tell stories that at times parallel, at other times contradict, the titles preceding them. As the intersecting testimonies unravel each plot's mysteries—the destruction and translation of a manuscript, the interpretation of a murder scene, the identification of characters who are unknown or in disguise—I investigate formal patterns that speak to the characters' struggles with identity and provide insight into the complex dissociative processes of a mind. In his work on relational trauma, Bromberg explains that a

collision of subjectivities, a shared understanding of internal experience, is necessary for the "growth of the relational mind" (*The Shadow of the Tsunami* 6). Through the managed seriality of fragments, the textual patterns and disruptions, and the collaborative transmission of stories in the two books, the novels' structural frameworks communicate and enact the characters' otherwise inexpressible self-negotiations as they learn to bear their attachments in the face of loss.

My third chapter, "Cyclical Fragments: Progression of Selves in *Sunris* and *Progress of Stories*," compares the ways in which Nichols's *Sunris* (1996) and (Riding) Jackson's *Progress of Stories* (1982 edition, first published 1935) arrange the rhythms of cyclical forms to embody self-identity within a multifaceted, fragmented world, especially when that identity is itself fragmented. Nichols's poetry emphasizes scattered multiplicity, bringing into relation disparate narratives and places in ways that illustrate Édouard Glissant's definition of "creolization," while (Riding) Jackson attempts to merge the pieces of her stories into a monochromatic guise of oneness: to reject the notion of relativity in interpretations of meaning and to distill possibilities into a singular reality. In both works, a diasporic tension lingers between longing for and liberation from roots and groundedness. The authors' fundamental divergence in imagining identity reaches the level of language: while Nichols fuses, alters, and expands words, (Riding) Jackson essentializes them. The two writers' focus on discovering one's genuine self extends to younger audiences. In their works directed toward children, such as Nichols's *Paint Me a Poem* and (Riding) Jackson's *Four Unposted Letters to Catherine*, the authors endeavor to teach the next generation how to see themselves in the world anew through creativity and linguistic play.

My fourth chapter, "Linguistic Fragments: Forms of Sound in Walcott's and Brodsky's Poetic Translations," brings the earlier chapters' concerns about trauma, identity, and language into the works of these two poets who were also each other's readers and close friends. The critical essays Walcott and Brodsky composed on each other's poetry collections and the poems they dedicated to each other exhibit convergence in their uses of language and form to teach audiences about the realities of displacement and fragmentation. No matter in which language Brodsky and Walcott write, much of their poetry is inherently polylingual and often investigates the implications of entangled linguistic attachments. Drawing on Homi Bhabha's explication of translation, I show that while the content of Walcott's and Brodsky's English poems functions as an entryway for monolingual English readers, or at least those unfamiliar with the poets' other languages, the formal choices and the manipulation of sound in the verse—including choices in translation directly tied to recitation—subtly immerse readers in the poets' own fragmented and complexly polylingual contexts. In other words, Brodsky and Walcott offer ways in which Anglophone authors can evoke a plurality of language worlds in spite of writing in English.

I am grateful to the financial support from the University of California Humanities Research Institute and UCSB's Graduate Division that enabled me to conduct archival research for the dissertation in the Archive for New Poetry at the University of California, San Diego, which houses the Charles Reznikoff Papers, and in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library, which houses the Laura Riding Jackson Papers. The composition of the Reznikoff text on which I focus in my first chapter was a decades-long process, and (Riding) Jackson returned to her early work later in life to republish with added commentary and shifted intentions, which I discuss in my third chapter, so archival study was particularly

helpful for tracking changes in the authors' mindsets and concerns as exhibited in their draft revisions and series of correspondences.

Benjamin portrays translation as an endlessly transformative process: "a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life" (71). The emphasis on the afterlife of the text—the continued existence of meaning in new contexts within rearranged fragments—is crucial for thinking about the intersection of translation studies and diaspora studies. Like diaspora, and like translation, the fragment signifies both rupture and linkage, both loss and presence. My project, situated at the crux of poetic studies and diasporic studies, connects through a series of close readings two diasporic literary communities whose resonances and relationships are insufficiently discussed in contemporary scholarship. But the framework itself pertains beyond this particular coterie of writers: at its core, *At Home in Pieces* demonstrates ways in which through formal and linguistic methods, global Anglophone poetics can render and grant readers a felt access to the lived realities of forms of displacement.

II. Spectral Fragments: Mourning and Movement in *Testimony* and *Bill of Rights*

This World is not conclusion,
A Species stands beyond –
Invisible, as Music –
But positive, as Sound –
—Emily Dickinson, Fr. 373

"We cannot read erasures," he said, "but we can imagine reading what has been erased for good."
"A reading of death."
— Edmond Jabès, *The Little Book of Unsuspected Subversion*

Ghostly strains of music and memory define and bind together Charles Reznikoff's *Testimony: The United States (1885-1915): Recitative* (1934-1978) with Fred D'Aguiar's *Bill of Rights* (1998). As diasporic poets, Reznikoff's and D'Aguiar's shared sense of straddling multiple selves and multiple worlds makes them particularly attuned to the past that continues to haunt the present. Their poems dwell in the co-existing realm that Dickinson describes as *absent* from view yet *present* to feeling, viscerally perceived and heard "as Music." They seek the suppressed, neglected stories in the invisible yet envisionable narrative gaps of Jabès's "erasures." Both poets imagine ghostly encounters, conversations within the fissures between languages and words, with music as the medium. D'Aguiar and Reznikoff engage the possibility of reading and hearing "death," what once was there but exists no longer—spaces among fragments, traceless palimpsests. *Testimony* and *Bill of Rights* join music and fragmented narrative to communally mourn the disregarded past, acknowledge transnational trauma and shame, and move toward a new vision of what constitutes "home."

Interwoven Traumas: Living with Ghosts

Reznikoff created the poetic sequences of *Testimony* from the witness reports of hundreds of legal cases spanning across three decades (1885-1915). The poems recount stories of fatal exchanges and lives destroyed—by the political and social environment, by the realities of prejudice and discrimination, and by the industrialization of the economy. D'Aguiar's *Bill of Rights* is a poetic series that centers on the 1978 mass murder-suicide of 918 people, mostly Americans, in the Guyana jungle, the location of their promised sanctuary to where they followed their religious leader Jim Jones. The people who settled in Jonestown left the U.S. to escape racism, capitalism, and economic inequality—in short, the issues that lead to the court cases Reznikoff transforms into poetry.[8] D'Aguiar and Reznikoff make heard the stories of the silenced masses whose individual narratives are otherwise forgotten. Jacques Derrida writes in his "Exordium" to *Spectres of Marx* that learning to live justly requires learning to "live *with* ghosts," forging a more intimate relationship with memory, across generations (Derrida xvii-xviii). Derrida's conceptualization of justice helps delineate the relationship in Reznikoff's and D'Aguiar's texts between sensitivity toward the past and commitment toward a better present. According to Derrida, justice is not possible

> without the principle of some *responsibility*, beyond all living present, within that which disjoins the living present, before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, be they victims of wars, political or other kinds of violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist, or other kinds of exterminations, victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism or any of the forms of totalitarianism." (Derrida

[8] Jones's promises of racial equality and purported compassion for the elderly and the young led to the following Jonestown demographics: around 70% African American, 20% senior citizens (ages sixty-one and older), and 33% children. For more detailed statistics, see Rebecca Moore, "An Update on the Demographics of Jonestown."

xviii)

Reznikoff and D'Aguiar, writing from liminal positions between cultures and familiar with the effects of intergenerational trauma, bring to light the "ghosts" for whom people share guilt but refuse responsibility.

The poets' backgrounds impact the shape and focus of their work: D'Aguiar and Reznikoff write about events that they did not directly experience but consider significant for their self-understanding, in some way as fragments of their identities. Raised in two of the largest English-speaking cities in the world, New York and London, Reznikoff and D'Aguiar spent their childhoods interlacing the realms of those cities with the languages and traditions of their immigrant families. Reznikoff was born to Russian-Jewish immigrants in Brownsville, at the time a predominantly Yiddish-speaking neighborhood in Brooklyn often referred to as a "Jewish ghetto." Stephen Fredman suggests that *Testimony* portrays "wandering, exile, and arbitrary persecution—ills that characterize much of Jewish history—as suffered by Americans of the lower classes" (Fredman 113). In his "Scraps of Prose," Reznikoff writes that he is "very much interested in communities—as well as individuals. After all, man is a social animal. And I wrote and write about Jewish communities because I think I know most about that kind of a community and its problems" ("Scraps of Prose," emphasis Reznikoff's).[9] D'Aguiar was born in London to Guyanese parents, spent ten years as a young child in Guyana, and then lived in England again until moving to the U.S. in his thirties. D'Aguiar describes his time in London as perpetually in flux, for a long time feeling

[9] Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Peter Quatermain point out that the word "testimony" further creates a bridge between the Jewish community and larger social structures by marking the spot "where legal and religious discourses meet" (DuPlessis and Quatermain 16). They note two passages in particular from the Book of Exodus: in Exodus 25:16, the Covenant itself is a "testimony," and in Exodus 16:34, the Ark of the Covenant is "the Testimony," and Aaron places the manna before it as a witness for generations of God's intervention in human time (Exodus 16:34).

"away from home (Guyana) and never quite in step with the rhythm of London," until gradually, "Guyana became more remote with time and . . . London took root" ("Home Is Always Elsewhere" 196). D'Aguiar considers Jonestown in relation to his own Guyanese past and transcontinental movement, as well as in relation to the massacre's impact on both Guyana and the U.S. *Testimony* and *Bill of Rights* have as much to do with the poets' own experiences of place and displacement as with a larger vision of social structures and human interactions. Psychoanalyst Daniel Stern explains that people live intersubjectively, "surrounded by others' intentions, feelings, and thoughts that interact with our own, so that what is ours and what belongs to others starts to break down" (Stern 77). If we read *Bill of Rights* and *Testimony* as reflecting the system of relationality that Stern describes, then we begin to see the connections among the voices within each text, the implications of each work that situate the poetry within a larger historical discussion, and the relations between the two texts that break down their boundaries and place them in conversation about the living past that is haunting the country. Multiple levels of translation occur in *Testimony* and *Bill of Rights*: from history to poetry, from personal experience to public concern, from linear stories in court cases and the media to serial fragments that place details adjacently and intertwine perspectives.[10] But the purpose of the two works is not just representation—their force is in acknowledgment and mourning. The theologian and philosopher Martin Buber writes that "Presence is not what is evanescent and passes but what confronts us, waiting and enduring" (Buber 64). Conscious engagement with the ghosts of shared shame and trauma can teach us to "live with them" rather than try to move past them, to recontextualize the past

[10] Incidentally and disturbingly, Jones also used the term "translation" for the process of the communal death and alleged movement to some blissful afterlife (Wendy M. Edmonds, "Followership in Peoples Temple: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly").

in order to reconstitute a fuller, resonant present. Buber's analysis of relations helps us trace the different relationships within the texts, distinguish the writers' attachments to the people in the poems, and conceptualize our own position with respect to the subjectivities we encounter.

D'Aguiar and Reznikoff use musical arrangement to manage traumatic moments and move the reader through the often disjointed fragments of the poems. The recursive patterns in structure and the punctuated interruptions evoke the effects of a musical score. Ian Cross argues in his work on music's role in evolution and development that music "embodies, entrains, and transposably intentionalizes time in sound and action" (Cross 24). The multiplicity of meanings in music, what Cross calls its "floating intentionality," is what allows its embodied effects to function in a variety of contexts: as a medium for "communication with the dead for the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea . . . a mechanism for restructuring social relations, as in the *domba* initiation of the Venda . . . or in the remaking of cultural narratives, as in klezmer," all distinct circumstances in which "music's meaning is rarely if ever explicit" (27, 23). Rather than reason, what unites the use of music in all of these instances is the element of communal experience—a sensation within one's own body, yet an encounter with sensation that is shared. Music is key in "the development of 'primary intersubjectivity' based on the 'sharing of emotional states'" and "the sharing of patterned time with others" (26). Reznikoff and D'Aguiar adapt the shared quality of music for their poetic forms and their process of remembering the past. Many traditions involve musical repetition in funeral and mourning rituals. Two such examples are "Kaddish" in Judaism and "Nine Night" in several countries in the Caribbean. In an important sense, *Testimony* and *Bill*

of Rights literarily reflect these traditions in their cyclical, polyphonous approaches to mourning.

The Mourner's Kaddish must be recited in community for eleven months after the death of a loved one. Jewish law does not require personal belief or understanding in saying the prayer; rather, as Anita Diamant writes, the "sounds of the words are more important than their definitions," the text "secondary to the emotional experience of its recitation. The meaning only comes clear when given communal voice" (Diamant 14). Mourners repeat this prayer three times daily for almost a year, and later repeat it annually. The prayer itself consists of repeated syllables and vowels that conclude with a plea for peace. Diamant suggests that Kaddish helps to "replace grudges and guilt with *shalom*—peace for the mourner, peace among the mourners," affirming life in a time when living feels impossible and the fragility of life is most evident (20). Reznikoff's poem "Kaddish" opens with the prayer's English translation[11] and follows with four stanzas that begin and end in a similar way to the prayer, effectively "sampling" the prayer, but then, Reznikoff expands the scope of each stanza, praying for people suffering in all places, especially within the city. For example, in the second stanza, he wishes safety for all in daily danger:

> upon Israel and upon all who meet with unfriendly glances, sticks and stones and
>
> names –
>
> on posters, in newspapers, or in books to last,
>
> chalked on asphalt or in acid on glass,
>
> shouted from a thousand thousand windows by radio;

[11] "Upon Israel and upon the Rabbis, and upon their disciples and upon all the disciples of their disciples, and upon all who engage in the study of the Torah in this place and in every place, unto them and unto you be abundant peace, grace, lovingkindness, mercy, long life, ample sustenance and salvation, from their Father who is in Heaven. And say ye Amen." (Kaddish de Rabbanan, trans. R. Travers Herford)

who are pushed out of class-rooms and rushing trains,

whom the hundred hands of a mob strike,

and whom jailers strike with bunches of keys, with revolver butts;

to them and to you

in this place and in every place

safety (*Separate Way* 171-172)

Each stanza ends with a different noun—"peace," "safety," "a living," "life"—a prayer for each concept to solidify into a protected right. The concern about the lack of these rights is a central issue for the speaker of D'Aguiar's *Bill of Rights* and an underlying theme of Reznikoff's *Testimony*. *Testimony* could be read as a form of "Kaddish"—a mourning based in repetition that cannot undo the past but enables a process of grief and calls for a present that is different, safer, kinder. Another Jewish mourning ritual, that of "sitting shiva," a week-long period when members of the community visit the mourning family to bring food and share stories about the deceased, parallels the traditional ceremony of Nine Night.

Nine Night involves songs, speeches, drumming, drink and food at the "dead yard," the home of the deceased, until the "duppy," the spirit of the dead, has moved on from the world of the living on the ninth night following the death (Chevannes 339-340).[12] Grace Nichols describes a "Tropical Death" and the Nine Night ritual in her collection *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*:

The fat black woman want

some bawl

[12] For more information on Nine Night wakes and how they have changed over the years, see Barry Chevannes's "Between the Living and the Dead: The Apotheosis of Rastafari Heroes" in J.W. Pulis's *Religion, Diaspora and Cultural Identity: A Reader in the Anglophone Caribbean* and Jean Besson's *Martha Brae's Two Histories: European Expansion and Caribbean Culture-Building in Jamaica*.

no quiet jerk tear wiping

a polite hearse withdrawal

The fat black woman want

All her dead rights

first night

third night

nine night

all the sleepless droning

red-eyed wake nights (“Tropical Death” 19)

While “Kaddish” uses the realm of liturgy to confront the lack of protected human rights, Nichols’s “Tropical Death” incorporates the political language of rights into her demand for mourning rites—a person’s “dead rights” thus illuminating the entanglement of life and death in the conversation of ethics. As Nichols depicts it, the Nine Night ritual comes with the expectation of sound, feeling (“some bawl”), community (“all the sleepless droning / red-eyed wake nights), and dutiful, respectful repetition of the mourning traditions (“first night / third night / nine night”). The custom of setting up a table for the spirit (for example, with water, salt, lime, and rum) and the length of time that passes between death and burial (up to nine days) implies a period of time when there exists an ongoing material relationship between the physical and the spiritual worlds. D’Aguiar’s last poem from his *Elegies* sequence on the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting imagines the corporeal encounter between these two worlds:

I eat the spoor of the dead

When I breathe, when I walk, when I run.

They rise from underground and stay airborne.

Some lodge in the corners of my eyes and form crusts.

Others line the corners of my mouth and the lines turn

Down giving me a sour look, a frown or complaint.

. . .

Until more of me is dead than living.

I am done, I am done, I am done. (*Elegies* 121)

D'Aguiar's bodily grieving process in this poem is interwoven with the bodies of the dead, whose traces overtake all senses and crevices. As Nichols's speaker in "Tropical Death" describes the Nine Night traditions of communal musical mourning as her "rights," D'Aguiar's *Bill of Rights* offers that possibility of communal mourning to the people of Jonestown, who were deprived of those rights. Both *Bill of Rights* and *Testimony* experiment with particular traditions of music in mourning for envisioning a public grieving process and dealing with trauma at the national and transnational level.

Trials of the Dead

Testimony takes on the challenge of acknowledging America's reality—out of anger, but not out of hopelessness—with the imperative to present this reality from a multitude of standpoints. David Ignatow reads *Testimony* as an expression of "grief at the loss of opportunity this country had once to raise itself to the heights dreamed of by its founders," with the hope that it "someday would act as a therapeutic with which to cleanse this country of its shame" (Ignatow 75). In an interview with L.S. Dembo, Reznikoff mentioned a

reviewer who wrote that when reading *Testimony*, "he saw a world of horror and violence"; Reznikoff responded that he "didn't invent the world, but [he] felt it" (Dembo interview 107). Though the court-based content of the text purports to privilege "fact" over "feeling," feeling haunts its form. Reznikoff organized the poems by year, region, and topic of crime and injury, an approach stemming from his 1930s work for *Corpus Juris*, an encyclopedia of U.S. law at the state and federal levels.[13] Notably subtitled "*Recitative*," Reznikoff's work manifests its performative intent—the necessity to read aloud and follow the scripted patterns and shifts—and its intermediate position between speech and song. The categories and sub-categories repeat throughout *Testimony*, so formally, the whole text is structured in overlapping cycles. Mid-motion, the recitative is composed for fluidity in reading, "words and phrases flowing as the thought; / to be read just as common speech / but for stopping at the turn of each line— / and this like a rest in music or a turn in the dance" (*Early History of a Writer* 133). Displaying the statistics of common cases might momentarily astound but not move—so Reznikoff's rhythms guide readers through specific but hypnotically recurrent individual events. Each poem's ending is shocking but also predictable—after the initial few variations, we can foresee, depending on the sequence category, that most will conclude with a hand or foot suddenly crushed, an abrupt accident, murder, or another form of violence typically resulting from someone's intentions or indifference. There is never catharsis or satisfaction, but something about the repetition keeps the reader moving forward. Like music, it *provokes* meaning rather than imposes it. Charles Bernstein suggests that for Reznikoff, each instance and detail "is not a 'luminous particular' in Pound's sense—not extraordinary,

[13] Reznikoff's job involved reading volumes of judicial opinions and composing summaries for the encyclopedia. According to Marie Syrkin, his wife, Reznikoff's slow examination and diligent analysis of each case, which he wrote not quite in the prescribed legal jargon, led a supervisor to tell him, "When I hire a carpenter, I don't want a cabinet maker" (Syrkin 45). A less flexible superior soon fired him.

even if indeed luminous"; rather, Reznikoff chooses each fragment in terms of "Metonymy: the fragment as substitute for, hinting at, something else, something that only it can stand for, is an instance of a manifestation or emanation" ("Reznikoff's Nearness" 224-225).

The accumulating narratives of *Testimony* show perpetual failure in constituting community—failures in living together interdependently rather than as closed off, self-serving mechanical entities. Both Reznikoff and D'Aguiar are aware of home as a shifting, plural notion—in D'Aguiar's words, "open-ended, fragile and vulnerable. Each generation it seems has to re-define home for itself" ("Profile of Wilson Harris" 72). Fredman suggests that "[f]rom a diasporic perspective, the world is a realm of multiple identities and affiliations where one remains at home not in a Sacred Land but in a Land of In-Between" (74). What links Reznikoff and D'Aguiar is their continual revision of home to include others—fragile connections to near and distant people, to each generation, to creatures across spaces and histories. In *Testimony*, Reznikoff makes visible networks of human interactions and how they are affected by the social and economic structures that frame the poetry.[14] The poems about family, in theory the most intimate relational structure, examine what constructs a home, what could cause a feeling of homelessness within one's home, what defines a home beyond the family. Several of the other sequence categories are more patently violent, and some deal directly with the U.S. immigrant experience.[15] However, Reznikoff aims to find the issues at the core of these other cases and show how they manifest in everyday concerns, what most people living in that time period would understand and experience. More than a

[14] Based on a count of the number of pages devoted to each topic, about a quarter (23.5%) of all the material falls under the categories "Domestic Scenes" and "Family Difficulties," and 13.4% falls under "Property."

[15] For example, a poem that details a teenage girl's move from Turkish Armenia and another family's trick that pushed her into an unwanted marriage (452-453, *Avakian v. Avakian*), or a poem about the "gas pipe thug" who attacked Jewish and Chinese storeowners (472-473, *State v. La Rose*).

third of the cases in *Testimony* relate to the quieter, prevalent horrors of the "near, the close at hand," in Bernstein's words ("Reznikoff's Nearness" 225). As he wrote these poems in the 1930s, Reznikoff was thinking particularly about the Great Depression, and much of his efforts involved figuring out how the country (and world) reached its present situation, and how such knowledge could help grapple with the current circumstances. Mutual recognition and reciprocal acknowledgment are missing from most of the relationships in the "Property" and "Domestic" sections in *Testimony*—most of the relations are characterized by gaps, withheld information, disconnection of minds, marriages with no compassion, and cold, one-sided relationships.

Bernstein describes Reznikoff's poetic project as not about sharing "reports of things seen . . . but bearing witness to things not seen, overlooked" ("Reznikoff's Nearness" 225-226). The second "Property" sequence exemplifies the ways in which Reznikoff bears witness to people left unacknowledged or silenced, denied community or home. This sequence varies in the type of crime or violence that it depicts—negligence, theft, disputes over wills, murder, treachery, conspiracy—but a form of betrayal is prevalent in each poem. The sequence's eleventh poem in particular exemplifies the formal methods through which Reznikoff takes the reader through the motions of loss: using choice details and their placement, he compels attachment to the victim, stimulates a process of grief through an extended, meaningless loss, deepens the grief through further betrayal of the dead, and in the poem's position within a larger, repeating sequence, reveals this individual example as representative of a larger cycle of people constantly wronging each other. Beneath the legal surface of a dispute over a deed documented in *Scott v. Scott* (1888), the poem deals with complex webs of connections, responses, and care. Within the poem, a man named Roy

tricks his cousin Emily on her deathbed into leaving him all of her property. The almost compulsive repetition of monetary calculations of acres in the first stanza—four lines in a row[16]—makes evident Roy's general focus: the potential for profit rather than family relations.

Like in a ballad,[17] Reznikoff slowly releases new variables with each stanza, foreshadowing the events that will take place by the end. A fuller picture of the family gradually develops as the poem builds a framework of interacting characters: a widow whose husband bequeathed land to his children and who provides a home for her nephew until recognizing his ulterior motives, and her daughter, who appears unwilling to distrust her cousin, against all odds. The second stanza, which primarily conveys the relationship between Roy and Emily's mother, is the shortest one in the poem but extends over the longest period of time:

> Roy was her cousin
>
> but his attentions to Emily were so displeasing to her mother
>
> that she refused to let him board with them any longer.
>
> Emily then left her mother's house
>
> and went to live with her uncle, his father. (62)

Without providing any dialogue or specific details, the stanza compresses time into feeling and action: we see a relative's perception of Roy ("so displeasing") and can deduce his

[16] "Roy had been authorized to sell certain land . . . for one of them—at nine dollars an acre, / and was to have a dollar an acre for making the sale; / he sold the land for twelve dollars an acre / and accounted for it at nine dollars an acre" (62).

[17] Geoffrey A. Wolff writes in his review of *Testimony*, "There is something remarkable about the way Renzikoff has transformed the daily fare of violence into a calm, flowing and significant chronicle. He exhibits the tact and touch of a balladeer in the lyric sadness of his dark entertainments" ("Poet Sees Violence of Our Age with a Macabre Eye").

persuasive power over Emily (as she eventually "left her mother's house"), but on Roy's end, we observe no hints of his emotions. The third stanza, a confrontation between Roy and Emily's brother, consists of two sentences: the first, a single line, succinctly states Roy's role in Emily's decision-making regarding the land "that their father left to his children" ("Roy acted for Emily in transacting her business"), while the second spreads over nine lines of Roy's attempts to contradict the facts (62). As Roy defends himself against any suggestions of liability, he inconspicuously inverts the subject in power: when the brother asks about Emily's intentions, Roy instinctively responds about his own ("*he intended* to let Emily do as she please") before recovering himself and circling back to the language of the initial inquiry ("did not know what *Emily intended* to do") (62). The use of polysyndeton is especially prominent in the stanza—the repetitive "and" holds together the pieces of Roy's tenuous, tortuous answer. Reznikoff's arrangement of Roy's thought process echoes the first stanza: Roy sees people only as factors affecting his likelihood of making a profit. In stark contrast with Roy's manipulative mindset, Emily's letter to Roy in the fourth stanza highlights her unconditional extension of kinship not only toward people but even in the case of someone else's pet: when she considers joining Roy out West, she asks, "what shall I do with Nellie's squirrel / if I go?" (*Testimony* 62) Reznikoff's inclusion of this is a tool: the occasional sweet details in *Testimony*, like "Nellie's squirrel" in this instance or two brothers working "cheerfully enough" in a different poem,[18] relax the reader and make the inevitably awful endings even more disconcerting (235). While much of Emily's letter is paraphrased and edited from the original one presented as evidence in court, the concern about the pet is

[18] In this poem, "The boys had just been brought to this country," two young boys who had not yet learned English begin working at a factory, and one of them loses a hand to part of a machine "which the other boys had been told to stay clear of" (*Testimony* 236).

delivered largely word for word, perhaps due to a mixture of Reznikoff's pleasure from the letter's language and its stark contrast with Roy's attitude.

Over the next few stanzas, Emily goes West to look at her inherited land with hopes of also marrying Roy, but then, she falls ill. The rushed sixth stanza reveals that

> she was sick:
>
> the doctor said she had typhoid—
>
> and she never got any better
>
> but worse and worse until she died. (63)

In both focus and structure, Emily's deteriorating health is central, situated as the middle and shortest line in the sixth stanza. After the time-arresting colon, the subsequent three lines condense the rest of her life into diagnosis and death. Rather than concluding with the doctor's words, the dash after the verdict hauntingly positions the reader in post-death time, looking back, as Emily decides, "If I have no chance, I want to marry Roy" (63). The seventh stanza, in which Emily speaks to the doctor with Roy standing in the background, is the poem's only section with no instances of enjambment. There is no hesitation or uncertainty, no broken phrases that awkwardly drop into the next lines, regarding either Emily's death or her determination to marry Roy beforehand. In the seventh and eighth stanzas, Emily refers to her cousin by name when she speaks *about* him and her final desires ("want to marry Roy," "wanted Roy to draw up a will"), but Roy is merely a pronoun in instances of dialogue and direct description of his actions ("turned to him," "He went out," "He answered"). The eighth stanza, which features the sole appearance of the word "property," is also the only point in the poem in which Emily and Roy communicate directly—and the short dialogue confirms the reader's knowledge about both characters from preceding dialogues. Emily's

straightforward questions about Roy's plans to keep promises remain unanswered, and rather than replying with a clear "yes" in response to Emily's "Is that enough?" Roy again displaces attention away from himself ("never mind me") and states that he already "ha[s] enough." The syntax of the eighth stanza's middle line, noticeably the longest line of the poem, positions Roy on one side and all other family on the opposite, echoing the poem's first line[19] in reversed order: "and she said she would leave him two thousand dollars and the rest to her family" (63).

The final two stanzas, which recount the wedding scene and its aftermath, are the most difficult, demoralizing parts of the poem because of the drastic difference in perspective, Emily's blindness to that difference, and Roy's abuse of Emily's blindness. As Emily grows progressively weaker, the poem entwines the reader's consciousness with Emily's through her sensuous experience of the ceremony, as she turns to speak to a man she mistakes for "the doctor" and is too disoriented even to see the minister ("*That* is the minister")—and then the poem pulls the reader back into the eyes of a witness with the ambiguity of the last line: "and she seemed very happy" (64). In the concluding stanza, Roy misleads Emily into signing a deed leaving everything to him:

> Roy went to his room to write out her will
> as she had told him to—
> so he said.
> But what he wrote was a deed
> leaving all she had
> to himself,

[19] "The rest of the family did not like him" (62).

and she signed it.

The signature was hers

but she had been too weak

to read what he wrote. (64)

The poem's last ten lines are visibly shorter in comparison, mostly monosyllabic words and typically four or five words per line. Reznikoff's notes on composition define what he calls the "secret of effective narrative verse" as "long lines . . . alternating occasionally to avoid monotony with short lines—and a series of short lines for emphasis; say, at the end" (The Secret of Effective Narrative Verse). Reznikoff's account of this "secret" seems tied to the ratio of regular speech—the longer lines that do not clearly adhere to rules—to musical verse—the interspersed shorter lines that defamiliarize and stylize regular speech. The key to effective poetry, then, is its manipulation of form and the rhythmic, managed order of perceptions, alternating between lingering and rushing time and eliciting states of feeling through recitation. Looking at the physical structure of the poem, we see the alternating structure Reznikoff describes through the oscillating wave on the right side of the page, and he indeed concludes the eleventh poem with short, significant lines. Perhaps the narrowness of the lines emphasizes Roy's stinginess: his egotism is particularly highlighted in the isolation and brevity of the single line "to himself." Or maybe in recitation, the pauses at the line breaks simulate Emily's shortness of breath in her moments of greatest weakness (the poem twice calls her "too weak"), which are also her moments of greatest betrayal by someone for whom she sacrificed everything. The music of the narrative poem builds along with Emily's trust, and then quickly dwindles away with lines as short and quick as Roy's concluding deception. The poem ends on a note quite similar to its beginning: Roy is

"authorized" to take care of a financial situation one way, but he lies to the trusting parties and expands his authority in order to maximize his gains. Throughout the entire poem, Roy has no moments of genuine, direct dialogue because he acts the same way with people as with land and property—never as equal subjects, always positionable objects. In Buberian terms, Roy's connections can be categorized only as "I-It," a view of others only as "the things that he experiences and uses" (Buber 63).

Emily and Roy's narrative is situated within a set of four other poems in the same sequence that depict a contractual dispute or loss of assets—a mosaic of the elements of loss and grief the reader has already experienced but in altered forms. Alienated from their original contexts, they appear to all improvise on the same theme in different keys. The twelfth poem shares factors in common with Emily and Roy's story, but Jane Dill's family situation is more financially difficult than Emily's. Therefore, although the attention of Robin Gray, a widower in his sixties, is unwanted by Jane, a sixteen year old girl, and her mother, like Emily's mother, "tried to dissuade him" at first, they both eventually "consented: / after all, he was well-to-do, / had a house . . . and ten thousand dollars in a mortgage" (*Testimony* 65). The proximity of these two cases emphasizes the "duplicit character of legal testimony—its claims to objective truth while reflecting occupational and class positions" (Davidson 150). Emily's momentary happiness is based on a lie, but Jane does not even have that, so after discovering that the stability for which she traded her youth and body was a fiction, that Robin's son got everything promised to her, she is left with nothing, not even illusion: "When Jane came home / she found / that even the new furniture in the house was gone" (66). Pausing in the lengthy space after the brief two-word line, the ending of the poem emphasizes the lack after "found," the emptiness that remains in Jane's life.

The ninth poem is effectively a condensed version of the eleventh, featuring only the part when a man pushes a dying woman to sign her name on a will until she "finally ma[kes] a cross instead. / Her hand has to be guided even in this, / and she kept gasping for breath" (*Testimony* 61). In the tenth poem, the factual information is also scarce: "Mr. Siren," aptly named, tries through condescension and flattery to make what we assume is a faulty business deal with a reluctant Mr. Stokes. His attempts become increasingly desperate and angry by the repetition at the end: "Come . . . sign it . . . Come on and sign it. / Sign it. Sign it!" (*Testimony* 61). Time moves much more quickly in these poems—rather than building up, the whole content is climactic: lines alternate more abruptly between long and short, and the phrasing and punctuation alert the reader to overtones of dishonesty.

Poems three through seven repeat the cycle of pain and distortion, but they turn more toward the psychic consequences for the witnesses. Reznikoff focuses not on the images of particular crimes' unforgiving brutality but rather on the impressions of the stranger who comes across Blake "lying in the road, / his pockets empty," of the people who find Reilly's wallet "empty—in a coal shed . . . in a corner black with cobwebs," of the boys who "took a couple of shovels / and digging down / found clothing, shoes, and a pair of spectacles" until reaching Mrs. Blunt's foot "with her stockings on" (*Testimony* 56-58). Reznikoff places emphasis on the shock of coming across the discarded fragments of bodies and stories—unearthed layer by layer in the scattered pieces of the text. Reznikoff transfers the shock to the reader through the shortness of line length at the key moments of horror in each poem: "lying in the road," "but no answer," "and digging down" (*Testimony* 56-57). By shifting the focus sharply on those who encounter the fragments afterward, Reznikoff engages not only

with the crime at hand, but also with moments that continue to haunt after the initial scene of violence.

The thirteenth poem's anonymous dialogue takes on the issue of "justification" behind a false statement that could result in sacrificing someone's life for money:

"I want to ask you
a fair question:
did he say
that he killed the woman?"

"No.
But if I say
he said that he killed the woman,
I am to get half the reward.
He is just as well off
to lay in jail
as to get out and get mobbed;
for if he gets out
he will be mobbed."

"It is pretty hard
to swear a man's life away
for a little money."

"Yes,

but this is pretty hard times,

and I am pretty hard up."

We can read this poem as a decontextualized summary of the various combinations of tricks and desperation throughout the "Property" sequence. Reznikoff uses quotation marks sporadically throughout the poems, but the pure overheard, colloquial quality of this poem particularly resonates with the sequence as a whole, as well as displaces it from the rest; its positioning at the conclusion gives it almost a sense of dark comedy. The poem mediates between the written text and the spoken word, between reality and how it is perceived or willfully described, between the ideal of justice and the precarious nature of law, life, and human interactions. However, the poem is not explicitly judgmental, and the reader is distanced from judgment due to the anonymity of the speakers. Judgment is similarly complicated in the eighth poem, the story of Meyer leaving all he owns to his tenants and servants, the Trosts. Reznikoff makes us question and analyze our *own* instinctive assumptions, biases, and mind-reading skills, in effect illuminating the impossibility of actual objectivity. How can we be certain of whom to trust after the patterns of deceit in other poems? Is the proximity of "Trost" to "trust" ironic, or is the author really asking us not to be suspicious of all exhibitions of kindness? Can we trust the potential to create genuine kinship and connection in this particular case despite of their failures in so many other instances? (In the real case, the tenants *were*, it seems, genuinely good people who took care of Meyer.) The beginning of the "Property" sequence goes further in this direction: the first two poems, instead of rehearsing the numerous forms of manipulation and egotism, provide images of personal valor and collective responsibility.

Unlike the rest of the poems in this sequence, the first two do not immediately exhibit a clear human cause, but they do feature humans in groups rather than separate individuals. The poems address the consequences of a conflagration (moving backward through the sequence, we might see this as a metaphor). In the second poem, a grain elevator catches on fire. Half of the poem is hypnotic in the sounds of its details about eleven days of burning wheat scattering with "burning timbers" that "buried the wall" as "the wheat was burning briskly" until the next sudden event: "thirty feet of the wall / fell / on some of the men" (55-56). The single-word line that follows multiple long lines freezes us in the moment of action, pulling back the time of the poem as the wall topples over "gangs of men" who were working "day and night" to put out the fire (55). The first poem provides a less determinate alternative to the second: the people are denoted only by the plural pronoun "they," and we never find out the outcome of their actions. The poem opens with "One of them" seeing the smoke from a fire growing dangerously quickly in dry conditions. The line that stands out in the midst of all the description of smoke, wind, and fire is: "They had only shovels / to keep the fire from spreading" (55). The anonymous "they," without regard to challenge or futility, instead of running to safety, remain in order to protect their "neighborhood" with the little they have available to them—facing a wall of fire, together (55). This responsibility to the community, a recognition of the needs of others, distinguishes this "they" from the rest of the people in the "Property" sequence.

In contrast to the objectification and use of Emily, Jane Dill, and other named and unnamed characters who are never treated as partners in human interactions, "they" work together, in relation with one another. In Buber's terms, transitioning from a relational connection instead of experiential, based in reciprocity rather than mere impression or

objectification, is the movement from I-It to I-Thou. An I-Thou connection involves acknowledging the unified entirety of the other being, "included and inseparably fused," rather than seeing only "a condition that can be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities" (Buber 58-59). While the structure of Roy and Emily's family was not conducive to any genuine reciprocity, the temporary kinship of the "they" fighting against fire allows for a glimpse or trace of the trust and interdependence that "home" could be.

Though composed of phrases borrowed from real court reports, the poems of *Testimony* are largely not equivalent to the cases from which they are sampled. Discussing his own experience reading law cases, Reznikoff writes that mere names were all that "was left of eager argument and eager parties . . . all the blood—the heartache and the heartening—gone out of the words / and only, as a pattern for thinking, / the cool bones of the judge's reasoning" (*Early History of a Writer* 131). The point of differentiation between case and poem here is the feeling, breathing body—the "blood" and "heartache" invested in the words, phrases arranged by patterns of emotions rather than "cool bones" of "reasoning." Furthermore, Reznikoff's interweaving of different voices emphasizes the dissonance of voices in community to counter the false claim of singular objectivity of law, court, and government. Svetlana Boym in *The Future of Nostalgia* makes a relevant differentiation between "national memory" and "collective memory": while national memory forges "a single teleological plot out of shared everyday recollections," mending the "gaps and discontinuities . . . through a coherent and inspiring tale of recovered identity," collective or cultural memory, comprised of the "common landmarks of everyday life," offers "mere signposts for individual reminiscences that could suggest multiple narratives" with "a certain syntax (as well as a common intonation), but no single plot" (Boym 53). Reznikoff makes

use of words from the courtroom, but they are significant primarily in how they influence human interactions and feelings, how places, structures, and social complexities expand or limit relations. The poetry invokes empathy, but with recognized separation. Michael Davidson suggests that in *Testimony*'s court case poems, "Reznikoff's objectification does not escape empathy but rather provides a series of surfaces upon which identification can be built" (Davidson 151). In its construction through the documented words of witnesses, *Testimony* eludes over-identification or appropriation of experience, instead evoking what Dominick LaCapra calls "empathic unsettlement": a balance between disruption and engagement, empathy in "a form of virtual, not vicarious, experience . . . in which emotional response comes with respect for the other and the realization that the experience of the other is not one's own" (LaCapra xi, 39-40).

Critics have at times described *Testimony* as prosaic, journalistic, too brutal and relentlessly unforgiving, but though the poems certainly come from a place of pain, through their form, they are more inquisitive than prescriptive. *Testimony* ultimately assigns the task of connecting and sense-making of the fragmented pieces to the reader—urging the reader to discover feeling instead of being told what to feel. This democratization of interpretation is characteristic of Objectivistivism. Reznikoff defines the Objectivist writer as one who "does not write directly about his feelings but about what he sees and hears; who is restricted almost to the testimony of a witness in a court of law; and who expresses his feelings indirectly by the selection of his subject-matter and, if he writes in verse, by its music . . . the judges of what you say as a poet are the readers" (Dembo interview 99). Reznikoff also situates Objectivism as a reaction to Tennyson's poetry, which failed to represent the tensions of "the world we knew—the streets of New York or of East Rutherford or Paterson"

(101). On the outskirts of mainstream U.S. culture, most of the Objectivist poets were "differently, but markedly, urban and Jewish," with "factors in each case that made marginalization, even exile, central to the existence, and to the poetry, of each," and most of them learned English as a second or third language (DuPlessis and Quatermain 5). With readers as "judges," Objectivist poetry focuses on showing rather than prescribing in an effort to create a "poetry of ethical interaction" that has a sense of equality among poet, society, and language (Fredman 2-3).

Testimony uniquely[20] goes a step further in compositional restriction: Reznikoff limits himself to the stock of material in court cases, which he suggests exposes the pain people perpetually cause and endure, in both past and present, and allows people's voices to inform the telling of their own stories. He explains that the details from the law cases that enter his poems "have a function of their own—psychological, sociological, and perhaps even poetical . . . the speakers whose words I use are all giving testimony about what they actually lived through . . . What I wanted to do was to create by selection, arrangement, and the rhythm of the words used as a mood or feeling" (Dembo interview 107). Playing with the concept of *Testimony* as a form of "found poetry," Bernstein writes of the work that "to found America means to find it, which means to acknowledge its roots in violence, to tell the lost stories . . . founding means giving witness to what is denied at the expense of the possibility of America" ("Reznikoff's Nearness" 236). Reznikoff's other poetry features a similar productive tension with regard to the U.S. and its distance from the "dream" that people seek within it. One of Reznikoff's poems recalls an instance when his grandfather and uncle were

[20] Along with Reznikoff's *Holocaust*, which uses the same methods

attacked in Brooklyn on their way home from Yom Kippur services, and Reznikoff's grandmother

> . . . was muttering that this country
> was no better than Russia after all;
> and my parents and I felt ashamed
> as if somehow we were to blame,
> and we tried to explain that what happened was unusual,
> that only the neighborhood we lived in was like that,
> and what a wonderful country this was–
> that all our love for it and our praise
> was not unmerited. (*By the Well of Living and Seeing* 312)

These ambivalent sentiments (especially for Reznikoff's parents), of simultaneously feeling "as if somehow we were to blame" and reiterating "what a wonderful country this was," are familiar to immigrants who, facing hostility from neighbors, begin questioning their choice of moving in the first place. While Reznikoff grew up in turn-of-the-century New York, D'Aguiar belongs to the second-generation Caribbean-British writers who emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, during a time filled with particularly virulent racism. D'Aguiar experienced racial riots in England during the 1970s and then the Brixton riots in 1981. Analogous to the secularized Jewish Objectivists, this generation of writers had difficulty identifying with the backgrounds of their parents but felt excluded from a national identity (Pearce 172). In one interview, Frank Birbalsingh tells D'Aguiar that he is struck by the absence of an instinct to blame in his poetry, and D'Aguiar responds in a way that recalls Reznikoff's answer about Objectivism (though perhaps more strategic):

> "You draw your own conclusion, I think. In writing about politics, I felt I should try and step back from any emotional attempt to lay blame or responsibility . . . The appeal of a poem should be in the way the images work. Sentiment would have to be kept under tight rein if I were to communicate a sense of hunger, distress, deprivation, inhumanity, or injustice . . . I felt if I were loyal to certain rules in poetry, I would better serve the community about which I was writing. One of the rules was not to stand on a soap box, because people might stop listening. Another was that people who heard my message might be the very people who perpetrated the terrible things I described, and might not want to listen if I judged them" (Birbalsingh interview 79-80).

The lesson in both *Bill of Rights* and *Testimony* is not in projecting the poets' own views onto readers, but rather kindling responses through the organization and juxtaposition of fragmented moments and sounds.

Traces of Jonestown

Bill of Rights is a collage of recollections told from the viewpoint of a surviving Peoples Temple member in the time leading up to the massacre (November 18, 1978), from the summer of 1977 to the fall of 1978. Over the course of the narrative poem, the speaker gradually unravels under the conditions of Jonestown: at the age of thirty-three,[21] he experiences the loss of his lover and infant, a deafening of senses, and an absence of control. The fictionalized speaker exists in the interstices between the lived reality documented in survivors' reports and the imagined circumstances constructed from D'Aguiar's mind.

[21] Close to D'Aguiar's own age when he began composing this poem

D'Aguiar believes that both detachment and engagement are necessary for a poet: merging visual and aural metaphors, he states, "Insofar as I take on certain personas to write or adopt certain postures depending on the poem I'm writing, I wear a mask. Behind all those disguises there is a tone which I hear as mine however much I might turn up or down the volume" (Dawes interview 232). Though the speaker's actions and feelings in the poem correlate more closely with those described in real accounts, his transnational movement—especially his fluid interweaving of locations—suggests a degree of biographical connection to the poet. Over the course of *Bill of Rights*, we learn that the speaker has lived in both England and Guyana before coming to Jonestown. At several points in the text, the location of the speaker's memories rapidly alternates between the two countries (*Bill of Rights* 38-39, 12-13). We switch with the speaker from sailing near London to futile shopping expeditions in Stabroek market in Georgetown, from the 37 bus that people take to Brixton market to piranhas biting at children who jump into the river (38-39, 12-13).

When D'Aguiar initially heard about Jonestown as an eighteen-year-old in London, he instantly blamed Guyana's politicians for permitting it, but around twenty years later, near the time he composed *Bill of Rights*, he realized that Jim Jones was an "accident waiting to happen" anywhere, and Guyanese soil was "merely a backdrop for his Hollywood apocalypse flick" ("Made in Guyana" 12). No biographical features characterize Jim Jones in *Bill of Rights*—D'Aguiar portrays him merely as a different form of what has long existed in the world, like Reznikoff's metonymic fragments that hint at a larger web of structural problems. In a similarly decentralizing vein, Francisco Bone, the narrator of Wilson Harris's novel *Jonestown*, tells his readers that "[h]eroes run in parallel sometimes with the vague footsteps of hapless multitudes murdered on the battlefield, or in concentration camps, or in

Jonestowns around the globe, and are on occasion the victims of obscure Fate upon ladders and stairways into the Void" (*Jonestown* 179). In *Bill of Rights*, the community of nearly one thousand people, who come to Jonestown with no necessary experience ("*We sang, clapped hands and prayed / For rain, for our cutlass to miss us as we weeded / Before now tending a pot on a window sill*") and starve until "the locals t[ake] pity" and give them hunting and survival advice, rapidly spirals into Jones's dictatorship, a "Friend of Lenin. Friend of Amin. Friend of Stalin" (1, 5). From the start, *Bill of Rights* weaves the events at Jonestown into a larger sociohistorical context, a longer past of cultural imperialism and disaster, through the metaphorical associations and comparison that it pulls into the poetry.

D'Aguiar felt unsettled by both the tragedy itself and the reactions that it elicited from people who heretofore expressed little interest in Guyana—or did not even know of its existence.[22] Finding that his pain was not alleviated by statistical reports, "the hurt wasn't being answered by finding out the numbers," D'Aguiar began thinking about Jonestown as a "psychological investigation" and ways to combat the trauma of what had occurred (Kocz interview).[23] Considering the situation through his own context led D'Aguiar to the multilayered organization of *Bill of Rights*: as his account narrativizes the public occurrence of mass migration and the transnational experience of the Peoples Temple members, it simultaneously entwines it with the private experience of the diasporic consciousness of displacement. His essay "Made in Guyana" examines the effect that Jonestown's legacy had on understanding his own diasporic identity, "how a Guyanese sensibility forms" and "what

[22] Many people asked if D'Aguiar meant "Ghana" when he told them where he grew up. He comments ironically in "Made in Guyana" that it took a calamity to distinguish "Guyana from Ghana once and for all in everyone's mind" (11).

[23] D'Aguiar remarks that "with my psychological nursing background, I always go back to that, because it leaves a habit in your body of looking at people when they're hurting, and addressing the pain" (Kocz interview).

maintains it outside of Guyana" ("Made in Guyana" 1). The consequent fragmentary form that oscillates between public and private, communal and individual, constructs a space for an intersubjective experience shared by the reader, the poet, and the imagined version of Jonestown survivors who, as the poem's conclusion shows, are often too stigmatized or traumatized to be heard. To work through his own complex relationship to Jonestown and to open a space of relation for readers, D'Aguiar constructed this narrative blending places, names, music and lyrics—some recognizable by most, some by few—and fusing them with an imagined speaker who participated in intuitively incomprehensible events. In this way, D'Aguiar's and Reznikoff's projects are inverses of each other: while Reznikoff collected the facts of individual cases and arranged them within a collective tragedy, D'Aguiar took the particular case of the communal tragedy and expanded it to include a history of relevant moments and situations.

D'Aguiar's text is a narrative poem, but it is impossible to pin down to a single timeline: the scattered memories fail to remain within the limits of one historical event, and the cultural references disperse across time and continents. Even the poetic structure varies widely between short, abrupt lines[24] and long, coherent passages.[25] The floating of D'Aguiar's poetic sequences across time, space, and voices corresponds to the philosopher and psychoanalyst Robert Stolorow's depiction of trauma breaking up the "unifying thread of temporality" as the traumatic experience is "freeze-framed into an eternal present" (Stolorow 19). Simultaneously, the polyphonic quality of the text helps the reader relate to D'Aguiar's

[24] For example, p. 21 features several single-word lines, with the longest line containing five, mostly monosyllabic, words.

[25] For example, on p. 35, when the speaker has a flashback to returning home after a football match, all the lines are between eight and twelve words long.

own diasporic experience in London as passages fluctuate between British and Guyanese rhythms and manners of speech ("Home is Always Elsewhere"). The speaker in the poem conveys to the audience what it means to constantly juggle multiple consciousnesses that seem distinct from one another—to live in a state of in-betweenness. On most of the long poem's pages, the speaker thinks in (at least) two voices that share each page, differentiated from each other by italics. The italicized section often riffs on the themes and words of the section above it, at times echoing,[26] other times responding to the plain text. After the loss of the few human attachments he has—"Tikka sits on her hair / Somewhere not here / L— sips on a brew / Somewhere not here"[27]—the speaker also loses a part of himself: the chanting of the italicized voice, which leaves him to narrate through the end with only one voice—emptied, more detached (117). Aida Alayarian, clinical psychologist and co-founder of the Refugee Therapy Centre, argues that healthy post-traumatic dissociation, pushing certain experiences temporarily out of consciousness to avoid psychological collapse, is "evidence of an individual's capacity for resilience," of the ability to "dissociate from the pain of the memory, while maintaining, for all practical purposes, emotional and physical continuity" (Alayarian 70). The division of voices allows the speaker to subdivide the different parts of his mind during his time in Jonestown, but once he loses the people whose presences keep him attached to the world, he loses all sense of identity and physical continuity: "I feel so far from Chattanooga. / Kalamazoo may as well be on the moon. / Brixton is less real than a fiction" (*Bill of Rights* 114).

[26] In one section, the italicized voice chooses nouns from the part preceding it and lists twenty-two different pairs in this manner: "*Cart horse / horse ice / Ice water / Water fire*" (*Bill of Rights* 41).

[27] His lover Tikka walks off toward the Mazaruni River, where her child was conceived, after the Reverend discovers the speaker to be the father. His friend L— dies from cancer and is buried in Forest Hill, London.

In “Home Is Always Elsewhere,” D’Aguiar expresses a fluidity between memory and imagination in literature, a constant re-engagement with history on new terms in order to survive. Discussing his frequent turning to past tragic events in his texts, D’Aguiar explains that “[c]ontinuity is about repetition. To repeat something that is unpleasant or dangerous requires both the impulse of pretending that this time is the first time and the memory of knowing how to proceed with care,” specifically, “trusting in the mechanisms of story-telling to display lies, deceits and injustices,” and to call attention to the problems of the past to take care they do not repeat (“Home Is Always Elsewhere” 202). As in *Testimony*, repetition is a major stylistic device in *Bill of Rights*. The two voices echo each other, and the italicized voice frequently uses anaphora, which in itself is a form of textual improvisation, a repetition with a shifting meaning. Informed repetition within the safer space of literature could help the public remember the danger of forgetting in our reality, outside of the text.

In the elegiac form, memory and imagination converge to create a space for placing the dead and the living in conversation. With its fluidity in moving across the globe despite its focus on one particular event and location, we can read *Bill of Rights* as an example of what Jahan Ramazani calls “elegiac transnationalism.” Ramazani writes that “Constructing transnational cultural spaces of mourning, spilling grief across boundaries of race, ethnicity, and nation,” builds “structures of feeling that represent alternatives to modern nationalist efforts to bind mourning within an imagined community of compatriots” (Ramazani 89). In a situation where the deceased found their nation hopeless and fled it, where they were stuck between countries while not really feeling claim to either, where the bodies were almost uniformly denounced and made practically unavailable even for identification by families—even the pretense of mourning within a community of compatriots was never an option.

Though the speaker is physically alive at the end of *Bill of Rights*, the poem gives us reason to mourn for his life, too, as well as the lives of those he knew.

In a scene featuring Jones's speech to his followers, D'Aguiar suggests how Jones enforced and maintained his domination over the space and residents of Jonestown:

> Our leader likened our resolve to greenheart.
> If this wood, he said, finger-wagging, wide-eyed,
> Can find its way to London to buffer
> Banks along the Thames, all the way over – lover? –
>
> From this interior we can surely establish
> A toe-hold on the outskirts – under the skirts –
> Or my name is not Jim Jones and we are not
> The renowned People's Temple – we are not. (47)

Jones's desire for control over land is enmeshed with control over bodies. The passage simulates the control through form and style—the grammar and punctuation, the rhyme and rhythm. Though Jones uses the plural "we" to raise morale for building the community, he switches to the singular "lover" to seduce listeners individually, to a raise feeling of significance in people frustrated with being collectively ignored. The underlying seduction is echoed in the internal rhymes of the fourth and sixth lines in the same breath as Jones's instructions – "over – lover," "outskirts – under the skirts." We learn earlier from the speaker's account that the "Reverend has a propensity for virgins . . . After dey is pregnant for him we get them as wives / All our firstborn are the children of God" (19). The parallel expectations invert the community's initial hopes for freedom from the tyranny they thought

they escaped: as he critiques fascism and imperialism, Jones takes extreme measures to manipulate and command the minds and actions of his followers. While the passage above ridicules Jones's demeanor ("finger-wagging, wide-eyed"), thus resisting the mainstream media's focus on his charisma, its musical repetition of phrases and sounds mimics the leader's hypnotic effect on his followers. We see the long-term results of Jones's individual indoctrination in the speaker's description of devoted, dependent conformity:

The feeling is with him

When you leave the room

You no longer exist

So you spend all your time

Trying to get

An audience with him

. . .

You would change but

Everyone around you

Does the same (93)

The Peoples Temple members each feel a singular connection with the leader for whom they abandoned their lives. In this passage, "him" is always preceded by "with"—the presence Jones establishes at the beginning is the primary and yearned for sense of collective connection, without which the self "no longer exist[s]". The erasure of the self begins with the disappearance of the senses. It first occurs with food, which is the same for every meal, mere sustenance for energy: "*In this dream / There's no word for rice / No picture . . . taste* .

. . *smell . . . No touch no sound / No imagining rice*" (9). Sensing and feeling are no longer sought through individual means, only through Jones – "The feeling is with him," you cease to exist "[w]hen you leave." The speaker's appreciation of living creatures decreases until ceasing completely when he captures a canary: as he "waited for its aria," the bird "stayed dumb and I grew hungrier / And hungrier, caring less for its song / and more for its meat" (13). As sense and sensitivity to aesthetic pleasure gradually withdraw, the speaker's relationship to the environment converges with Jones's demands: a use of nature and its resources as it fits Jones's vision. The speaker's space and time depend on Jones, able to exist only in "the room" with him, to "spend all [his] time" trying to merge with Jones's time. D'Aguiar counters this suffocating perspective with Guyana's landscape.

In spite of Jones's restrictions, history and time are split open by the narrative through the interactions between the natural environment and the Jonestown residents. Harris, who studied land surveying and took numerous expeditions into Guyana's rainforests, writes about a "language akin to music threaded into space and time which is prior to human discourse . . . preternatural voices in rivers, rapids, giant waterfalls, rock, tree" ("The Music of Living Landscapes" 40). *Bill of Rights* lingers on natural images of Guyana—especially the rivers that flow into and twist around several passages. The speaker feels homesick for Chattanooga and Kalamazoo because

> The Potaro, Demarara and Essequibo
> I don't know, I can't know, not now.
>
> There is river water in everything,
> And what the river can't reach is left to rain. (34)

While the speaker defines his relationship to the rivers as resistant, negating in his language any possible knowledge of them, he is also seized by them, continuously reiterating the feeling of dampness[28] as the nature he refuses overtakes him. From the first stanza of the poem, the rivers are juxtaposed against the homes he knows: "From Chattanooga, from Brixton . . . To the Potaro, Essequibo, Demerara" (1). The speaker lists the rivers again later as they delay the movements of the newcomers: "Many rivers to cross but I quibble / Over names: the Courentyne, Essequibo, / Potaro, Mazaruni, Demerara" (57). The situational contexts in which the rivers appear seem less significant than the musical repetition of their names, the rolling r's of the rolling river names. The warped time-space boundaries regulated by Jones are irrelevant to the expansive, moving sounds of nature. The word Guyana itself comes from an Amerindian word that means "land of waters" (*Jonestown* 9). However, opposition to the multidimensionality of natural spaces obscures meaning and interaction—for example, Jones's superficial appreciation of greenheart wood as a tool for building or taming nature ("buffer / Banks along the Thames" (47)), or his explicit mockery of the powerful land:

> I was there
> When Jones cracked
> His one and only joke
>
> He called Guyana's
> Bracken-tumbling
> Savannahs

[28] "damp / Had got to it too," "Damp everywhere," "I am damp to the innards of my watch" (33-35)

Blasted

Flat-arsed

Country (21)

D'Aguiar's connection to the Guyanese landscape runs deeper than symbolism—the transgenerational connection to the threaded music, in Harris's words, is in the body.

Both Reznikoff and D'Aguiar express in their poetry a profound embodied connection to their families' pasts. In his collection *By the Well of Living and Seeing*, Reznikoff splices his own poetic voice with that of his grandfather, who died in Russia before Reznikoff could ever know him: "all the verse he wrote / was lost— / except for what / still speaks through me" (*By the Well of Living and Seeing* 249).[29] D'Aguiar's poem "Continental Shelf" merges his body with that of Guyana in a narrative of awakening: "Guyana climbed from my colonized bed, / Blindly stuffed feet into my leather slippers / And ambled towards kitchen and coffee / Where the dog wagged to be let out" (*Continental Shelf* 131). Beginning with the daily morning rituals of a human, the poem slowly weaves in the embodiment of the country, with the poet's "robe / Wrapped around contours accustomed / To flags thrown over its territory" and desire for "milk and beans from Central / America" (*Continental Shelf* 131). As Reznikoff's closeness to his grandfather comes with an inherited wariness of Czarist Russia and a guilt for moving away from traditions his grandfather embraced, D'Aguiar's bodily closeness to Guyana involves a weight, as well: "This country / Needs to wake up faster, for my body / Could use another couple hours rest" (131). The fragments that make up the poets' minds split their senses of place and time, of personal

[29] Reznikoff's grandmother burned his grandfather's poetry in case it "might send her children to jail / should any of it be construed as treasonable against the Czar" (*Early History of a Writer* 295)

voice and collective memory – but this fragmentation, shifting, and multidimensionality, according to Reznikoff's and D'Aguiar's notions of "home," is healthy. As Stern writes, past states of the mind are always "interwoven with and cocreated by the physical environment that immediately surrounds it" (Stern 95). Harris expresses in a conversation with D'Aguiar that when humans lock themselves up in one dimension, "one human dimension . . . the world becomes a very threatening place," and the "things that happen to us seem random, seem meaningless," so "how one opens up the other dimensions in nature, becomes critical to a resurrection of meaning," and therefore a resurrection of multidimensional life ("Profile of Wilson Harris" 70).

The immensity and power of the rivers are sullied in their last musical iteration by the graveyard that Jones imposes on them—the hundreds of "bodies lying on mud floors," on the "neat wooden walkways," and "By the banks of the Potaro, the Mazaruni, / Essequibo, Corentyne, Demerara" desecrate D'Aguiar's deferential presentation of the environment (*Bill of Rights* 113). After all the perceived environmental threats, the human community is decimated—by other humans, by themselves, rather than by the creatures and rivers of the Guyana landscape. The image of the sprawling dead haunts the speaker long after his rescue from Jonestown. During his stay at a psychiatric hospital in London, he feels in danger of stepping on the dead everywhere he turns, so he stands in one spot, "Staring at one place / Whose pattern, I pray, will not / Scramble into a town full of dead" (128). The jungle in which Jonestown took place is once again overgrown and has returned to its natural state – but though the landscape has healed, the psychic scars have not.

Political theorist C. Fred Alford, whose work often uses psychoanalytic theory to shed light on critical social theory, discusses the relationship between art and the clarification of reality through the role of the audience's emotional reactions:

> Art transcends the conventional, everyday, socially accepted interpretation of reality in order to show it to us as we really know it to be in our deepest—often unconscious –hopes and fears: beautiful, ugly, evil, banal, pointless, wondrous . . . What art properly transcends is thus not reality itself – art grasps reality – but the lie that this reality is fit for man or even necessary . . . Art does this by telling us the truth about our emotional reactions to reality, which frequently reflect our unconscious awareness of society's lies, lies that we will not admit even to ourselves. Seen thus, the transcendence of art is not a threat to truth but its ground. Art transcends the truths of convention to apprehend the deeper truths that stem from our own passionate encounter with reality. (Alford 128)

Alford's approach to art coincides with D'Aguiar's idea that it is highly instructive for a writer to "go to a point of disaster and come out with a feel for it and then some sort of a lesson based on feeling" (Kocz interview). D'Aguiar insists that his writing be powered by emotions rather than an idea, presupposing what Alford sees as art's transcendence. In D'Aguiar's case, the "passionate encounter with reality" is not a singular experience but an intersubjective one. Stern writes that "Our intentions are modified or born in a shifting dialogue with the felt intentions of others . . . And our thoughts are cocreated in dialogue, even when it is only with ourselves" (Stern 77). We cannot communicate with the dead, and few have the means to communicate with the survivors in situations similar to that of this poem's speaker—who ends up in a psychiatric hospital soon after his rescue, and later

remains in self-selected isolation. But rather than either forgetting about Jonestown victims or branding them as simply "weirdos" and "kooks,"[30] D'Aguiar pushes readers into a conversation, compels them to dwell in the discomfort of the fictionalized Temple member's experience—to volunteer with the other members "for the cargo hold," "One on top of another" when occupancy is limited to 118 people, to later relive their starvation and misery under "pestilential rain," to hear the "mosquito that sings as it sucks us dry," and to endure the long hours of "huddl[ing] for warmth" or lining up for food in a huge line waiting in front of a pot (Chidester 695; *Bill of Rights* 2, 18, 15). We as readers experience the speaker's degradation in the dissonance between his situation and the nursery rhyme playfulness of much of the form.

Linguistic Echoes and Code-Switching

In the section where the rivers impede the journeys of the newcomers, beneath the scene of the speaker's frustrated drinking, the poem's italicized voice sings an extended, altered version of a popular Caribbean nursery rhyme:

Mosquito one mosquito two

Mosquito jump in the old man's shoe

Mosquito three mosquito four

Mosquito knocking down our door

Mosquito five mosquito six

[30] David Chidester discusses angry letters to the government and newspapers that use such terms to refer to people associated with Jonestown.

Mosquito eating its way through sticks

Mosquito seven mosquito eight

Mosquito pile us all on a plate

Mosquito nine mosquito ten

Mosquito nyam us all to death (57)

It is not immediately evident when the counting game transitions from a child's song to a countdown toward nature swallowing up those who are counting. The language remains eerily playful through the end, using Jamaican patois to denote the mosquito eating "us all to death." The "cuteness" jars against the reality of mosquitoes posing a legitimate threat of spreading disease in the area, as a children's rhyming poem jars against the backdrop of Jonestown. The ending of the song is reminiscent of another nursery rhyme with potentially dark connotations, "Ring Around the Rosie"—which is also excerpted later in the poem as if to balance D'Aguiar's source backgrounds: "And we all fall down" (74). While nature in the form of the rivers and the mosquitos overtakes both voices of the speaker, the italicized nursery rhyme suggests at the core a comfort or at least familiarity with the conditions of the natural forces, whereas the plain-text voice uses British slang ("haven't seen ice in yonks") and turns to "red rum" as if to avoid focusing on the rivers and the "mosquito's proboscis" (57). The proximate placement of these two different terminologies—or "code-switching"—

interlaces the two cultures and languages, which for D'Aguiar and his speaker exist in the same body, even as it contrasts them.[31]

D'Aguiar and Reznikoff both write in English—but other languages and dialects inform their written English words. D'Aguiar reminisces that in his childhood, he felt closely engaged with London but separated from other children at school because of his accent, which "was not East London, nor South London," and an English with "idiosyncratic grammar" ("Home Is Always Elsewhere" 196). In an interview with Birbalsingh, D'Aguiar describes his linguistic in-betweenness in terms of his visits to Guyana: "When I go back there, my friends and relatives say 'Hello English', because of my views, and how I talk about the place. I have to remind them that in England I am told 'Hey, go back to the Caribbean!'" (Birbalsingh interview 88). Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Peter Quatermain regard Reznikoff at a linguistic and cultural intersection as "a Yiddish poet writing in the American language" (DuPlessis and Quatermain 15). In his interview with Dembo, Reznikoff cites a study that considers "the tendency in a writer to use characteristics of the speech of his ancestors, even a speech he no longer knows" (Dembo interview 104). D'Aguiar depicts his split linguistic tendencies through the image of a forked tongue: "Creole and Standard English forked my tongue in ways that would encourage ambiguity in my utterances and twin loyalties in my beliefs . . . although my writer's sensibility is made in England, there are Caribbean undercurrents informing the form and content of my writing" (Dawes interview 228).

[31] Ramazani argues in "Code-Switching, Code-Stitching" that "a poem's code-switching may not merely reflect participation in a borderland or contact zone or mixed society but stage, enact, even will it . . . It's in poetry that code-switching often becomes code-stitching" (Ramazani 33).

Bernstein suggests that Reznikoff's "newness to English" as a second-language speaker contributed to his poetry "forged by syntax and music previously unheard in the language," as he notices and interweaves linguistic details that may slip past a native speaker ("Reznikoff's Nearness" 216-217). In his notes and drafts, Reznikoff's assemblages of sentences, names, and phrases from the witness reports show a proclivity for memorable implications of words, as well as distinctive turns of language. He gravitates toward minor details in cases that strike him in some way: a contrast between colors (for example, "the dark mule was a little light on her nose—had a mealy nose"), different ways of calculating time ("the sun about two hours high"), and names that may naturally add a degree of foreshadowing or irony to the narratives of the chosen cases, such as "Constable Hurt" and "Peace" (1885-1890 Typescript). Some of Reznikoff's lists explicitly mark moments such as when a murderer is named "Nicely" or "Stain," note intentional changes to names, and add explanations to phrases with which he was not originally familiar (for example, "sawing on the reins (hurrying a horse)") (1885-1890 Typescript). Reznikoff's close interaction with the documents illustrates his approach to language as a way to learn about others—in a sense, to live through their words. Reznikoff often leaves quotation marks around words that are specific to particular communities, typically either work-associated language or regional sayings. For example, poems about coal miners' work include language like "'spragger'" and "'squeeze'" (19, 95), a boy in a factory in a different poem carries "'quills' as they were called— / from the 'weaver room' to the 'quiller room'" (122), and a boy working for an oil company had "to feed a 'cake-crusher' in its mill" (120). Reznikoff's attention to the languages of others' lives consequently teaches readers work-specific words that we would likely otherwise never hear or know. D'Aguiar likewise often incorporates words not

immediately familiar to the average American reader. When Birbalsingh asks D'Aguiar about his techniques and forms, D'Aguiar discusses creole and the Guyanese speech rhythms immediately recognizable to a local audience but different for a global public: for poems taking place in Guyana, "the language had to be creole to be plausible in terms of the character and her environment," thus upholding Reznikoff's insistence on adding genuine expressions for authenticity (Birbalsingh interview). Both poets are invested in translating the realities of the people they write about, and at times, they do so by leaving particular words untranslated or unexplained. D'Aguiar repeats the names of the rivers in Guyana over and over again, until the names become familiar, part of the reader's knowledge as they become part of the speaker's. The growing familiarity makes worse the horror of the final scenes near these waters.

As *Bill of Rights* shows, the tragedy at Jonestown is not solely in the massacre—the survivors have to live with the memories of cycles of abuse, infantilization, dehumanization, and perpetual self-blame:

It takes a little and a lot

To turn a man into a mouse

Reduce him to a louse

Banish him under the house

Like a mangy dog

Shoot him for grouse (25)

The end rhymes and animals liken this passage to other nursery-rhymes-gone-awry in the poem. Just as it describes the process of dehumanization and slow loss of self-identity, the lines become off-kilter, as if imitating missteps and tripping over themselves. As the speaker

realizes later, after being rescued but not before undergoing a similar process, "Not one survives to tell the tale" (123).

Thinking about the poem through an intersubjective lens illuminates the abundance, maybe even excess, of allusions, especially to contemporary music. Perhaps what we observe is a mind that realizes the extent to which Jones's narrative has invaded it, and it is constantly adding in other quotations, other sounds, to dilute the one deemed "holy" by the Peoples Temple community as a method to confront trauma and the disappearance of the self. The use of anaphora throughout many of the passage evokes the structure of prayer, particularly in one passage near the beginning when the speaker makes a list of "holy" things. Although "Holy His name Jones and His every aspect," aspects of Guyana are called praised as holy, too: "Holy stinking-toe and sour-sap and eddoe . . . *Holy the Buckoo Jumby Ol' Higue*"—the local trees, fruit, and vegetables, the characters from Guyanese folklore (6). In one interview, D'Aguiar describes *Bill of Rights* as "a distillation of an experience based on a kind of loyalty to music and sound . . . paying homage to Guyana itself and its Caribbean cultural tradition, and showing how history and culture can be conveyed as song" (Kocz interview). Pieces from songs—Caribbean, American, and British—create a constant humming throughout the poem, sometimes adding to the dissonant disorientation but other times, commenting through musical association on the traumatic moments the speaker undergoes.

The text's scattered musicality adds to its fragmented polyphony. Rather than presenting one streamlined viewpoint, the text shares with us what we might call "Memories for stock," a phrase the speaker uses as we approach Jonestown's fatal moment:

I am stirring pepper

In a pepper pot

Memories for casrep

Memories for stock

‘Something is happening

And you don’t know what it is.’

You’re curious but you feign

A studied nonchalance.

‘Señor, señor, can you tell me

Where we’re heading…’ The pots

Of broth are brought to the boil

Then left to simmer and stirred

And watched over, as they bubble,

Bubble, toil and trouble. (102-103)

This section in the text exemplifies the oscillation between the local and the global, the movement among the speaker’s three geographies of influence, and the thread-through lyrics that characterize most of the larger narrative. In the first of these stanzas, the speaker stirs hot peppers into pepperpot, one of Guyana’s national dishes. Pepperpot is a stewed meat dish flavored with a sauce called cassareep, which is made from the cassava root. The next two lines have no clear grammatical connection, but the food-reminiscent language suggests

stirring in memories as ingredients into the stew: "Memories for casrep / Memories for stock." "Stock" suggests both a cooking liquid and an accumulation of memories to be made available for use in the future (a frame through which we might read the entire poem). "CASREP" is the casualty report that informs Navy commanders of mission-critical equipment malfunctions, which seems out of place with the exception of its connotation of 'casualties.' But "casrep" also sounds like "cassareep," thus recalling the cassava root—which contains a substance that can trigger the production of cyanide, so the root must be prepared properly to avoid poison. The connection to cyanide disconcertingly links the image of the traditional dish to Jones's perverse version when he stirs the cauldron of "Kool-Aid, laced with cyanide" (105). These pots, memories and poison, are brought to a boil side by side (103).

The five pairs of lines that follow alternate allusions and responses to immediate occurrences. The first and third excerpt Bob Dylan songs that involve confused characters worrying about lack of knowledge or understanding: "Ballad of a Thin Man" and "Señor." In the first song, the name of Dylan's character is Mr. Jones, a man who is intelligent and asks many questions but does not understand much about the world beyond bourgeois conventionality: "Something is happening / And you don't know what it is." The inclusion of these lyrics might signal Jones's declining mental state, or maybe, as Jim Jones was well-read like Dylan's Mr. Jones, the lines could suggest Jim Jones's lack of genuine understanding of the populations for whom he claimed to have solutions: he is "curious" but feigns "nonchalance" in order to lead as if he does have full knowledge. The fifth pair of lines ("bubble, / Bubble, toil and trouble") allude to the witches in *Macbeth* as they "In the poison'd entrails throw," paralleling Jones's preparation of poisonous liquid (while humming

a Parliament song) (Shakespeare 4.1.5; D'Aguiar 103, 105). As musical allusions are stirred into the pot, the reader's own associations might be thrown in, as well. These five pairs of lines lose all sense of identity – the "I" from the previous stanza disappears, leaving only an indeterminate "you." The speaker stirs the "pepper pot," but the text then describes the two pots using passive voice: "The pots / Of broth are brought to the boil . . . And watched over" (103). The speaker may be addressing Jones, or the text, as it splits into pairs, may be pairing the reader more intimately with the speaker's experiences, establishing a connection between the 'curious you' and the 'stirring I.'

As in the stirring scene, the entirety of *Bill of Rights* swerves across literatures and subjects, teaching us through repetition, as does *Testimony*, to consider the narrative poem piece by piece rather than as a clear, linear progression. The text revolves around the idea of recreating glimpses of the emotions of memories, real or imagined, in a way that a reader can access. We as readers gather the disjointed fragments not to create a whole but to feel the complexity of the different thoughts and emotions, comparable to the way we recall our own memories. According to modern neuroscience, retrieving memories is "not the simple act of accessing a storehouse of ready-made photos in a stable neural album, preserved with complete fidelity to the moment of their formation. Rather, each act of recall is a re-creation, drawing upon multiple, dynamically changing modular fragments to shape a new mosaic" (Young and Saver 79).

Communal Commemoration

The mosaic of *Bill of Rights* concludes with the arthritic speaker living alone on one and a half acres of land, sometimes visited by a prostitute, at all times keeping the same

'tools' from Jonestown around: a "stave of greenheart wood / Against intruders" that "doubles / As a walking stick" and a submachine gun "classified as an 'implement / For hunting . . . The authorities are none the wiser" (133). As we leave the text and the speaker, there is no sense of healing, but we do leave with a keener sense of the complexities of the different voices and experiences at Jonestown, intensified by oppression, tyranny, and faith. The reader is provoked into feeling, thinking, and, by D'Aguiar ideal, acting, to "help that history, and not make it passive," particularly in terms of D'Aguiar's central concern, expressed in his title (Dickow interview).

The name *Bill of Rights* is clarified during flashbacks to songs ("When we used to sit and sing / Marley after Marley like anthems" (75)) and conversations with L— at the center, the heart, of the text:

> And talk! As if talk were going for good,
> About a Bill of Rights for these Isles of isthmus
> As much as the Islets of Langerhans:
>
> Would a Bill of Rights have saved those
> Dozen young men killed in police custody?" (76)

The two friends dreamed about walking across the entirety of Great Britain, southwest to northeast, "From Land's End to John o'Groats" / Collecting signatures for a Bill / Of Rights" (77). The initial passage shows disillusionment with such a possibility, suggesting universal human rights and freedoms for a cluster of small islands ("Isles of isthmus") to be as likely as for clusters of small cells in the human body ("Islets of Langerhans," hormone-producing clusters of cells throughout the pancreas) (76). This is clearly tongue-in-cheek but also

crucially intertwines the body with the imperative for human rights not extended to people like the dozen "men killed in police custody." The speaker and his friend call for

> A Bill of Rights for the Front Line
> As much as for the boys from the Blackstuff,
> For Glasgow's tenement
> Blocks and the Shankhill Road,
> For Tiger Bay and Millwall's Den?
>
> A Bill of Rights, we vowed, before the outing
> Of our lights. (79).

In part, the phrasing emphasizes the youthful idealism of the two friends, since *The Front Line* and *Boys from the Blackstuff* are television shows, Millwall's Den is a football stadium, and the question mark and concluding rhyming vow seem to all poke fun at the two men in their younger days. However, the call is also sincere—for human rights in all neighborhoods, for all classes, for Britain and the United States where the existing Bill of Rights is failing to protect against government- and police-sanctioned brutality. The discussion of rights and the fear of empty talk ("As if talk were going for good") recalls the original point of Jonestown: the transnational, transcontinental hope that led the Temple members to Guyana in the first place, the hope to close the gap between governmental assertions and people's lived experiences – and the utter failure of the promised safe haven that fell into familiar cycles of abuse and structures of violence. Even after the massacre, the governments on both shores of the ocean refused to claim responsibility for the survivors or for the dead. The tragedy was prolonged – the dead were denied their right to be laid to rest with dignity, and the families

and friends were denied the right to grieve properly, to move immediately into the rituals of mourning that at times help recuperate at least some sense of expectation and community.

While the people Reznikoff commemorates in *Testimony* were *unknown* to the larger American public, those D'Aguiar commemorates were also *unwanted*, their complexities discarded by blanket statements about a "charismatic cult leader" and "drinking the Kool-Aid." In "Rituals of Exclusion and the Jonestown Dead," David Chidester details the immense aversion to the massacred bodies on the sides of both countries involved. Initially, United States Secretary of State Cyrus Vance requested a mass burial where the bodies were discovered in the jungle, while Guyanese Prime Minister Forbes Burnham demanded the immediate removal of bodies that were "an American problem" (Chidester 683). Then, after the arrival of all the bodies at the United States Air Force Base in Dover, Delaware, residents' letters flooded newspapers to express discontent concerning the bodies' presence in the state. Both residents and local politicians argued that "Delaware residents were not involved in Guyana and Delaware should not have to bear the burden of this problem" (Chidester 687). Mayor Charles Legates, Jr. suggested cremating all of the disfigured bodies and scattering the ashes "beyond the continental limits of the United States," as a mass grave "would inundate Dover with people who are not quite, if you'll pardon the expression, all there" and make the site a "shrine" for "other cult worshipers" (Chidester 686-688). The language of contamination characterized the Jonestown dead as a "dangerous and defiling contagion" (Chidester 687):

> Perceived dangers of defilement presented by the bodies of Jonestown—hygienic, social, and ultimately spiritual dangers—were all viewed as violations of the sacred space of the state of Delaware. The sanctity of that space could only be preserved by

> exercising rituals of exclusion on those bodies, ritual exclusion that would simultaneously remove them from that sacred space and effectively deny the human status of the persons that had once animated those bodies. (Chidester 689)

In other states, with few exceptions, newspapers shared similar fears and sentiments about excluding the bodies from the U.S. and keeping their states free from "such a mass suicidal group" (Chidester 689). The only area in the country that visibly stood out in this regard was San Francisco,[32] the community of which was much more implicated and involved in the organization and life of the Temple and Jonestown (Chidester 691-696). Ultimately, in May 1979 (half a year after the mass killings) the government transported all of the unidentified or unclaimed bodies, more than half of the total, from Dover to San Francisco in truck shipments, gave family members thirty days to identify and claim them, and buried the remaining 378 in unmarked graves in Oakland.

Many family members were disturbed by their loved ones' dehumanization and exclusion from collective mourning rituals taken for granted or insisted upon in most societies, by the length of time before decisions were made about where to place the bodies.[33] Chidesters draws a parallel between the "[r]itual exclusion of these bodies" and the "dehumanization in American society of the blacks, seniors, and poor who had constructed meaningful lives within the Peoples Temple" (Chidester 694). On the second anniversary of the event, at a service at the Oakland cemetery, a woman who lost twenty-seven family members in Jonestown came and called for larger social change: "We must commit ourselves to ridding our communities of the hopelessness which caused so many to follow Jim Jones to

[32] Headquarters of the Peoples Temple before the community's move to Guyana

[33] This pained Jonestown survivors, as well. Michael Prokes shot himself several months after the incident, leaving behind notes on the country's unfolding reactions and his sadness about the bodies "not only unidentified, but still unburied" (Chidester 694).

Guyana, seeking a better life" (Chidester 695). But Chidester notes that most other commemorations are used as opportunities to warn against cults without questioning why so many joined in this particular situation: "memorials tended to raise the spectre of Jonestown only to exorcise it and, thereby, reinforce normative boundaries in American society" (Chidester 696). These deindividualized people, whose rights to human treatment and rituals are denied to them legally and socially, are the focus of D'Aguiar's (aptly titled) *Bill of Rights*.

After the failure of the "American dream" for so many in the U.S. and of the "anti-American paradise" outside of the U.S., we face a question of movement: where do we go now, and how do we move onward? D'Aguiar and Reznikoff record the complexities of tragedies that public consciousness, or what Boym calls "national memory," would rather not preserve. The participants in these stories are made invisible and silent, in spite, or because, of being numerous. D'Aguiar and Reznikoff tell their ghost stories because these are the narratives that haunt the nation when untold, threatening to keep repeating. As D'Aguiar suggests, forgetting does not mean moving forward but rather dangerously perpetuating the same cycles, so the task at hand is to record and arrange the fragments of people's stories whenever they happen. Reznikoff writes that

> Just as a dream is forgotten, except for a fragment, and generally not even that, as soon as the night is over, so the actions of the day, all the many actions, the bulky speech, except for the merest fragment, is gone at nightfall like a dream; therefore, it must be set down at once, that very day or the next, while some of it is still remembered. ("Scraps of Prose")

D'Aguiar and Reznikoff collect memories from the past while "some of it is still remembered," reenacting events and conjuring the ghosts of people whose history, in Jabès's words, "has been erased for good." In rearranging the splintered fragments of a broken past, the two poets assemble what Harris calls "an unwritten past that awaits a new language" in a special form of poetry: songs of mourning for lost lives, lost relations, lost homes (Harris 5).

Reznikoff and D'Aguiar orchestrate the fragments of the past into musical pieces, incorporating strains of language and tradition from their own experiences, and from the experiences of the generations preceding them, to reinforce the thread between the present and the past. The serialized fragments organize the trauma they hold into rhythmically structured clusters, helping the reader manage it piece by piece. Discussing the relationship between past and present, Stern describes the past as "a pattern of change revealed in sequences," the "differences and similarities between successive events that trace a pattern and direction of movement. It is a past made up of in-betweens," with the present moment like "the final chord in a succession of chords" (Stern 207). If we slow down this image, we can read *Testimony* and *Bill of Rights* as performances of such a past "of in-betweens," discerning patterns across time, and the "meeting ground between the past and the present" as a collective mourning recitation. The fragmentary nature of the two works of poetry—their parallel sequences, split voices, polyphony, broken lines—provides readers with the spaces to formulate their own connections, to insert their own minds into the gaps. We cannot predict whether the collective mourning rituals, the work of remembrance in *Testimony* and *Bill of Rights*, will help readers in responding to Derrida's call for responsibility in our disjointed present. But through the simulated encounter with the voices of our history, the embodied recognition of lost lives and stories through their recitation, D'Aguiar's and Reznikoff's

fragmented poems create a space to hear and begin acknowledging the silenced traumas of our past.

III. Serialized Fragments: Contingent Attachment in *The History of Love* and *NW*

> Minimal, incoherent fragments:
> the opposite of History, creator of ruins,
> out of your ruins you have made creations.
>
> Theatre of the spirits:
> objects putting the laws
> of identity through hoops.
> — Octavio Paz, "Objects and Apparitions,"
> translated by Elizabeth Bishop

Joseph Cornell, to whom the epigraphic poem is dedicated, created worlds inside boxes. Moved by the fragments of found objects, Cornell assembled miniature realities and suspended them behind glass surfaces. Paz and Bishop, friends and translators of each other's works, coincided in their affinity for Cornell's series of boxes and concluded the poem with a direct address to the artist: "Joseph Cornell: inside your boxes / my words became visible for a moment." Making visible self-authored existences through the arrangement of details, as well as the translation of those details across worlds, is central to Nicole Krauss's[34] *The History of Love* (2005) and Zadie Smith's *NW* (2012), where alternating narrators respond to disruptive or traumatic events with self-invention and reimagination: "out of your ruins you have made creations." As the novels' intersecting testimonies unravel each plot's mysteries—the destruction and translation of a manuscript, the interpretation of a murder scene, the identification of characters who are unknown or in disguise—the distinct formal patterns speak to the narrators' forging of identity in confrontation with and relation to the traumas of historical and personal losses. The characters display various mechanisms for coping with trauma: immersion in a religion, immersion in a profession, immersion in the

[34] Krauss wrote her master's thesis on Cornell.

past, invention of friends and worlds, development of multiple identities, endeavor to wield control over the present. These strategies and approaches are foregrounded by the texts' stylistic and structural features. Within the novels' constellations of cross-generational attachments, the narratives of two second-generation immigrants, Alma Singer in *The History of Love* and Natalie (who changes her name from Keisha) Blake in *NW*, are formally distinguished by the amalgamation of numbered, titled fragments. In this chapter, I draw especially on Philip Bromberg's study of relational trauma, M. NourbeSe Philip's work on language, music, and fugue states, and Marianne Hirsch's memory studies research to examine how *NW* and *The History of Love* express the characteristics, consequences, and lived experiences of fragmented identity. I argue that through the managed seriality of fragments, the textual patterns and disruptions, and the collaborative transmission of stories in the two books, the novels' structural frameworks communicate and enact the complexities of transgenerational relations and the movements of mind in the midst of its constant reconfiguration. The fragments trace the self-negotiations of the characters as they learn to bear their attachments in the face of rupture.

Fugal Narratives, Fugal Identities

The construction of *The History of Love* and *NW* resembles a fugue: each narrative depends on four successive voices telling a tale at different pitches, building on a particular subject that connects them all in a shared finale. The separate melodic lines can stand alone, but when heard together, they complete a previously imperceptible story. Smith discusses in an interview that at the time of writing *NW*, she was playing with modes of writing and had "always admired the idea of the 'fragment'" but was deterred by fragments typically being

"single-voiced—often a monologue of some kind . . . I wanted to see if I could make a fragmentary third person work" (Leyshon interview). Krauss produces her own kind of fragmentary effect through alternating points of view in her novel. Writing on third-generation Holocaust representation, Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger suggest that "Krauss's literary method seeks to reconstruct and reassemble fragmented lives, giving her characters a renewed sense of meaning and purpose. To describe the fragmented, chaotic, and anomic world of a century of genocide, dispossession, uprooting, and exile is not an easy task for a writer" (Aarons and Berger 153). More specifically, Smith and Krauss aim to show the realities of this world and the consequences of its fragmentation for contemporary, everyday lives. Writing about *Beloved* and the ways in which concerns regarding memory and history coalesce in that novel, Toni Morrison defines "rememory" as "recollecting and remembering as in reassembling the members of the body, the family, the population of the past. And it was the struggle, the pitched battle between remembering and forgetting, that became the device of the narrative" (Morrison 324). As in a fugue, Smith and Krauss unwind and rewind narrative threads, disrupt and reassemble memories, both individual and transgenerational, and play with combinations of forgetting and remembering in the process of figuring out what is necessary for life after trauma.

In Krauss's novel, approximately two-thirds[35] of the narration alternates between Leo Gursky, a Holocaust survivor from Slonim who writes the eponymous *The History of Love* for Alma Mereminski,[36] his lost love, and Alma Singer, a teenager who seeks meaning in her life after her father's sudden death. A third voice belongs to Bird, Alma's little brother, who

[35] According to the number of pages allotted to each individual narrator, thirty-five percent of the novel is Alma's narration and thirty-two percent is Leo's.

[36] Alma Mereminski left on a boat for America, unknowingly pregnant with Leo's child, and assuming that Leo died with the rest of his family when he did not respond to her letter, she married her boss's kind son.

turns to Jewish mysticism and religion in search of answers after his family's collective loss.[37] A story about a continent-crossing manuscript emerges from the comparatively more distanced perspective of Zvi Litvinoff, which uses third-person narration and free indirect discourse, in contrast to the first-person accounts of the other three sections. Zvi takes Leo's novel with him to Chile for safekeeping during the war, but under the assumption that Leo had died[38] and with the desire to impress his future wife Rosa, he rewrites the original Yiddish in his own handwriting with transposed names and places (changing "a Feingold from Vilna to a De Biedma from Buenos Aires," leaving only Alma's name unaltered), translates it into Spanish, and publishes it under his own name (183). The final section, entitled "A+L,"[39] alternates page-by-page between Alma's and Leo's voices, building in energy and intensity, rapidly shifting perspectives and stitching the doubly fictional manuscript more tightly with the characters' lives—until the narrative ultimately brings the voices fully together in the final few pages.

Alternating voices in *NW* similarly interweave at the end of novel, but in a more uneven, tangled way. The third-person limited narration of *NW* is shared among four characters in their thirties, all from Caldwell, a Willesden council estate.[40] Leah Hanwell, Keisha/Natalie Blake, and Nathan Bogle grow up and go to school together, whereas Felix

[37] Bird begins to believe that he is a *lamed vovnik*, one of thirty-six holy people concealed from the world but on whom the "existence of the world depends" (Krauss 52). The Yiddish term comes from the letters "lamed" and "vav," the numerical value of which, in gematria, adds up to thirty-six.

[38] With the exception of one nephew, Zvi lost everyone in his family during the Holocaust.

[39] Earlier in the novel, thinking about the older Alma, Leo reminisces about a "tree on which I'd once carved our initials, A+L, and she never knew, just as for five years I never knew that our sum had come to equal a child" (Krauss 164).

[40] Form of British public housing

Cooper, rehoused by the council from the Garvey House[41] at the age of eight, is unknown to the others. Leah's mother emigrated from Ireland, Keisha/Natalie's parents from Jamaica, and Nathan's mother from Saint Lucia, and Felix's parents are of Jamaican and Ghanaian heritage. *NW* stays mostly within the bounds of the eponymous London postal code as it traces a series of local encounters among individuals living near each other but varying significantly in socioeconomic status and lifestyle. In her article on *NW*'s geographies, Molly Slavin renders "the postcolonial northwest London of Zadie Smith" as "a place with no center," with "a multiplicity of voices at work, many of which are absent from the singular, neatly ordered myths of the pretty English village or prosperous London neighborhood" (Slavin 98-99). The novel's voices spread across five sections, the titles of which suggest shifts in power dynamics: "Visitation," "Guest," "Host," "Crossing," and another "Visitation." "Host," which composes forty percent of the novel, follows the life of Keisha/Natalie, a second-generation Jamaican woman who has become a wealthy, successful barrister living in a beautiful house with her family—but at a cost that she questions throughout her narrative. Leah, Keisha/Natalie's childhood best friend, narrates the first section, which is characterized by a dream-like quality and instability of expectation, sporadic changes in font size and spacing, as well as experimentation with shapes in presenting consciousness on the page.[42] Nathan, Keisha and Leah's former classmate who is now living on the streets, has little speaking time but shows up consistently in each of the sections. The single-day "Guest" section, which focuses on Felix, a recovering drug addict

[41] The Garvey House is based on the 1970s housing project "The Black House" in Holloway, north London. Colin Jones, who shot a series of photographs that recorded life there (and whose work Smith mentions as inspiration in her acknowledgements), describes the residents as living "between two cultures": "A lot of them got kicked out by their parents. They were the second generation from who'd come out of the West Indies, they were born here and saw their parents as very subservient" (Couvée interview).

[42] Her daydreaming about an apple tree, for example, takes the shape of a tree on the page (Smith 31).

who works on turning his life around, is divided according to the places he visits while running errands: *NW6* to *(W1)* to *NW6*. His murder by "two youths . . . moments from his own front door" on the weekend of Carnival links all the narrators together: Leah hears a news report of the stabbing, Natalie walks by the street where it happens, and Nathan may be a witness[43] or a suspect (104). The fourth "Crossing" section, most similar to the "A+L" crossing of paths in *The History of Love*, is propelled through dialogue between Natalie and Nathan as they wander around Caldwell, and it leads to the short, final "Visitation," during which Natalie and Leah make a hasty decision to report a crime without evidence, a use of words reminiscent of a comment Keisha/Natalie makes: "People were not people but merely an effect of language. You could conjure them up and kill them in a sentence" (295).

The memory of past loss and the threat of future loss frame Keisha/Natalie's and Alma's narratives. The fear of loss—of others and of oneself—haunts the two characters, and we can read the compartmentalized fragments of their narratives as expressing both that fear and their strategies for managing it. Alma's first section, "MY MOTHER'S SADNESS," recounts the loss of Alma's father, David, and the Singer family's coping methods. Alma and Leo's joint narrative at the novel's conclusion is followed by "THE DEATH OF LEOPOLD GURSKY," an obituary that Leo composes for himself in Poland long ago. Keisha/Natalie's narrative ends and begins with near-death encounters: a phone call that may effectively end a former friend's life, and an anecdote about Keisha saving Leah's life. With detached diction and grammar, Keisha retells her mother's story: "There had been an event. To speak of it required the pluperfect. Keisha Blake and Leah Hanwell, the protagonists in this event, were four-year-old children . . . a child nearly drowned" (201). As Marcia Blake recalls Keisha

[43] Nathan rants as he sits with Keisha/Natalie, "How can I stop Tyler though? Tyler should stop Tyler. I shouldn't even be chatting with you, I should be in Dalston, cos this isn't even on me, it's on him" (370).

rising from the water, holding "these red pigtails," the child is suspicious of her mother's accuracy: Keisha "could neither contradict nor verify this account—she had no memory of it" (202). The passivity with which Keisha/Natalie conveys this "event"—the cognizant use of the pluperfect that pushes the occurrence back by two layers of pasts, prior to what is already past, and the dubbing of the children as "protagonists"—immediately sets up a distance between the narrator to whose inner thoughts we are privy and the character confronting new situations. Keisha, who is listening to her mother's story at the age of ten and "curious about the tensions between grown people," notes as an "interesting detail" the reason for the threat of drowning—the lack of a lifeguard: "They had a guard up the hill, in Hampstead, for them. Nothing for us" (201). Told from a young age by society that success required a particular set of characteristics absent from her own family, and inevitably connecting that absence to the "dramatic event" that almost leads to a death, Keisha/Natalie learns how to take flight from herself (202).

The word "fugue" is derived from the Latin word *fuga*, or "flight" (OED). In "Fugues, Fragments and Fissures: A Work in Progress," Philip writes that as a result of trauma, "fleeing from the usual, the individual forgets his or her earlier life and adopts a different identity"; in this way, the amnesia associated with the fugue state "protect[s] the mind and the psyche from overwhelming trauma" and allows the individual to live 'normally'" (Philip 6). Philip explores the fugue state and dissociative behavior as a lens through which to comprehend Caribbean societies, but she also extends its relevance more broadly:

> A fugue state. Fleeing from a trauma—an unacknowledged trauma—it simply cannot face. Neither Trinidad and Tobago nor Caribbean societies in general are

> unique in having to grapple with the psychic, societal, and material disintegration that are an integral part of the modern capitalist society: the atomisation of society, the breakdown of communities, the dissipation of family ties, the hiving off of generations, the emphasis on youth culture at the expense of the wisdom of the elders . . . the legacy of empire, colonialism and its attendant scourges like racism. (Philip 8)

Portraying it as an exile from oneself, a wandering, Philip argues that much of the dissociative behavior she discusses is a "direct result of the poisonous legacy of colonialism," and one of the ways to confront that legacy "is through memory—the memory fragment" (Philip 7). From this perspective, the seemingly tidy, manageable divisions within the writing and the self that characterize Keisha/Natalie's narrative could be read as not only the consequences of trauma and dissociation, but as fragments of memory encapsulating the potential to transform and contend with that trauma.

In his work on relational trauma and the complex dissociative processes of a mind, Bromberg explains that depending on people's early development of intersubjectivity, some are "especially vulnerable to the 'uncertainty' about the boundary between selfhood and otherness, and can become unable to navigate this boundary. They become unable to sustain the loss of a needed person as a separate 'other,'" and the threat of potential loss in times of crisis becomes greater when the individual cannot separate that loss from the "traumatic loss of self" (*The Shadow of the Tsunami* 180, 179). Bromberg argues that a collision of subjectivities involving a shared, co-created, ambiguous understanding of internal experience is imperative for the "growth of the relational mind" (6). For a patient and analyst, this means that the uncomfortable "enactment of self-state collisions," of the dissociative experience,

becomes the "most powerful doorway to a genuinely productive analytic process," a process that is dynamic, unpredictable, unstructured, and emerges in communicative exchange (6).

The fugal construction of the two novels simulates for the reader the collision of selves that is necessary to confront actualized and potential losses. Meanwhile, the "experience of uncertainty" that characterizes the enactment of dissociated experience in psychoanalysis, the imperative to "tolerate the ambiguity inherent in not-knowing or, more confusing still, sort-of-knowing," is reminiscent of the reader's experience of confronting narrative voices, especially ones like Keisha/Natalie's and Alma's that seem to go in different directions at once (like a collision of self-states) (186). In her work on post-Holocaust writing and visual culture, Hirsch writes that "loss of family, home, of a sense of belonging and safety in the world 'bleed' from one generation to the next"—the traumas of historical losses that Krauss and Smith explore through particular, personal instances in their novels (Hirsch 34). The structure of Krauss's and Smith's narratives pulls the reader into the dynamics of self that Alma's and Keisha/Natalie's sections present and allows the reader to feel the destabilization or fracture that accompanies the characters' individual and transgenerational confrontations with the past.

Multidirectional Narratives

The pages of Alma's and Keisha/Natalie's narratives forge boxes to order and to hold life's chaos. Both characters use lists to sort through dilemmas – Alma's narrative includes lists of clues (104-105), memories passed down from her parents (143, 180), and things "not to think about" (198), and Keisha/Natalie makes lists of answers (205), menu items (244), and performative instructions (328). Even their narratives overall form lists. With apparent

adherence to logical reasoning, Alma and Keisha/Natalie both attempt to manage time and organize space within labeled fragments. If we temporarily decontextualize the titles from the subsequent prose segments and follow them in sequential order, there emerge simultaneous narrative threads that weave into and inform the prose of the passages. In the example below from Alma's first section in *The History of Love*, tracing the trajectory of titles provides another frame of reference for analyzing Alma's thoughts:

6. NO TWO PEOPLE LOOKED LESS ALIKE THAN MY MOTHER AND FATHER
7. THERE IS A PHOTOGRAPH OF MY MOTHER THAT NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN
8. MY MOTHER IS THE MOST STUBBORN PERSON I KNOW
9. WHAT FOLLOWED WERE THE HAPPIEST YEARS OF THEIR LIVES
10. THEY MOVED TO NEW YORK AND HAD ME
11. I WAS SIX WHEN MY FATHER WAS DIAGNOSED WITH PANCREATIC CANCER
12. HE LIKED TO COOK AND LAUGH AND SING, COULD START A FIRE WITH HIS HANDS, FIX THINGS THAT WERE BROKEN, AND EXPLAIN HOW TO LAUNCH THINGS INTO SPACE, BUT HE DIED WITHIN NINE MONTHS
13. MY FATHER WAS NOT A FAMOUS RUSSIAN WRITER
14. AT THE END OF THE WORLD
15. WHENEVER I WENT OUT TO PLAY, MY MOTHER WANTED TO KNOW EXACTLY WHERE I WAS GOING TO BE
16. EVERYTHING IS REMADE AS REASON

These titles look like headings that briefly outline subsequent passages, but at times, they do something different than their appearance suggests. Arranged together, this catalogue of titles, many of which are complete sentences, resembles a set of intertitles in a film, or forms a poem. Perusing these titles alone provides an overview of Alma's parents' relationship (nearly all of the titles involve them), but more noteworthy, by implication of what it reveals, the list also displays the range of factors affecting Alma's mindset at the time, otherwise jumbled among the passage details: the fear of her mother's happiest years being over, the significant role of writing and words in her household, the trauma-bred feeling of being caught outside of time, "at the end of the world," the gap between rationality and reality (42).

The listed titles sometimes summarize the focus of a passage, sometimes reflect it from a different angle, and other times imply what is not told directly or at all within the passages. The twelfth title, for an example of the latter, which states the fact of David's death, has no accompanying passage, suggesting that we might learn more about Alma's emotional state from some of the titles than the subsequent prose.

In several cases, the title sequences trace the dynamics of Alma's interior movement, while the passages' content traces the exterior plot. When she begins believing in the factual existence of Alma Mereminski, as the passages recount the events leading to this developing realization, the titles hint at Alma's reactions:

9. THE MAN WHO SEARCHED FOR A STONE
10. I READ THE LETTER ONE HUNDRED TIMES
11. HOW I AM
12. NOT MUCH
13. THE ETERNAL DISAPPOINTMENT OF LIFE AS IT IS
14. THE BIRTH OF FEELING

While the content of the passages leads us through steps in a process—Alma reading Jacob Marcus's[44] letter but not understanding its implications, writing clues, printing the translations of Chapters One through Fifteen, and discovering that Mereminski is the only name in the book that is not Spanish—the titles record Alma's emotional responses to the circumstances detailed in the prose: the adamant searching and seeking, the frustration about her progress (HOW I AM / NOT MUCH), the disappointment that feels "ETERNAL" until a new "FEELING" fairly quickly replaces it (101-109). In the chapter "The Birth of Feeling" from the book Charlotte is translating, the narrator writes that the "oldest emotion in the world may be that of being moved; but to describe it—just to name it—must have been like

[44] Isaac Moritz, the son of Leo Gursky and Alma Mereminski, uses the alias Jacob Marcus (a character from his own bestselling book) when he commissions Charlotte to translate *The History of Love* from Spanish into English.

trying to catch something invisible. (Then again, the oldest feeling in the world might simply have been confusion.)" (107). We continue to witness the confusion of Alma's feelings in motion through the title in the very next fragment, also called "THE BIRTH OF FEELING"; by this point, the reference seems to do less with the chapter title and more with Alma's renewed feeling, or "BIRTH," of hope after learning character-Alma's surname.

As the title-fragment relationship transports the reader through Alma's organizational logic, the narrative form entwines the act of reading more tightly with the character's movement of mind. This structural approach exemplifies the potential Bromberg describes of authors to "shape and shift the states of mind of a given reader so as to evoke not simply the world in heightened form, but simultaneously, a heightened and expanded experience of selfhood" (*Awakening the Dreamer* 53-54). The title sequence of Alma's final section brings to the surface the worries from which she tries to distract herself by taking on a detective role ("I TRIED NOT TO THINK ABOUT" but "I SHOULD"): the pain she feels thinking about Bird's and Charlotte's different forms of loneliness, the "HUNDRED THINGS" out of her control that "CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE":

3. HOW TO WATERPROOF YOUR BROTHER
4. THE MORE I THOUGHT ABOUT IT, THE MORE MY STOMACH HURT
5. ONCE
6. I READ IT AGAIN
7. AND AGAIN
8. AND AGAIN
9. HOLY COW
10. THE SITUATION
11. WAITING
12. ALL THE FRIENDS I EVER HAD
13. IN ANOTHER ROOM, MY MOTHER SLEPT CURLED NEXT TO THE WARMTH OF A PILE OF BOOKS
14. I TRIED NOT TO THINK ABOUT
15. I SHOULD
16. A HUNDRED THINGS CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Lines six through thirteen (when Alma discovers that Jacob Marcus is actually Isaac Mortiz, Alma Mereminski's son) mark for the reader when to accelerate the tempo ("AGAIN / AND AGAIN / AND AGAIN") and when to retreat and slow down ("WAITING" and the long line about Charlotte that creates a sense of quiet slowness with words like "SLEPT," "CURLED," and "WARMTH"). The fluctuations in the lengths of the titles and of the entries they envelop regulate the process of reading, of perceiving what happens and how, for the book's audience: the reader moves through the novel with what Bromberg depicts as an ambiguous "sort-of-knowing," guessing the narrative direction based on each title, each fragment, and how they seem to come together, and then adjusting in the process based on shifts in language and form. The result of these reading rhythms resembles what Russell Meares describes in *The Poet's Voice in the Making of Mind* as a "transformative conversation" that "brings about an enlargement of a personal state of existing" and "in which a latent complexity of feeling is realized" (Meares 61). This feeling, Meares writes, is "felt sometimes as a kind of rhythm. It is necessarily represented by an analogue of this feeling, which has a musical quality" (Meares 61). In most of the "A+L" section of Krauss's novel, words are centered in the middle of the page, surrounded by blank space. With the rapidly changing perspective and amount of words per page, the body is actively engaged in the book's final section, as Jessica Lang points out: the "rhythm of reading achieves a sense of urgency through movement: both the eye and the hand are flexed as the novel rapidly comes to a close" (Lang 53). Lang interprets the blank space as "a historical record of sorts, one that symbolizes absence and silence, one that recognizes the limitations of language and narrative in a Holocaust context. But the space, the silence, is interrupted . . . with humor," a dual

feeling reminiscent of Leo's first draft title for his new manuscript: "LAUGHING & CRYING" (Lang 53).

The connection between reader and narrator encouraged by the structures of Krauss's and Smith's texts results in what Bromberg depicts as "playing with boundaries": "an author . . . becomes *your* author . . . when the 'otherness' of his words does not obtrude, when the interplay among his self-states allows you to imagine yourself into them. Then he writes for *you*, and you become *his* reader (*Awakening the Dreamer* 53). The forms of *NW*'s sections manage time in diverse ways and provide space for the reader to actively feel these distinct approaches to and senses of time. Smith says in an interview that *NW* attempts to show how people experience time, and in "Keisha's case, she has this belief that life is a meaningful progression towards some ultimate goal—in her case, 'success'—and this made the numbered sections the obvious choice" (Leyshon interview). The linearity of Keisha/Natalie's narrative presents life as an arrangement of delineable, numerable stages through which one must advance to attain an ideal existence. Keisha/Natalie and Alma both organize life into series of steps, but because we stay with Keisha/Natalie over the course of a couple decades, we are able to observe the development of her fragments and titles over time. Keisha/Natalie is "completely regimented in her existence and pursues it with complete lethal monomania" (Mullan interview). In contrast with Alma's, most of Keisha/Natalie's titles are short, five-sixths of them consisting of three words or fewer, briskly moving the reader with a sense of calculated efficiency from one event to the next. Many of the passage titles, some repeating, are markers or measures of time: "The new timetable," "Relative time," "Time slows down," and "Time speeds up."

Keisha/Natalie's fragmented narrative is in the form of 184 encyclopedia-like entries (numbered 1 through 185, with 37 missing[45]). Keisha/Natalie presents the majority of topics as philosophical concerns and treats them all with the same degree of detached gravity, regardless of the subject matter's particularities. A passage on Nike Air Max sneakers titled "That obscure object of desire" praises the "red and white air technology of the Greek goddess of victory," and two passages regarding a borrowed Sony Walkman characterize the ability to "hear the Rebel MC in [one's] ears and at the same time walk down Willesden Lane" as "a kind of miracle and modern ecstasy," an "orchestral existence" (213-214). References to cultural objects and events also produce a sense of time for the reader: they imply the year during which a passage is set with remarks about the release of Nike Air Max shoes, Kurt Cobain's death, or a Salt-N-Pepa single. Many titles in Keisha/Natalie's earlier years refer to particular objects or food she encounters ("Kiwi fruit," "Filet-O-Fish, large fries, apple pie," "Gravel," "Evian," "Spectrum 128k"), and during her high school and university years, titles more frequently indicate abstract concepts and ideas ("Mobility," "Parity," "Ambition," "Reconnaissance," "Desire"). The titles, often broad keywords that categorize Keisha/Natalie's clusters of events, describe yet distance her from what takes place in her own life. In part due to the formal use of full names in most of the passages, Keisha/Natalie's section gives the impression of an observational analysis rather than narration from within the person experiencing the events. The descriptions always appear to point to something outside of themselves.

[45] Leah's former lover has a theory that "37 has a magic about it, we're compelled toward it," so all of the sections play with this 'mystical' number: Leah's section has multiple chapters numbered 37, and there are scattered references to it, including in one of Keisha/Natalie's entry titles, a bus number, and the page number in a book with Felix's father's picture.

Several titles in Keisha/Natalie's section involve references and allusions—literary, filmic, musical—through which she interprets and copes with particular moments in her life. Above and within the passages, and often not distinguished by quotation marks, the book's audience can locate the works and words of John Updike, Nas, Jane Austen, Beyoncé, Evelyn Waugh, Michael Jackson, Vladimir Nabokov, Jay-Z, Samuel Beckett, A Tribe Called Quest, John Donne, Jean-Luc Godard, and many other artists, all interwoven with ease into Keisha/Natalie's discourse. Some referential titles in Keisha/Natalie's section act as advance responses to or reasons for a subsequent passage, perhaps even outside of the focalized character's awareness. One fragment questions where Rodney Banks, Keisha/Natalie's once-boyfriend, "had even got the idea of 'the law,'" since his "mother was a dinner lady. His father drove a bus"—but the fragment's title is "Rumpole," likely referring to *Rumpole of the Bailey*, a 1978-1992 British television series about a London barrister who often defended underdogs (227). When Keisha is bullied in school, a single-sentence passage entitled "Jane Eyre" tells the reader that

> When being bullied Keisha Blake found it useful to remember that if you read the relevant literature or watched the pertinent movies you soon found that being bullied was practically a sign of a superior personality, and the greater the intensity of the bullying the more likely it was to be avenged at the other end of life, when qualities of the kind Keisha Blake possessed—cleverness, will-to-power—became 'their own reward,' and that this remained true even if the people in the literature and the movies looked nothing like you, came from a different socio-economic and historical universe, and—had they ever met you—would very likely have enslaved you or, at

best, bullied you to precisely the same extent as Lorna Mackenzie who had a problem with the way you acted like you were better than everyone else. (214-215)[46]

Aside from revealing more about the nature of Keisha/Natalie's typical day at school and why she would primarily rather narrate from outside of that experience, this passage demonstrates a split awareness with the shift halfway through the sentence from fiction to reality. While the first half of the passage shows the role literature and film plays in Keisha/Natalie's life as a coping mechanism ("being bullied was practically a sign of a superior personality"), the second half indicates that the images from books and movies are inaccessible, blocked from reach due to the reality of racism ("the people in the literature and movies looked nothing like you, came from a different socio-economic and historical universe, and—had they ever met you—would very likely have enslaved you or, at best, bullied you"). The more Keisha/Natalie learns about and navigates these different "universes," which we trace partially through the allusions permeating her descriptions, the more she adjusts and crafts herself to fit into the roles she deems 'successful'—but simultaneously, the more she anguishes over the idea of 'authenticity,' of "whether she herself had any personality at all or was in truth only the accumulation and reflection of all the things she had read in books and seen on television," whether she is a "forgery" (217, 221).

Though their individual circumstances and choices are quite distinct, Keisha/Natalie's anxiety about unoriginality links her to Zvi, whose incessant self-doubt and lack of confidence leads him to plagiarize Leo's book. Zvi's section in *The History of Love* depicts him as "an average man. A man willing to accept things as they were, and, because of this, he

[46] In the usual scholarly style, this passage is followed by a small section labeled "Citation" containing a second sentence: "Further confirmation of this principle was to be found in the Bible itself" (215).

lacked the potential to be in any way original. And though he was wrong in every way about this . . . nothing could dissuade him" (116). Krauss crucially alternates the perspective here, slipping in and out of Zvi's consciousness through free indirect discourse in order to differentiate the narrator's conclusive sentence from Zvi's own qualms. Keisha discovers as a child her ability to chisel out versions of herself for others to see—as opposed to for herself to feel and be. During one university visit, Leah confesses to her friend, "You're the only person I can be all of myself with," in response to which "Natalie begin[s] to cry, not really at the sentiment but rather out of a fearful knowledge that if reversed the statement would be rendered practically meaningless, Ms. Blake having no self to be, not with Leah, or anyone" (246).

The sequence of titles that follows shortly after Keisha/Natalie's marriage to Frank evinces the difficulty of juggling multiple, competing identities:

139. Doublethink
140. Spectacle
141. Listings
142. Technology
143. The Present
144. Speed
145. Perfection
146. Cheryl (L.O.V.E.)
147. Listings
148. The future
149. Nature becomes culture
150. Listings
151. Redact
152. The past

The titles alone have the multilayered connotations of performance, façade, and duality ("Doublethink," "Spectacle," "Perfection," "Nature becomes culture," and "Redact" all convey a distance from the 'real' or 'original'), as well as suggest a preoccupation with the movement of time ("The Present," "The future," "The past," "Speed"). The passages show

Keisha/Natalie struggling to hold within them the current life she forges for herself, her family, and her past life. All of the gaps between perceived reality and what is concealed beneath the perception result in a constant negotiation among self-states in attempt to maintain some sense of coherence. Keisha/Natalie works as a commercial barrister but does "pro bono death row cases in the Caribbean islands of her ancestry," and she gives a percentage of her income to her family, though suspicious of herself that "these good deeds were, in fact, a further, veiled, example of self-interest, representing only the assuaging of conscience" (303). Her marriage feels like "a double act that only speaks to each other when they are on stage," a spectacle for weekend audiences (304). At a certain point, Keisha/Natalie begins "secretly checking the website" (the repeating "Listings" above) and creates an Internet profile for setting up casual sexual encounters (304). She registers with the email KeishaNW@gmail.com: some form of nostalgia brings Natalie to insert her old name and home, dress and speech, into an alter ego through which she can step out of the bounds of her carefully sculpted position. Since she cannot return to an identity that no longer exists and cannot alter her family connections—her mother wants to move back to Jamaica with her father, and her sister has no interest in Keisha/Natalie's offers of help ("Keisha, if I wanted to get out of here I'd get another place off the council before I come to you")—she turns to her past-inspired identity on the website, where she already *is* "what everybody was looking for" (310, 312).

Transgenerational Connections

In *NW* and *The History of Love*, names encapsulate familial and transgenerational memories and relations. Keisha considers her name a link to her and her family's past – a

past she grows to resent but later returns to and samples either for her Internet-identity or instances of nostalgia. As readers, we are not privy to the exact moment when and reason why Keisha changes her name to Natalie. Leah assumes she "became Natalie Blake in that brief pause in their long history," when Keisha "[e]ducated herself on the floor of Kensal Rise Library[47] while Leah smoked weed all the live-long day" (80). The narrative marks a shift when "Ms. Blake," rather than "Keisha Blake," awaits Leah's third visit at the university, "a time of experimentation and metamorphosis," and within the dialogue in the next section, titled "Proper names" (playing with the grammatical term and the denotation of respectability), Leah is corrected during her introductions: "'Guys, this is Keisha, she—' 'No: Natalie.' 'Sorry, this is Natalie, we went to school together,' said Leah" (239, 240). Leah's husband Michel admires Natalie's shedding of her given name as a method of professionalization: "It's like: 'Dress for the job you want not the one you have.' And it's the same with names, I feel" (71). Alma likewise resents the weight of inheritance within her names. While her Hebrew name, Devorah, was passed down to her in honor of her great-aunt Dora, who died in the Warsaw Ghetto, Alma's given name is shared with "every girl in a book called *The History of Love*," David's gift to Charlotte two weeks after they meet (243). On the title page, he had written, "*For Charlotte, my Alma. This is the book I would have written for you if I could write*" (108). Before David purchases the novel in Buenos Aires, Leo writes it in Slonim for Alma Mereminski, and after Alma Singer discovers that Alma Mereminski, later Alma Moritz, is no longer alive, she becomes upset to find out that "everyone I'm named after is dead" and wonders, "Why do people always get named after

[47] This library and the threat of its closure due to 'unprofitability' is the topic of Smith's essay "Northwest London Blues."

dead people," rather than "things, which have more permanence, like the sky or the sea, or even ideas, which never really die, not even bad ones?" (176).

Philip argues that one consequence of fragmentation, the rupturing of history "into fragments and fugues or fuguing fragments," is the loss of "a deep, spiritual understanding of the relationships between ancestors and the land and community that bind us" (Philip 8). In Smith's and Krauss's novel, part of the dissociation and disruption that the characters experience may be linked to the implications of and attitude toward family heritage for second- and third-generation immigrant children. The motive to self-invent for later generations correlates with a desire to assert independence that contrasts with and defies family background, in pursuit of what seems like an abundance of other lives to be potentially living. Leah and Keisha/Natalie agree that "parental legacy meant little": "it was [Keisha's] solid sense that she was in no way the creation of her parents" (211). By the time in the novel that Leah and Natalie have drifted apart in most respects (Leah "looks up at her best friend, Natalie Blake, and hates her"), the scenes during which the women are most in tune and happy to be in each other's company are in the midst of laughing about their mothers: "Leah folds her arms flat across her bust and becomes her mother," "mouth drawn downwards, eyelids fluttering against the world's specks and their determination to fly into Pauline's eyes," saying in her voice and accent, "I wouldn't be liking the newer churches, no. I wouldn't be dying over them. You can be surer of the older ones, so you can," and Natalie responds in her own mother's voice, "Keisha, hear me now. I just want the spirit of the Lord to settle upon us all" (67, 78). The stifling pressure of preceding generations is particularly felt with Leah's mother: "Time is compressing for the mother, she has a short distance left to go. She means to squeeze the past into a thing small enough to take with her. It's the

daughter's job to listen" (20). The story of Pauline coming from Dublin to Kilburn, "a rare Prod on the wing, back when most were of the other persuasion," making through desperate measures, now "bursts through every phone call" to Leah (19, 20).

Charlotte similarly overwhelms her daughter with a lesson on her family background's complexities. She works through sixteen computations of heritage ("one-quarter Russian, one-quarter Hungarian, one-quarter Polish, and one-quarter German," "three-quarters Polish and one-quarter Czech," and so on) based on Alma's grandparents' immigration paths and the changing borders of their countries of residence ("Bubbe's parents were from Poland before they moved to Nuremberg, and Grandma Sasha's town was originally in Belarus, or White Russia, before it became part of Poland," "the town Zeyde came from was in Hungary before 1918, and in Czechoslavakia after") (95-96). With a recently uncharacteristic burst of energy,[48] Charlotte scribbles a page of distinct pie charts for her daughter, afterward noting that she "could always just stick with half English and half Israeli" (97). Alma responds to this waterfall of generational pressure by shouting, "I'M AMERICAN," to which Bird mutters, "No, you're not. You're Jewish" (97). This passage portrays identity as an amalgamation of interconnected but competing backgrounds; for Alma, this is a composition of religion and relatives, moving patterns and numerous countries with shifting borders, all at a distance from her. Lang interprets Alma's exasperated declaration of American heritage as an attempt "to detach herself from her past and create herself afresh, from nothingness," an impossible wish "fueled by her father's death and the collapse of her family . . . but one that reflects her sense of self and her desire to be, at least

[48] After David's passing, Charlotte remained in bed for almost a year, and once she did start working again, she "roamed the house in a kimono printed with red flowers, and wherever she went a trail of crumpled pages followed" (43). As Alma describes her mother's circumstances, "She's kept her love for him as alive as the summer they first met. In order to do this, she's turned life away" (45).

momentarily, unaffiliated with *any* culture, simply an individual" (Lang 48). Krauss's short story "Zusya on the Roof" (2013) takes an especially hard, harsh look at the generational burden of inheritance: "Abraham bound Isaac once so that Isaac would go on binding himself forever. Each night before bed, Brodman checked his bindings . . . on his back he carried his mother, with her blue ankles, and his stooped father, and their parents, too, dead in a trench at the edge of a pine forest" ("Zusya on the Roof"). Hirsch elucidates the term "postmemory" as describing this

> relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up . . . Postmemory's connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. To grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. (Hirsch 5)

Brodman wonders what life could have been if he were "born and raised without precedent . . . Who might he have been, had it been given to him to choose? But his chance had passed . . . He had failed to fully become himself, had instead given in to ancient pressures" ("Zusya on the Roof").

At certain points in her narrative, Alma does imagine a tangible, not necessarily oppressive, connection between generations—some history that is part of one's own, even if not personally experienced. Unable to sleep and thinking of all she wants to tell Bird about

her fears for both of them, she "lay in the dark and the silence, which was nothing like the dark and the silence my father lay in as a boy in a house on a dirt street in Tel Aviv, or the dark and the silence my mother lay in on her first night at Kibbutz Yavne, but which held those darknesses and those silences" (181). Hirsch discusses the effect of her parents' recollections on her mind: "as a child, it was at night, particularly, that I imagined myself into the lives they were passing down to me" (Hirsch 4). This concept of generational connection—*l'dor v'dor*, from generation to generation—as Lang points out, "resonates with a much older sense of Jewish history . . . there is a common foundation on which we depend that not only endures but works to connect us," and our survival depends on "succeeding generations both to remember the past and to live anew, to relate to history that has not been directly experienced by them and, also, to create their own individual histories" (Lang 48).

But moving forward while carrying the weight of inherited trauma involves the difficulty of holding on to something not easily perceptible, removed from the event in question. One scene that illustrates this blurred perception of inheritance is the fragment entitled "THERE IS A PHOTOGRAPH OF MY MOTHER THAT NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN": on a train ride, Charlotte meets an almost-blind photographer who, after damaging his retinas, describes seeing the world "differently now, and it wasn't necessarily bad" (39). He takes a picture of Charlotte, knowing it will look like a blur but just in case his eyes ever heal—"So I'll know what I've been looking at" (39). A photograph, though ephemeral, holds its own "fragile power" of memory preservation (Schacter 306). Daniel Schacter, whose research explores conscious and unconscious forms of memory, writes that "the external media in which we pass on our personal memories—including family photos, portraits, and other heirlooms" are physical traces of the past that "may fade, decay, and even change over

time, but they nonetheless exude a compelling emotional aura" (Schacter 306). To an extent, we could read the photographer's account of blind sight as a metaphor for what it is like for Alma as a grandchild of Holocaust survivors—having a certain record of a world without ever quite being able to see it but holding on to and passing it down. In "The Site of Memory," Morrison describes the route to accessing the "unwritten interior life" of ancestors as a "kind of literary archaeology: on the basis of some information and a little bit of guesswork you journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply" through the necessary act of imagination (Morrison 238). Morrison asserts that the exploration of past generations leads to a clearer understanding of one's own interiority and personal recollections, the "memories within": "Like Frederick Douglass talking about his grandmother, and Simone de Beauvoir talking about her mother, these people are my access to me; they are my entrance into my own interior life" (Morrison 238, 240).

Family Trees, Family Traces

The divisive generational struggles and dilemmas evident in both the form and content of *NW* and *The History of Love* connect to Krauss's and Smith's own family backgrounds—not in a strictly autobiographical sense but rather in details that inspired and framed the narratives. In her essay "Fail Better," Smith argues that despite T.S. Eliot's efforts to convince readers otherwise, writing fiction "is not an objective science and writers have selves as well as traditions to understand and assimilate . . . The self is not like platinum—it leaves traces all over the place." Smith defines writing as the "attempted revelation of this elusive, multifaceted self" while understanding the impossibility of its total revelation: "That

is what I am looking for when I read a novel; one person's truth as far as it can be rendered through language." Smith was born in London to a Jamaican mother who immigrated to England and an English father. Krauss was born in New York to a British Jewish mother and an American Jewish father, raised partly in Israel. Parts of Krauss and Smith are strewn across numerous characters, but familial similarities are particularly reflected in Alma and Natalie.

Krauss dedicated *The History of Love* "FOR MY GRANDPARENTS, *who taught me the opposite of disappearing*,"[49] and underneath this dedication are four passport photographs of them. In an interview with Gaby Wood, Krauss talks about "these places that we could never go back to, because they'd been lost . . . My great-grandparents and lots of great-uncles and aunts died in the Holocaust. I don't know; maybe it's something that's inherited in the blood, a sense of a loss of that thing and a longing for it" (Wood interview). Alma's heritage pie charts already resemble Krauss's own background,[50] but moreover, Charlotte mentions a "Grandma Sasha" whose town was originally in Belarus before it became part of Poland. Correspondingly, Krauss's grandmother Sasha Mereminski was born in Slonim, where the fictional Leo Gursky, Alma Mereminski, and Zvi Litvinoff grew up (Marsh interview). Krauss describes her grandmother's curtailed love story as "A love that is frozen in mid-phase and the rest of life has to grow around it," similar to Leo and Alma's. Krauss's

[49] This phrase is used as well in a photograph scene with Leo. After failing to appear in a picture three times after his cousin tries to take it, Leo takes his cousin's picture, instead, and thinks, "It was I who'd taken the picture, and if it was proof of his existence, it was also proof of my own" (82). After this event, Leo repeatedly has his picture taken at photo booths until his face finally appears in the photograph: "It was the opposite of disappearing," he ecstatically observes, and keeps evidence of his place in the world tucked firmly in his wallet, always with him to serve as a reminder (82).

[50] Krauss's maternal grandparents, born in Germany and Ukraine, later moved to London, and her paternal grandparents were born in Hungary and Slonim (now in Belarus), met in Israel, and moved to New York (Aarons and Berger 150).

grandmother met a doctor in a Polish transit camp who "helped her to get her papers to go out as a chaperone on the last Kindertransport to London. Her parents died. We really don't know how. She assumed he (the doctor) had died, too" (Marsh interview). Years after Krauss's grandmother married and moved to the U.S., she received letters from the doctor, by that time resettled in South America, to which she never responded, "choosing not to complicate her devotion to her new family" (Marsh interview). Krauss's writing responds to the reality of being two generations removed from a history she inherits but cannot fully grasp—and to the desire to give a new life to her family's past. In an interview with Jennie Rothenberg Gritz, Krauss demonstrates a hyperawareness of her ethical position with respect to the Holocaust, several steps of separation away from the experience itself: "I know this goes against the grain of what most critics might say about my work, but I would not say that I've written about the Holocaust. I am the grandchild of people who survived that historical event. I'm not writing their story—I couldn't write their story . . . What interests me is the response to catastrophic loss," one that carries over generations (Gritz). Krauss attests that even her first novel *Man Walks Into a Room*, her book that is least concerned about the Holocaust and tells the story of a man who has lost his memories beyond childhood, is still in a way her "own response to [her] familial history—this history of surviving real catastrophe during the Second World War and the need to start a second life" (Gritz).

Krauss and Smith hold in common the desire to confront inherited traumas and to think deeply about how this confrontation manifests in the growth and development of a mind. Their writing is "connective" in the way Hirsch calls for, moving "between global and intimate concerns" of memory to foreground "affect and embodiment and a concern for justice and acts of repair" (Hirsch 206). "There's never a good time to tell your child about

slavery, or the Holocaust," Smith says in an interview with Synne Rifbjerg (Rifbjerg interview). Smith recalls her own confrontation with her family's past at the age of twelve, a "deeply embarrassing" realization in conversation with other Jamaican British children after seeing "an encyclopedia picture of an Arawak Indian," who was described in the entry as Jamaican native (Rifbjerg interview). At the time, she could not understand this information that contradicted what she knew: "I thought my family, people like me, were native to Jamaica, so you had all this knowledge about the slave trade as it applied to West Africa and America, but I suppose I hadn't really considered the idea that the entire population of Jamaica is a descendent of a slave trade" (Rifbjerg interview). This anecdote illustrates what Philip describes as the "amnesia generated by slavery and colonialism," a violent history severed into dispersed fragments (Philip 8). In her essay on *Beloved*, Morrison characterizes the nature of slavery as a haunting past with which all of our lives are entangled, "traces of a ghostly presence, the residue of a repressed past in certain concrete but also allusive detail" (Morrison 284). Smith considers in the interview how much would have made more sense as a child had she had a fuller knowledge of this historical heritage, but also how much difficulty and pain that knowledge contributes. Her childhood story demonstrates the necessity for her twelve-year-old self to contend with multiple levels of history and heritage that affected her, but from various distances: her own position as a child born in London to a Jamaican immigrant, her mother's life within and outside of Jamaica, and the traumatic history of Jamaica, a country with which she identifies, but as her retelling shows, with a degree of separation. Hirsch declares that the "postmemorial" work of later generations must strive to "*reactivate* and *re-embody* more distant political and cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic

expression," maintaining a "material 'living connection'" through memory, "an affective link to the past" (Hirsch 33). Smith enacts this material connection to the past through her writing—at a remove in her fiction, more directly in her essays.

In "The Bathroom," for example, Smith considers the role of spaces and places in formulating feelings of home and self-identity, particularly within her mother's transnational movement, her personal local movement, and the intersection between the two. A collaborative essay by environmental psychologist Barbara B. Brown and community psychologist Douglas D. Perkins explains that "*Place attachments are integral to self-definitions,*" so disruptions in those attachments are threatening: "A disruption means that individuals must define who they are and where they are going without the benefit of the tangible supports that formerly bolstered such intangible understandings" (Brown and Perkins 280, 301). Smith lived with her family in a council estate in Willesden, like the *NW* characters, until moving out when she was eight years old "into what seemed to [her] a mansion," a home with a spare room and extra toilet that "represented, for [her] parents, a very British form of achievement. Raised in poverty, they were now officially what the census-takers call 'lower middle class'" ("The Bathroom" 354, 355). The bathroom was particularly exciting for Smith's mother, whose "preoccupation" with toilets "stretches back to her childhood, in Jamaica, where she had to use a hole in the ground. She rarely comes home from a holiday without a photograph of the local facilities: drop toilets in Ghana, sparklingly clean toilets in Port Verde, supersonic toilets in Japan" (355). Her mother decorated their new bathroom with tropical-looking, overgrown plants that "made the whole thing feel like a tropical sweat-box . . . Green grew on green grew on green" (362). Smith recalls recognizing the design as an incorporation of her mother's past into the everyday

present: standing at a literary festival in Jamaica thirty years later "amid a lot of green growing on green growing on green," Smith feels "thrown back, in memory, to a corner of a foreign bathroom that was forever…Jamaica. Yet it never occurred to [her], as a child, that [her] mother might be homesick" (362). Comparing theories of interpersonal and place attachment, psychologists Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford explain that "proximity-seeking" is an attachment process exhibited both interpersonally and toward places: "When physical proximity is impossible, it can be achieved symbolically," such as "when emigrants name places and design and use buildings in a way that reflects their heritage" (Scannell and Gifford 26). As Smith discusses the features of place that remain with a person who moves, she considers the concurrent linguistic movements.

Linguistic Attachments: Language, Place, Identity

In "Speaking in Tongues," Smith describes her double-life after leaving for the university in terms of language. She writes that she had no intention of replacing Willesden with Cambridge:

> I thought I was adding Cambridge to Willesden, this new way of talking to that old way . . . And for a while, that's how it was: at home, during the holidays, I spoke with my old voice, and in the old voice seemed to feel and speak things I couldn't express in college, and vice versa . . . Like being alive twice. But flexibility is something that requires work if it is to be maintained. Recently my double voice has deserted me for a single one, reflecting the smaller world into which my work has led me. ("Speaking in Tongues" 133)

Smith's description interconnects voices and subjectivities with corresponding environments. The voices embody the multiple centers of consciousness that seem so distinct from one another, yet must be juggled together—so this passage recognizes and illustrates, in psychoanalyst Elizabeth Howell's words, the life of the mind as a linked network of "contemporaneous, subjective realities that alternate as foreground and background," depending on immediate circumstances and surroundings (Howell 37). Maintaining flexibility in modulations of voices and switching between realities as needed is what Bromberg refers to as "the use of normal dissociation," a relationship among self-states that allows one to "select a self-state configuration that is most immediately adaptive" (*The Shadow of the Tsunami* 95). Analogous to this process in linguistics is code-switching, which entails the awareness and implementation of multiple, simultaneous systems of meaning-making. In *NW*, Keisha/Natalie faces a dilemma similar to the one Smith describes in "Speaking in Tongues": once relying on her versatility to switch between worlds, she feels increasingly blocked from going back and forth. As she walks with Nathan in the "Crossing" section near her old home, she "tried to place the people back there, in the house, into the present current of her thought. But her relation with each person was now unrecognizable to her, and her imagination . . . did not have the generative power to muster an alternative future for itself. All she could envision was suburban shame, choking everything" (364). Though Nathan is speaking explicitly from his own context ("Ain't the same for girls, it's a man ting"), his words to Keisha/Natalie echo her own sentiment of exclusion: "Everyone loves a bredrin when he's ten. After that he's a problem . . . There's no way to live in this country when you're grown. Not at all. They don't want you, your own people don't want you, no one wants you" (376).

The local crossing of worlds in Keisha/Natalie's section is often marked by language and allusions. The use of French increases in fragments that reconfigure identity. For example, the passage in which Keisha/Natalie and Leah begin separating in tastes and friend groups in high school (a "sudden and violent divergence") is called "Vivre sa vie,"[51] to live one's own life, and she refers to her time wondering about the existence of her own personality as a "mauvais quart d'heure" (216-217). The passage when she sees Frank for the first time in the classroom, in which she describes him as seeming "Like he was born on a yacht somewhere in the Caribbean and raised by Ralph Lauren," is titled "Coup de foudre" (241). In a later passage titled "Romance languages," Keisha/Natalie explains that many of the men she "became involved with after Rodney Banks were as "socio-economically and culturally alien to her as Frank" (247). Passages related to Frank, whose mother is Italian and father is from Trinidad, sometimes feature Italian words, such as in the two honeymoon fragments set in Positano. "Miele di Luna (two weeks)," a portion of which is excerpted below, blatantly stands out in Keisha/Natalie's section because of its formal instability in contrast to the other neat, manageable divisions:

Sun.

Prosecco.

Sky, bleached.

(. . .)

Empty beach. Sun rise. Sun set.

"You know how rare this is, in Italy?

This is what you pay for—the silence!"

[51] This is also the title of a 1962 French New Wave film directed by Jean-Luc Godard, translated into English as *My Life to Live*.

Oh.

He swims. Every day.

"The water is perfect!

Wave.

(. . .)

The public beach is at the tip of the peninsula. Four miles hence. Whoops. Screams. Laughter. Music from loud speakers. More bodies than sand.

Wish you were here?

Empty.

Exclusive.

"This is really like paradise!"

oh

wave

Lone family. Red umbrella. Mother, father, son. Louis.

LOOO-weee! Pink shorts. WAVE

Nowhere and nothing.

(275-277)

Unlike the strict structure of the other passages in Keisha/Natalie's section, the "nowhere and nothing" of this prose fragment is fragmented within itself, spread out like a poem, outside of the London setting of the rest of the novel. Bits of dialogue intermingle with brief observations, with the text partly centered, partly left-aligned. As Frank enjoys the empty beach and perfect water, Keisha/Natalie, who does not swim, reads "Obituaries. Reviews. Cover to cover" (276). Even the Italian part of the title is off-kilter: "Miele di Luna," the

reverse of "honeymoon," or "luna di miele." The sense of direction present in most of the other prose fragments in Keisha/Natalie's section, even when misguided, is "empty" from here, where there is just discomfort, out-of-placeness, and separation between Keisha/Natalie's and Frank's experiences (277). The sense of absence, emptiness, and separation resonates in the title of the subsequent passage, "L'isola che non c'è": the Italian name for "Neverland," but literally, "the island that is not there"[52] (278). This passage shows Keisha/Natalie spending her honeymoon largely by herself, reading personal advertisements in the paper of people searching for "soulmates," to which Frank responds, "*Che schifo!*[53] . . . They depress me. So many lonely people" (278).

Speech, including code-switching, is a method through which to either relate to or distance from others. Language in general is simultaneously a form of navigation in the present and a connective tissue to the past. In one of the longest numbered fragments, "In the playground," Keisha/Natalie tries to use speech to walk the line between the two. She teams up with a group of other adults, a "circle of judgment" comprising an "old white lady," a middle-aged "formidable-looking Rasta in a giant Zulu hat," a "previously uninvolved Indian man," and eventually a small crowd of "other parents, concerned citizens," against a teenager smoking in the playground on the roundabout (336). The old woman yelling at the teenager, Marcus, and his friends, saying "They're all off that bloody estate," prompts Keisha/Natalie and the middle-aged woman to walk over to the roundabout themselves (despite Keisha/Natalie not having "strong feelings about secondhand smoke, particularly when in was outside in the open air") (336). After Marcus tells them that "We don't do like you do

[52] It is also the title of a song by Edoardo Bennato.

[53] Translation: "How disgusting!"

here. In Queen's Park. You can't really chat to me. I'm Hackney, so," both women assume a position of familiarity and identification by location and consequently become angrier and defensive: "the Rasta" tells him, "you can try and mess with these people but you can't mess with me, sunshine. I know you. In a deep way. I'm not Queen's Park, love, I'm HARLESDEN . . . You're the reason why we're where we are right now," and Keisha/Natalie tells him to "Just put it out, man . . . She had not ended a sentence in 'man' for quite some time" (336-338). After the two women tell Marcus about their successful jobs as a certified youth worker and a lawyer ("I'm a lawyer, mate. That's paid. That's really paid."), more people gather around to "keep yelling at poor Marcus, who by this point had finished his cigarette and looked utterly exhausted" (338-339).

The playground scene stages overlapping implications regarding speech and its intersections with place and identity. The old woman's assumption about the teenagers being "off that bloody estate" and therefore requiring a "piece of her mind" about what "[a]ny half-civilized person ought to know" parallels the assumptions that lead the two other women to claim recognition and assume a role of mediation, as well as a position of superiority, without any sincere connection to the people involved. The coalescing of these elements in an affluent area like Queen's Park, all based on bias and speculation, quickly escalates the situation into a spectacle far beyond its immediate context. Nathan points out the injustice of these attitudes on his walk with Keisha/Natalie: "I don't live in them towers no more, I'm on the streets now, different attitude . . . When you been walking in my shoes? What do you know about living the way I live, coming up the way I came up" (376-377).[54] Tammy Amiel

[54] A thread runs through the novel of no one actually knowing how Nathan reached his current position. Pauline recalls that he is "not the one who killed somebody," but probably was admitted to a hospital after he beat his father, though "that man had it coming for him or something like it" (51). Franks asks if Nathan is "the one who

Houser writes that the exhibition of this kind of distorting empathy "may actually lead to an active rejection of those who, like Nathan Bogle, the novel's underdog, are not allowed fellowship . . . one may instead become locked . . . holding a presumptive 'knowledge' of others that assumes that those who are fundamentally different are actually similar" (Houser 126). Nevertheless, Keisha/Natalie maintains the same discourse in her conversation with Leah at the novel's conclusion: "we worked harder . . . We wanted to get out. People like Bogle—they didn't want it enough" (400). When the two friends call the Kilburn Police Station to report Nathan as a possible suspect in the murder on Albert Road, "It was Keisha who did the talking . . . 'I've got something to tell you,' said Keisha Blake, disguising her voice with her voice" (401).[55]

Although *NW* only occasionally incorporates non-English words and phrases, the novel takes seriously the issue of translation in terms of its etymological sense of "carrying across": the narrative examines what is carried over between cultural, historical, and socioeconomic worlds, what is 'lost in translation' (especially in the book's conclusion), what is the relationship between space and speech, and how all of these issues are embodied in patterns of language, interlingually and intralingually. Likewise, *The History of Love* does not consider translation in a practical or traditional way, but it does take up some of the questions of translation studies by incorporating the fictional work of a translator into the plot. Thomas Beebee proposes the term "transmesis" to convey "literary authors' use of fiction to depict acts of translation": transmesis, Beebee clarifies, is the "mimesis of the

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was caught for heroin importing," but Natalie corrects him that "Bogle wasn't in that league. He dropped out to become a footballer" (70).

[55] Smith uses similarly ambiguous phrasing when Leah sees Shar three weeks after she steals Leah's money: "At first Leah is grateful to be without Michel. Then her face turns into his face and his voice comes out of her throat or this is a marital excuse and it is her own voice in her throat: – Proud of yourself? *Thief*. I want my money" (44-45).

interrelated phenomena of translation, multilingualism, and code-switching," and without necessarily incorporating multiple languages, "transmeses remind their readers that the universe is multilingual" (Beebee 3-6). The interwoven narrative threads of Krauss's novel are entangled in the circulation and translation of a manuscript. Words in Yiddish, Hebrew, and Russian are scattered throughout the narrative, and a few sections in English are presented to the reader as translations of spoken Yiddish, distinguished by italics.[56] Love and loss in the book are intimately tied to language: we witness the effects of ruptured attachment through linguistic associations with people, places, and memories.

Alma remembers her father "in parts"—parts of appearance, of stories, of speech (37). In the prose fragment titled "MY FATHER DIED WHEN I WAS SEVEN," Alma describes the contents of her memories:

> His ears. The wrinkled skin on his elbows. The stories he used to tell me about his childhood in Israel. How he used to sit in his favorite chair listening to music, and liked to sing. He spoke to me in Hebrew, and I called him *Abba*. I've forgotten almost everything, but sometimes words will come back to me, *kum-kum, shemesh, chol, yam, etz, neshika, motek*, their meanings worn off like the faces of old coins. (37)

More than half of Alma's listed associations are rooted in language: despite the fact that she largely cannot understand Hebrew anymore, she remembers the *feeling* of understanding the language in her father's stories, the mood and impression that remained and the sound of those words—as if recalling a melody. Meares discusses the "close association between the neural bases of language and music" and the likelihood that they either evolved together or a

[56] At the funeral of Leo's son, Isaac, Leo pretends to speak only in Yiddish to get out of an awkward situation with Bernard, Alma's second son: "*DE RETS YIDDISH?. . . FARSHTAIST? . . . Good*, I continued in Yiddish, *because this here dumbbell*, I said, gesturing at the man in the bow tie, *this here putz has inserted himself up my tuchas and it's only because I can't crap of my own free will that he has not been ejected*" (87-88).

"music-like vocalization preceded the use of words": "The dynamic structuring of the proto-conversation and the subsequent babbling of the infant are proto-languages made of the patternings of the sounds that can be seen as the forerunners of both language and music, each having the properties of melody, phrasing and rhythm" (Meares 131). Out of the words Alma lists in Hebrew,[57] most are associated with the natural world, which Alma already entwines in her mind with her father's memory, so the connotations are not necessary for additional understanding. By leaving the Hebrew untranslated for the reader, and by reiterating Alma's own diminishing familiarity with the literal meanings, the narrative places the reader in Alma's position of listening to the words "come back"— creating a rhythm through the commas that insert space for breath between each word, focusing on the flowing series of words that have meaning through sound specifically and solely because of their tie to a loved one. In "MEMORIES PASSED DOWN TO ME FROM MY FATHER," Alma composes a list of sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and other memories in English (Falls of Iguaçu, scent of jasmine, noise of cards being shuffled, flavor of raw sugar cane, and more) but writes out the corresponding numbers one through ten in Hebrew, reinforcing the emphasis on the *association* between the language and David rather than on denotative knowledge (143).[58]

[57] Teapot, sun, sand, sea, tree, kiss, sweetheart

[58] The emphasis on the affective potential of language resonates with Samuel Spinner's essay "Reading Jewish," in which he discusses Franz Kafka's ideas about intuition in "An Introductory Talk on the Yiddish Language": "Kafka's central point was that although his audience of secular Jews believed they did not know Yiddish, they really did" because "comprehension of Yiddish is actually a matter of unlocking something within" (Spinner 151). As he himself lacks knowledge of Yiddish, Kafka's concern with the language here is neither with its "denotative meanings" nor the "communicative potential of the language as a whole," but rather its "connotative powers": "Yiddish" in this case means "everything, the words, the Chasidic melody" (Spinner 151, 152).

While Alma's approach to her father's language is broadly, affectively expansive, Charlotte as a translator is much more precise. Alma's narrative states that near the beginning of her relationship with David, Charlotte hires a Hebrew tutor "to understand [Alma's] father" and taught herself Spanish to read the book he gave her, *The History of Love* (40). Charlotte's love for David inspires her to learn two languages, and that interest transforms into a love for translating books into English. Although she is a character with less presence and no narrative sections, Charlotte's role as the translator of *The History of Love* from Spanish to English, the version that arrives for Leo "Somehow in English! With Spanish names!" is crucial for the narrative turns and cross-generational connections that form by the end (122). Krauss's novel is tellingly called ***The*** *History of Love* (emphasis mine), suggesting a wider scope that stretches beyond *one* version or *a* personal instance. Charlotte translates the book because of its associations for her with David ("even if Jacob Marcus had offered almost nothing, my mother would have still agreed to do it"), Isaac Moritz seeks a translation because his mother read it to him in Yiddish when he was a small boy, and he wants to figure out the mystery of the man "*she used to be in love with in Slonim*," and Zvi translates the book into Spanish to secure Rosa's affection (57, 90). The movement of the translation, a global motion stretching from Poland to Chile and Argentina and the U.S., parallels and interlaces with some of the movements and moments of attachment and detachment—tracing the complexities and entanglements of love in the novel.

While the wider view of the role of translation in the book draws attention to interconnectivity, certain details focus more on the difficulty, pain, and loneliness of living in the spaces between languages. In the book within the book that Leo writes, the opening chapter, "The Age of Silence," imagines the gestures through which people communicated

before words got in the way, pre-linguistic interactions through hands before the borders between languages. One of the fragment titles in Alma's section states that "THE WALL OF DICTIONARIES BETWEEN MY MOTHER AND THE WORLD GETS TALLER EVERY YEAR" (46). Charlotte puts so much of herself into her translation work that her daughter feels concerned when trails of paper with words and loose dictionary pages gather around her, "*shallon, shallop, shallot, shallow, shalom, sham, shaman, shamble,* like the petals of an immense flower" (46). As a four-year-old, Alma fears that "the pages on the floor were words she would never be able to use again" and tries "to tape them back in where they belonged, out of fear that one day she would be left silent" (46). Outside of the timeline of events, the organization of Alma's narrative expresses the emotional changes in Charlotte through her relationship with words and language: the fragment about the growing border of dictionaries around Charlotte is sandwiched between two prose fragments titled "MY MOTHER NEVER FELL OUT OF LOVE WITH MY FATHER" and "MY MOTHER HAS ONLY BEEN ON TWO DATES SINCE MY FATHER DIED" (45-46). The juxtaposition of these concerns entangles the disorientation of working between languages with disorientation after trauma, and it presents the realm of Charlotte's writing as parallel to and simultaneous with her family life—although her work problems appear more manageable: "she stayed home all day in her pajamas translating books by mostly dead people . . . Sometimes she would get stuck on a certain sentence for hours and go around like a dog with a bone until she'd shriek out, 'I'VE GOT IT!' and scurry off to her desk to dig a hole and bury it" (48). In Alma's and Keisha/Natalie's sections, the combinations of direct and inherited traumas are quite different, but the narratives relate in their presentation of a multiplicity of self in order to investigate the effects of those traumas on a mind's development. Self-doubling and self-

projection become concurrently tools and consequences in Alma's and Keisha/Natalie's confrontations with past and present losses and realities.

Self-Construction, Self-Projection, Self-Survival

Keisha/Natalie grows up with a warning from her family that "there was very little space in the day for anything like ecstasy or abandon or even simple laziness, for whatever you did in life you would have to do it twice as well as they did it 'just to break even,' a troubling belief held simultaneously by Keisha Blake's mother and her Uncle Jeffrey" (*NW* 213). In a section entitled "Thrown,"[59] Keisha expresses the consequential self-division: "In the child's mind a breach now appeared: between what she believed she knew of herself, *essentially*, and her essence as others seemed to understand it. She began to exist for other people" (208). This rupture of identity is reminiscent of what Bromberg describes as a "rigid sequestering of "me" and "not-me" self-states" that divides the movement through adulthood into two simultaneous voyages of two simultaneous selves (*The Shadow of the Tsunami* 5). Keisha begins to attribute her accomplishments to fitting into the expectations of others, as well as to flexibly reformulate herself based on changing environments. She refers to her skill and intelligence as a mere "compulsion," a "sort of mutation of the will" (*NW* 207-208). As she continues to self-invent, she has to juggle a multiplicity of selves. Before beginning university studies, Keisha balances "two sets of accounts . . . On one side of the ledger she placed Rodney, Marcia, her siblings, the church, and Jesus Christ himself. In the other, Leah was lounging in the high grass drinking cider" (234). Part of the difficulty in contending with the separate parts of oneself, Bromberg writes, is that each self-state "obscure[s] the

[59] Perhaps the title has purposeful connection to Martin Heidegger's description of "thrownness," being thrown into a world with already determined conditions and meanings.

existence of the dissociation itself," so the self-splitting is often not immediately perceived (*The Shadow of the Tsunami* 30-31). When "Natalie Blake was crazy busy with self-invention" in college, she describes the fluidity with which she rearranged and reformed her interests and investments, as if with no gap in between: "She lost God so smoothly and painlessly she had to wonder what she'd ever meant by the word. She found politics and literature, music, cinema" (*NW* 247).

Keisha/Natalie periodically cycles through self-inventions in fear of what would happen if she stops. In one scene of self-projection, Keisha/Natalie gives a cursory analysis of Michelle Holland, one of three students accepted to the university from Natalie's high school. Without ever exchanging words with Michelle, and with the same faulty recognition and empathy of which Nathan accuses her, Keisha/Natalie weaves a whole narrative about a "math prodigy" without the "luxury of mediocrity," raised in South Kilburn by her grandmother, with a father in jail and a mother in a psychiatric hospital (250-251). Natalie is not surprised when Michelle leaves halfway through their final university year: "She just stopped. (This was Natalie's interpretation.) Stopped going to lectures, studying, eating. She had been asked to pass the entirety of herself through a hold that would accept only part. (Natalie's conclusion.)" (251). Natalie's comprehension of the situation, enclosed in parentheses to further stress the depicted rupturing into parts, seems a projection of Natalie's own fears about fragmentation and self-division eventually failing her. The fear of "just stopping" underlies the reasoning for the formal and stylistic approaches of her and Alma's section—emphasizing the multiplicity of "me" and "not-me" parts, constantly rearranged and readjusted in a society that only accepts part of the whole, a controlled fragment.

Keisha/Natalie imagines her performance of personality as alternating forms of drag: "Daughter drag. Sister drag. Mother drag. Wife drag. Court drag. Rich drag. Poor drag. British drag. Jamaican drag. Each required a different wardrobe" (333). In a fragment titled "Spectacle," Keisha/Natalie describes her marital performance with Frank: treating each other with "an exaggerated tenderness, as if the slightest applied pressure would blow the whole thing to pieces," they see each other only in short gaps between working and come together only "in front of their friends, for whom they appeared fresh and vibrant . . . full of the old good humor," as if on stage (303, 304). The section "Me, myself and I"[60] repeats Natalie's name at the beginning of each sentence, the anaphora generating the image of several Natalies working together to perform motherhood, discrete selves assigned to different tasks: "Natalie put Naomi in her car-seat and locked the buckle. Natalie put Spike in his car-seat and locked the buckle. Natalie climbed up into the giant car. Natalie closed all the windows. Natalie put on the air conditioning. Natalie put *Reasonable Doubt* in the stereo" (333). Even during lunch with an old church friend, Natalie is unable to let go of her protective layers, emphasized by multiple quotation marks in the text: "'"*It's such a relief not to have to pretend to be interested in the news*,"' said Natalie Blake, quoting another woman" (331). The text emphasizes her commentary on social performance as being a performance itself. Houser analyzes the sense of estrangement created by Keisha/Natalie's narrative, as if "she is a character in an external drama . . . as if Natalie does not have an 'I' with which to think," and with "'no self to be,' Natalie cannot make the empathetic shift: with no self she cannot imagine another self, cannot imagine herself into another's mind," even if she "longs for this movement into others." (Houser 139). Though Natalie certainly feels the way Houser

[60] Even when speaking of her many selves in this title, these selves have yet another layer of signification by alluding to the title of a Beyoncé song; meanwhile a Jay-Z (Beyoncé's husband) album plays on the car stereo.

describes, it is not so much an objective fact, but rather her internalized fear as embodied by the formal, distancing style and format of the narration.

Keisha/Natalie constructs a new hybrid self from the pieces she collects in her lists of observations and analyses, but "left to her own mental devices she quickly spiraled into self-contempt. Work suited her . . . She could only justify herself to herself when she worked" (300). During childhood, the thought "had never occurred to Keisha Blake that her friend Leah Hanwell was in possession of a particular type of personality. Like most children, theirs was a relation based on verbs, not nouns" (209). Work—a place of doing rather than being, verbs rather than nouns—is the realm in which she feels most distinct and purposeful. In "Poetry and Grammar," Gertrude Stein details her affinity for verbs and dislike of nouns. She foregrounds the inflexibility of nouns, a part of speech that fixes names onto variable entities: "just naming names is alright when you want to call a roll but is it any good for anything else. To be sure in many places in Europe as in America they do like to call rolls" (Stein 27). Nouns in this description become the attempt to prescribe permanent structures, limits on being, upon constantly shifting identities that surpass the limits of a name, for "a noun is a name of a thing, and therefore slowly if you feel what is inside that thing you do not call it by the name by which it is known" (Stein 27).[61] Verbs, on the other hand, are exciting for Stein because of their plasticity: "verbs can change to look like themselves or to look like something else, they are, so to speak on the move" (Stein 27). Like Stein, Keisha/Natalie resents the passiveness of being, of having inherited without control, of being perceived as

[61] To analyze Stein's concern regarding conjectures about and restrictions on identity, it is worth considering the historical moment in which she was writing: "Poetry and Grammar" was published in 1935, the year the Nuremberg Laws were enacted and several years after the Nazi Party's rise to power.

possessing a particular, fixed identity—as opposed to the malleable, improvisatory nature of verbs, always adjustable and in the midst of action.

Work for Keisha/Natalie is a space of self-formation and voluntary affiliation. Rather than any kind of family heritage, Natalie is exponentially more interested in being accepted into the traditions of the legal profession. At a barristers' dinner, an old judge gives a speech about the long (almost comically violent) history of the profession that leaves Natalie "enthralled. The idea that her own existence might be linked to people living six hundred years past! No longer an accidental guest at the table—as she had always understood herself to be—but a host, with other hosts, continuing a tradition" (257).[62] Natalie believes with utmost certainty that hard work truly pays off within this entered profession, so when she is selected as a "random pupil" to be present during a murder trial, she feels confident in "the efficacy of her strategy . . . Do good work. Wait for your good work to be noticed" (278).

Unfortunately, Natalie discovers that she is chosen solely due to heritage and appearance: "she took her seat and spotted the victim's family in the gallery, unmistakeably Jamaican" (278). As she takes down "the pretend notes she'd been instructed to scribble," Natalie watches the trial unfold as a ludicrous extended divergence—"Someone else had used the vicar's flat to chop up Viv," someone else left the body "twenty yards from [the vicar's] own back door"—all while the defense attorney reinforces the optics of the scene and reiterates that "'this is not a trial about race' . . . directing the jury's attention to Natalie Blake with a slight move of his arm" (279). Embracing the hard-earned, long heritage of her

[62] The novel plays with the various denotations of the section titles ("Visitation," "Guest," "Host," "Crossing"), calling into question, for example, the delineation of "host," Keisha/Natalie's narrative part, as the wielder of power. This passage suggests her own misgivings about her relationship with the word. A "host" may also be an organism housing a parasite that lives within or upon it—a reading that echoes Keisha/Natalies prevalent struggle with holding multiple lives within one body. In the Ecclesiastical sense, the "host" is the bread consecrated in the Eucharist—the body of Christ offered as sacrifice. This alternate reading projects questions onto the narrative about what in particular it presents as a sacrifice, and to what end?

profession leads Natalie to a situation where the familial heritage she rejects is used to turn her into a convenient doll ("just look pretty") in a high-profile farce of a trial (278). Reality reverses any short-lived notions about joining the 'heritage of hosts,' as well as complicates Keisha/Natalie's assumption that "life was a problem that could be solved by means of professionalization" (238).

Alma, like Keisha/Natalie, also attaches herself to actions to escape certain states of being: she lists goals for herself, such as solving the mystery of her namesake, finding love for her mother, and establishing normality for her brother. While Keisha/Natalie splits herself into multiple lives until she has difficulty finding her way back and forth between them, Alma projects parts of herself, her fears and concerns, onto others. Natalie buries her own traumas within the space of her old name, as well as under a barrister's wig and gown, whereas Alma buries her traumas beneath objects associated with her father, as well as beneath the layers of her mother's and brother's traumas. Alma's focus on her family is so comprehensive that she takes barely any time to fully express her feelings of grief, loss, and loneliness. Though "my" and "I" are often in her titles, Alma almost exclusively focuses on the stories, painful and joyful, of the people around her rather than her own, starting from the names of half of her clusters of fragments: "MY MOTHER'S SADNESS," "MY FATHER'S TENT," and "FLOOD," the latter of which refers to Bird's anticipation of another biblical flood (35, 93, 135). Even some of the individual fragment titles that claim to be about Alma are ultimately about others: "MY NAME IS ALMA SINGER" includes less than two lines about her name's origins and thirteen lines about Bird's name, and "WHAT I AM NOT" is really about what Bird is not (which is happy) and Alma's worries about her brother's sadness (35-36).

Alma covers her fear of surviving any more losses in her family with an interest in survival skills for which one *can* prepare and train—especially since those wilderness skills maintain attachment to her father, who "*knew the name of every plant and if it was edible*," "always kept a sleeping bag and two gallons of water in his trunk, and could start a fire with a piece of flint if he had to" (42, 38). As Alma diverts the reader's attention from herself with facts about survival, tasks for tracking down Jacob Marcus and Alma Mereminski, and perceptions of Bird, she simultaneously transports parts of herself into those issues and is able to contemplate them from a distance, not always consciously. As she looks for love options for her mother, she pledges in a fragment that runs into its content immediately after the title that "ONE THING I AM NEVER GOING TO DO WHEN I GROW UP Is fall in love, drop out of college . . . and ruin my life" (54). When she worries about Bird's loneliness and tells him to "just push your feelings down and try to be normal . . . You have to make some friends," he points out that they each have barely one friend (198). Alma starts arguing, stating "'I have plenty of friends' . . . and only as the words came out did I realize they weren't true" (198).

The organization of Alma's section sometimes points to the relationship between what she asserts (often about survival and biological facts) and what parts of herself she is thinking about. The title "ALL THE FRIENDS I EVER HAD ARE GONE" precedes the fragment that focuses on Charlotte's gift to Alma on her fourteenth birthday, *Life as We Don't Know It* by Daniel Eldridge, a book that previously belonged to David. The title of the section does not make sense until Alma explains Eldridge's conclusion—"ninety-nine percent of all the species that have ever lived on earth are extinct"—a statement that parallels Alma's lines of thought (52). Alma revisits this passage in a much later fragment titled "I

SEARCHED OUT OTHER FORMS OF LIFE," in which she plans to meet her eventual closest friend Misha for the first time. Much of the novel is organized around the search for relation. Bromberg stresses the potential of relations to restore a "felt legitimacy in the right to exist as more than an object in the mind of another, and release from torment by the illegitimatized 'not-me' parts of self that take possession of life" (*The Shadow of the Tsunami* 5). Alma and Keisha/Natalie seek arenas through which to develop relations but in nuanced or indirect ways. While Alma projects herself onto other people's lives, Keisha/Natalie 'searches out other forms of life' and relation by projecting herself onto other people's houses.

From the time she tries as a child to "replicate some of the conditions she had seen at the Hanwells'" and throughout her adult life, "Natalie Blake had a strong desire to slip into the lives of other people . . .Listening was not enough. Natalie Blake wanted to know people. To be intimately involved with them" (204, 334). The first time that Keisha/Natalie walks to a house from an Internet listing, she describes needing to "leav[e] her own body" in order to ring the doorbell (340). Though real-life critics and Natalie's novel-life husband make much of Keisha/Natalie's website-arranged exploits and what appears to be a sexual addiction, Smith points out that the scheduled interactions are actually about seeing other people's houses: "her interest . . . meant to be a kind of joke, is not really sexual, no, her interest is other people's houses . . . her life has become more and more gentrified, and, one of the things it seemed to me about gentrified life is it's incredibly lonely," with an ideal of isolation from neighbors and being with each other only in controlled settings (Mullan interview). In each house, she spends most of her time observing the interior design: dominant colors, aesthetic of the furniture, pieces of art, evidence of musical taste,

technology. She does not actually go through with the sexual intent of the encounters until the last house she visits, in which two young, awkward men looking "more scared than she did" lived surrounded by "a lot of boxed-up stuff . . . There was something terribly sad about the whole place" (349-350). Keisha/Natalie contemplates "Architecture as destiny," intrigued as well by the linguistic implications that to "Leah it was *sitting room*, to Natalie *living room*, to Marcia, *lounge*" (325). Even during the gruesome trial, when the prosecution offered photographs of the vicar's bloodied flat, "it was everything else that interested [Natalie]. Four modish 60s-era white chairs, unexpected for a man of the cloth. The too-big piano in the too-small room. Mismatched sofa and ottoman, a top-of-the-range TV. Out-dated fitted kitchen with a cork floor, unfortunate, the blood soaks in" (279-280). Though the comparison is odd, the intention behind Keisha/Natalie's interest in entering strangers' homes relates to Leo's appreciation of his work as a locksmith[63]—imagining and yearning for attachment. Once when Leo helps a locked-out woman get into her home, he stays the night, since "no one had to say that neither of [them] had anyplace to go" that Thanksgiving (130). Months later, when she asks Leo to make a copy of her key, he makes two copies: "One I gave to her, and one I kept. For a long time I carried it in my pocket, just to pretend" (130).

Houser suggests that the difficulty of everyday connections, the inability of protagonists in *NW* to "connect with others," is the setting of the novel in an "estranged cosmopolitan world" in which "they are frightened to move into another's space, feel invaded within their own space, or else are stuck within their own minds" (Houser 124-125). If we read the two novels in the context of diasporic writing, within a dynamic and

[63] Leo, "a Jew from Poland who's afraid that if he even so much as forgets to flush the toilet he'll get deported," eventually grows to embrace the implications of his adopted profession: "In my loneliness it comforts me to think that the world's doors, however closed, are never truly locked to me" (130, 132).

variegated field of linguistic, interpersonal, and place attachment, and with constant negotiation with and across these attachments, we could also interpret Keisha/Natalie's and Alma's trouble with reaching comfortably across to other minds through what Svetlana Boym terms "diasporic intimacy," which promises not "unmediated emotional fusion, but only a precarious affection—no less deep, yet aware of its transience. In contrast to the utopian images of intimacy as transparency, authenticity and ultimate belonging, diasporic intimacy is dystopic by definition; it is rooted in the suspicion of a single home, in shared longing without belonging" (Boym 252). Keisha/Natalie reflects her fragmented view of 'home' in her description as she stands on the Hornsey Lane Bridge and looks through the railings and the spikes above them: "The view was cross-hatched. St. Paul's in one box. The Gherkin in another. Half a tree. Half a car. Cupolas, spires. Squares, rectangles, half moons, stars. It was impossible to get any sense of the whole. From up here the bus lane was a red gash through the city" (384). Like the formal fragmentation of her narration, Keisha/Natalie sees London in pieces: famous sites are in distinct compartments, objects and surfaces are split up, a "red gash" breaks the city open, and the "only thing she could see that made any sense" is the "tower blocks" she spends her young adult life leaving, the buildings "separated from each other, yet communicating" (384).

Precarious Affection, Contingent Attachment: Life in Obituaries

Since loss frames both narratives, the controlled arrangement of fragments is always at risk of toppling over. Keisha/Natalie feels "a connection between boredom and the desire for chaos. Despite many disguises and bluffs perhaps she had never stopped wanting chaos" (365). As she builds her managed fragments and containers of worlds, she simultaneously

wants to shatter them, ceaselessly searching for meaning to fill the structured points of time she passes, for some kind of awakening disruption "to replace this absence of sensation, this nothing" (362). One of the characters in Krauss's *Great House* (2010) describes this feeling similarly: "We search for patterns, you see, only to find where the patterns break. And it's there, in that fissure, that we pitch our tents and wait" (89). Keisha/Natalie imagines "an image system at work in the world. We wait for an experience large or brutal enough to disturb it or break it open completely, but this moment never quite arrives . . . To behave in accordance with these images bored her. To deviate from them filled her with the old anxiety" (322-323).

As she stands on the Hornsey Lane Bridge, nicknamed "Suicide Bridge," at the end of her walk with Nathan, she considers a final "break—a sudden and total rupture," until suddenly, "the wind shook the trees once more and her feet touched the pavement. The act remained just that: an act, a prospect, always possible" (385). A loss of a life almost occurs in this moment but is narrowly avoided, perhaps due to Nathan's presence, and as in the anecdote that begins her narrative, Keisha/Natalie experiences a sense of confusion, as if she "did not know what had been saved exactly, nor by whom" (385). The novel overall concludes with another form of potential loss when Keisha/Natalie and Leah, "infused with a new energy" from having a new action to focus attention away from their crises in identity and relationships, turn in Nathan as a "person of interest" without any irrefutable evidence, initiating a process that may punish an innocent man (401).[64] Natalie's line of reasoning at the end of *NW* appears to be that she blames the past for her feelings of failure in the present,

[64] Smith discusses wanting Nathan, a complicated character to analyze, to "just exist" rather than turning him into a Dickensian character when the author tells the reader how to feel about the situation (Guardian podcast, John Mullan).

and she desires to cut out the past and the different alternative futures she may have had in store—one of which is represented by Nathan[65]—with the hope of permanently removing the threat of that past.

For Bromberg, the client/therapist relationship and the analytic process is not "a vehicle to get rid of the tsunami—as if the past were an illness—but a means to live together in its shadow, allowing it to shrink a little bit at a time, freeing the patient's natural capacity to feel trust and joy," allowing stability through secure attachment (*The Shadow of the Tsunami* 6). The form of the obituary is relevant for thinking about the function and position of the past within the present and future. Obituaries, in which Keisha/Natalie is invested during her honeymoon, hold within them the relationship between past and present, as represented in the personal instance. The genre of obituary writing locates special moments within the spaces of a life that must be preserved or prioritized in its recounting. Together, obituaries exemplify the reality of contingency, the different lives one may possibly live. In the opening section of a fugue, the theme is announced without harmony, and in the final section, the piece returns to the original subject and key. Keisha/Natalie's and Alma's sections begin and end with faux-obituaries commemorating particular individuals: in *NW*, with acts that hold the potential of death for characters that gradually become familiar to the reader, and in *The History of Love*, with obituaries that Leo writes for himself during his lifetime.

Alma's section starts with the sadness following the loss of her father, but the novel begins with Leo's words that "When they write my obituary. Tomorrow. Or the next day. It

[65] Slavin notes the significance in the linkage between Keisha/Natalie and Nathan symbolized through their names: "Keisha chooses the name 'Natalie,' which sounds much like 'Nathan' and causes her to share Nathan Bogle's initials. There is no indication in the novel that she has named herself after a family member, or a beloved author, or an admired schoolmate; indeed, we have no context at all for why Keisha chose 'Natalie'" (Slavin 117).

will say, LEO GURSKY IS SURVIVED BY AN APARTMENT FULL OF SHIT," and it ends with a poem, "THE DEATH OF LEOPOLD GURSKY" (3, 255). In the latter, rather than visualizing his life in the form of an epic poem or a tragedy, Leo considers the accumulation of small, mundane details that add up to compose the history of ordinary human beings, such as the growing clutter in one's room, "standing at the blackboard . . . carrying a heavy tray . . . opening a window," as his self-written obituary describes (255). In "The Figure a Poem Makes," Robert Frost describes the movement and purpose of a poem as "run[ning] a course of lucky events, and end[ing] in a clarification of life . . . a momentary stay against confusion" ("The Figure a Poem Makes"). In Leo's case, the description is especially apt, with the poem running through daily activities until the final encapsulating moment: "He was a great writer. / He fell in love. / It was his life" (255). Incidentally, Zvi is a journalist who writes obituaries professionally for a daily in Poland, whereas his friend Leo creates obituaries as narrative practice for himself, commemorations for Isaac Babel, Franz Kafka, Osip Mandestam, and his other literary inspirations. When Zvi finds "THE DEATH OF LEOPOLD GURSKY" on Leo's desk while Leo is ill, he reads it "over and over, mouthing the words as if they were not an announcement of death, but a prayer for life. As if just by saying them, he could keep his friend safe from the angel of death" (117). Zvi later folds the obituary and keeps it in his breast pocket for rest of his life "so that he could buy a little more time—for his friend, for life" (118). As in the preceding dissertation chapter, the fictionalized commemorations of loss function concurrently as 'prayers for life.'

The obituary is itself a fragment—a partial snapshot of a life that simultaneously tries to encapsulate the world of that life through the part, through the space of a box on the page. As Philip explains, the "fragment is both/and: containing the w/hole while being at the same

time a part of the w/hole—it compels us to see both the w/hole and the hole: impulse to memory and impulse to amnesia. The fragment is not static; it contains its opposite and it is that opposite" (Philip 6). Philip's description illustrates the conflicted position of the children and grandchildren of immigrants—standing on the margins of two opposing impulses, to remember or to forget, to remain rooted or to take flight. Incorporating threads from their own inherited knowledge, Smith and Krauss assemble stories of individuals whose identities are shaped by losses within and beyond their own lifetimes, and who by different means and varying degrees of success attempt to reconfigure the sometimes incoherent fragments of their realities and establish healthy attachments. The two novels consider how people hold transgenerational traumas within their bodies and translate the weight of that inheritance into narrative form. Memory in *NW* and *The History of Love* is embodied in the fragmented form and the fragments of languages and stories that meet and disperse throughout the texts. The collective histories of loss manifest themselves in the fugue form of the narratives as voices and perspectives encircle each other, all intricately connected and implicated in each other's timelines, cyclically returning to the same theme at different times, and in a different manner each time. In his study of multidirectional memory, Michael Rothberg argues that "[s]hared histories of racism, spatial segregation, genocide, diasporic displacement, cultural destruction, and . . . savvy and creative resistance to hegemonic demands provide the grounds for new forms of collectivity that would not ignore equally powerful histories of division and difference," therefore rethinking and expanding the potential for forms of solidarity and justice (Rothberg 23). Reading *The History of Love* and *NW* together shows that while they diverge in content and historical implications, they coincide in the forms of their expressions, stylistic features, and systems of organization. Most significantly, they resonate with each

other in their affective links to the past, the personal and collective attachments of their characters, and in their determination to comprehend and build upon—to create new possibilities from ruins.

IV. Cyclical Fragments: Progression of Selves in *Sunris* and *Progress of Stories*

> But language is power, life and the instrument of culture,
> the instrument of domination and liberation.
> —Angela Carter, "Notes from the Front Line"

> But her heart remains there.
> To survive here, she must hack off a part of herself.
> —Rabih Alameddine, *I, the Divine*

The cyclical narratives of Grace Nichols's poetry collection *Sunris* (1996) and Laura (Riding) Jackson's story collection *Progress of Stories* (1982 edition, first published 1935), search through language and rhythm for the meaning of being human—and of staying true to oneself as a human being. Little initially appears comparable in the approaches of these two writers, diverging especially in their works' relation to their diasporic backgrounds. Nichols, who was born in Georgetown, Guyana in 1950 and moved to Britain in 1977, often examines in her poetry the ways in which her realities prior to and after immigration intertwine. She refers in an interview to her "two homescapes . . . Guyana / Caribbean as well as England where I've brought up my two daughters. My work does straddle both places" (Bishop interview 2). (Riding) Jackson was born in New York in 1901, her father a Galician Jewish immigrant and her mother the child of a German Jewish immigrant, and from 1926 to 1939, she lived with Robert Graves in England and Mallorca, Spain, as well as briefly in Egypt, Switzerland, and France.[66] She keeps the migrational elements of her life largely out of her texts, calling herself "very anti-biographic" because "truly important facts about anyone,

[66] In his discussion of "postnational skepticisms of modernist poetry," Jahan Ramazani cites (Riding) Jackson as an example: "to enlist the poems of Laura Riding—a New York Jew turned Southern Fugitive turned American expatriate, in England and Majorca—as citizens of a national literature would be, at the very least, to override their skepticism toward cartographic reduction" (Ramazani 341).

about me, are obviously not for publication: my father, my mother, my strange and miserable childhood, and the many generations I have had to do in one" (Letter to Davidson).

Nichols and (Riding) Jackson respond in *Sunris* and *Progress of Stories* to the straddling of multiple worlds and diasporic fragmentation: Nichols emphasizes scattered multiplicity, the mosaic of her heritage and inevitable interconnectedness of narratives and places, while (Riding) Jackson attempts to merge the pieces of her stories into a monochromatic guise of oneness, to distill possibilities into a singular reality. This fundamental divergence reaches the level of language: Nichols reflects dynamic polylingual realities in her work, and (Riding) Jackson seeks to essentialize and further condense a single language. What unites their otherwise disparate aesthetic projects is their turn to cyclical forms to examine and represent self-identity within a multifaceted, fragmented world—especially when that identity is itself fragmented. The two series of poetry and poetic prose use modes of repetition—refrains, cycles, recurrent phrases, rhythms—that are common in folklore and fairy tales, stories that are universalizing in similarities across cultures, thus relevant for (Riding) Jackson's viewpoint, and, simultaneously, local in the kinds of details and particularities that Nichols weaves into her poetry. Furthermore, the two writers' focus on discovering self-identity extends to their works directed toward children, in which Nichols and (Riding) Jackson endeavor to teach the next generation how to see themselves in the world anew through creativity and linguistic play.

Hybrid-Dreaming

Nichols's introduction to *Sunris* establishes Carnival and calypso as composing the framework for the poems that follow, especially the title poem. Nichols writes that in her

childhood, “carnival, steel pan, calypso . . . anything that came from the ordinary folk including the Creole language itself were despised and regarded as products of a low-class consciousness by the colonial powers that be and by the more snobbish of the upper and middle classes” (“Introduction” 2). After beginning with her own experience as a teenager moving through Guyana’s “mini-carnival” and later “the epic proportions of a Trinidad carnival . . . band after band, stunning creature after stunning creature: beasts, queens, kings, gigantic flowers, pirates . . . in an endless flow of colour,” she expands her scope to the broader histories of Carnival and calypso, their persistence despite systematic repressive attempts to terminate them (such as “the banning of the drum”), and the influence of their “infectious rhythms” on numerous Caribbean poets (2). The collection’s title poem, “Sunris,” traces a woman’s introspective journey toward “self-discovery and self-naming” through the “all-embracing pulse of carnival” and the rhythms of calypso (5). The trajectory of the poem forges a way for the speaker to confront her heritage as a complex collectivity and put into conversation its various parts in order to define her individual identity: “her dance becomes a dialectic, her spree a pilgrimage” (5). The speaker asserts her place within her local community and articulates various global threads woven into that community’s history. In its form, much of “Sunris” is a series of refrains, some within individual stanzas and others as stanzas repeating in their entirety within the poem. The repetitive, rhythmic progression of Carnival enraptures the speaker, invoking synchronous memories, visions, and dialogues that expand across times, narratives, and spaces—and culminate in an affirmation of the speaker’s identity: “I just done christen myself, SUNRIS” (“Sunris” 74).

Though the poem concludes with the individual, it opens with the plural “They,” crowds gathering for Carnival in the “foreday morning”:

Out of the foreday morning –

They coming

Out of the little houses

Clinging to the hillside –

They coming

Out of the big house and the hovel –

They coming

To fill up like mist dis Jour Ouvert morning

To lift up dis city to the sun

To incarnate their own carnation. (51)

With the anticipatory "They coming" as the reverberating pulse, the speaker presents the beginning of J'ouvert, the large street party during Carnival, as a communal assemblage in which everyone takes part, leaving behind their "little houses," "the big house," and "the hovel," filling the city with their energy (51). Scholar and stage artist Esiaba Irobi writes about the potential of Carnival's ritual forms to open up "spaces for communality and mass participation despite societal differences in terms of class, race, color, income, intellectual pretensions, or the memories from the lacerations of history" (Irobi 902). The intention of the communal gathering is, as the first stanza's final line proclaims, to "incarnate their own carnation" ("Sunris" 51). This tactile beginning locates the poem's emphasis on the body: the purpose of what will unravel, as we find out before anything else, is embodiment. Irobi, who presents the body as holding memory and having the ability to be "a site of resistance through performance," illuminates Carnival as an "example of the transcendent expressed through spectacle, procession, colors, music, dance, and most important, the physical

movement of the body" (Irobi 901). "Sunris" gathers fragments of the body throughout the course of the poem ("my blood," "my every bone," "Hands," "Feet") until the speaker conveys a sense of completion, 'incarnation,' at the end ("Sunris" 53-55).

As the speaker pieces together the body dancing through the poem, she weaves it into a larger communal quilt with Guyanese, Amerindian, Aztec, Yoruba, and Greek histories and mythologies, as well as figures from her inherited past and present.

Hands Hands

Is all a matter of hands

Through the shaping and the cutting

Through the stitching and the touching (54)

Images of needlework, like the stitching and cutting above, permeate so much of Nichols's poetry that she is nicknamed the "Seamstress of the Caribbean" in a review of her book *Startling the Flying Fish* (Crown). Nichols proposes that "what we try to do as poets is a kind of stitching together of our memories, feelings, images, thoughts and bring them out in an imaginative wholeness into the world" (Bishop interview 2). In "Sunris," the 'whole' image is not neatly interwoven because everything happens on multiple levels within the context of Carnival, such as the speaker's interactions with deities and spirits:

Bless my eyesight

Is a whole heap of deity

like they come out to greet me

I think dis time I go make history. ("Sunris" 72)

The "whole heap of deity" is a spiritual vision as well as a literal one, since there are people in costume *as* the different figures. The correlation between the spiritual and the physical, the

sacred and the profane, repeats in the poem's recurring stanza with "*blood beating*" and "*spirit moving free*," "*promiscuous wine*" and "*sanctity*":

> *And is dih whole island*
>
> *Awash in a deep seasound*
>
> *Is hummingbird possession*
>
> *Taking flight from dih ground*
>
> *Is blood beating*
>
> *And spirit moving free*
>
> *Is promiscuous wine*
>
> *Is sanctity* (54, 59, 68)

The blending of these images recalls the excerpt from Derek Walcott's "On Choosing Port of Spain" that serves as one of the poem's epigraphs and calls Carnival an "exultation of the mass will, its hedonism . . . so sacred that to withdraw from it . . . is a heresy" (50). The last line in the stanza greeting a "whole heap of deity" echoes a passage near the beginning of the speaker's journey when she asserts, "I moving free / I sticking to the flight of my own trajectory . . . I think this time I go make history" (72, 53). In the introduction, Nichols explains the strong wording of this repeating line about making history: "In this act of reclaiming herself and the various strands of her heritage she engages with history and mythology and like the calypsonian sometimes resorts to verbal self-inflation to make her voice heard" ("Introduction" 5). But beyond the "calypso tone," the wording also recalls a statement by the figure of "Africa," who takes the shape of a woman participating in Carnival, "making the dancesteps of mourning / even as she clears a space for her way," and

who instructs the speaker to "Pay homage in ceremony" to "History," a "river / That flow to the sea / Laced with the bone of memory" (4, 65, 67).

As the "Feet" join the stitching hands, more figures from various traditions—some of whom are also traditional mas characters at Carnival—join the progression, and the poem presents dancing feet as the entryway for spiritual and ancestral connections:[67]

> Feet Feet
>
> Is all a matter of feet
>
> For the spirits
>
> Take entry from the feet
>
> High-priestess and Devil
>
> Aztec-King and me
>
> Midnight-robber, Saint Theresa,
>
> And Jab-Jab Molassi (55)

Nichols describes the Caribbean "like a microcosm of the world . . . embrac[ing] all the different races and cultures—native Amerindian, African, Asian, European," and she is "happy with the description on my birth certificate that says 'Mixed native of Guyana'" (Bishop interview 2). In an interview with Nichols, Kwame Dawes comments on the "connection with Africa that we make as writers in the Caribbean" and suggests that in Nichols's work, there is less "internal tension" than in texts by older Caribbean authors: rather than "a battle of cultures . . . it seems more a kind of acceptance of these strands as they affect the work" (Dawes interview 138). Nichols's approach of placing disparate strands into relation illustrates Édouard Glissant's definition of "creolization": "We are not prompted

[67] Nichols includes a glossary at the end of the collection to teach readers about the deities and historical figures in the poetry.

solely by the defining of our identities but by their relation to everything possible as well—the mutual mutations generated by this interplay of relations. Creolizations bring into Relation but not to universalize" (*Poetics of Relation* 89). Nichols finds "enriching to have at your disposal all these different cultures; the whole language thing, Creole, Standard English," but notes that tension inevitably exists "because of colonial history, because of the fact that all of our cultural 'things' were denigrated and looked down upon while the European 'things' were the ones celebrated" (Dawes interview 139).

Carnival, then, creates an apt context for Nichols's exploration of this hybrid heritage. As Irobi elucidates, Carnival "has come to represent a collective and dynamic process of subjectivity and creativity that enables Africans in the Diaspora to engage, rethink, redefine themselves, and act out the contradictions of their histories" (Irobi 902). Like Nichols, the speaker in "Sunris" characterizes and defines herself through the mixture, fusion, and cross-influences[68]: "a hybrid-dreamer / An ancestral-believer / A blood-reveller ("Sunris" 53). The motif of joining and stitching together extends even to the punctuation by means of the hyphen, a mark occurring here and frequently throughout the piece like sinews binding the words. The "Streets" stanza that repeats the structure of the "Hands" and "Feet" passages mixes together body and place:

> Streets Streets
>
> Is all a matter of streets
>
> Streets perspire freely
>
> Streets arch back ever so slyly

[68] Nichols extends the hybridity of her identity past familial inheritance to local cultural sources of influence. She writes about feeling "a kinship with the Amerindian people of Guyana . . . with their myths and legends. I have used some of their legends in my children's stories" ("The Battle with Language" 283).

Streets pulsate

In the deepest centre

Of their asphalt selves (60)

The parallel structure of the three stanzas grounds the moving body at the same time as it embodies the land with a "sel[f]" through sensuous, sensual description: the streets "perspire," "arch back," "pulsate" along with the bodies dancing through them (60).

The poem's ending recalls its beginning. The two stanzas preceding the concluding naming one repeat almost verbatim the second and third stanzas of the poem.

Symbol of the emancipated woman I come	O symbol of the emancipated woman, I come
I don't care which one frown	I don't believe I see one frown
From the depths of the unconscious I come	From dih depths of dih unconscious, I come
I come out to play – Mas Woman.	I come out to play Mas-Woman.
This mas I put on is not to hide me	Dis mas I put on is not to hide me
This mas I put on is visionary –	Dis mas I put on is visionary,
A combination of the sightful sun	A combination of the sightful sun
A bellyband with all my strands	A belly-band with all my strands
A plume of scarlet ibis	A plume of scarlet ibis
A branch-of-hope and a snake in mih fist	A branch of hope and a snake
Join me in this pilgrimage	In my fist. (74)
This spree that look like sacrilege. (52)	

The differences are few, but those that exist relate primarily to performance, the rhythm of speech and the sound of the words pronounced aloud. The second version is more Creole-

influenced in its langauge ("dih depths, "dih unconscious," "Dis mas"), and the enjambment interrupting the final line, delaying the last rhyme and putting greater emphasis on the body—the speaker's fist—presents a sense of newfound confidence (74). The initial version incorporates an invitation to the reader to "join" her in the "pilgrimage . . . that look like sacrilege," whereas the reiteration takes place later in time: not caring "which one frown" changes to not having "see[n] one frown" (52, 74). More significantly, the fourth line of the first stanza initially serves as an introduction of the speaker's role within the Carnival celebration ("I come out to play – Mas Woman"), but the line near the end of the poem is simply a statement of reality without any hesitation. The dash between "play" and "Mas Woman" places emphasis on the action, to "play," while repositioning the horizontal line to be the hyphen in "Mas-Woman" shifts the emphasis to the merging identities of the woman and her character role in playing mas. Trinidadian Carnival artist Peter Minshall explains the performative dedication and meaning of "playing a mas": "We do not say, 'What mas are you going to wear?'. We say, 'Wha' mas yuh goin' an play?' . . . We do not say, 'I am wearing a Flamenco costume', as if we were going to a fancy dress ball, we say, 'Ah playin' Flamenco dancer'" (Minshall 30-31). Minshall details the process mas involves to "come into being": "conception, design, craft, construction, making," then "going into the street or onto the stage, and to the accompaniment of sound . . . the action of moving in a mas, dancing, miming, presenting what is worn or carried, is fundamental to what makes a mas, a 'mas'" (Minshall 30). The speaker of "Sunris" calls the creation of character and world that Minshall describes "motion in art . . . art in motion," a chiasmus emphasizing the equivalent value of mask and movement in the performative process (61). Irobi argues that through the "pre-performance processes" that Minshall describes, the construction of masks, costumes,

floats, choreography, and musical arrangements, "the actants and participants of Carnival literally, performatively and philosophically, transcend themselves," like Sunris's hyphenated "visionary" identity, "enter[ing] into a realm of imaginative and experiential possibilities often denied them by their everyday social, economic, political, and religious reality" (Irobi 902, "Sunris" 74).

The concluding stanza culminates in the speaker's declaration of self-identity:

With the Gods as my judge
And dih people my witness,
Heritage just reach out
And give me one kiss.
From dih depths of dih unconscious
I hear dih snake hiss,
I just done christen myself, SUNRIS. (74)

The speaker's name, which occurs here in its single instance but is ever-present as the poem and collection's title, echoes the language of the poem's first stanza that states the street celebration's aim as "lift[ing] up dis city to the sun" (51). The connection through repetition merges Carnival's communal rituals with Sunris's journey toward reclamation, implying the crucial entwining of the two and the impossibility of either existing without the other. Irobi analyzes Carnival as "a hybridized derivative of African festival and ritual theater" that "represent[s] a performative retheorizing of individualism and alienation—the twin ethos and punishment of Western capitalist ontology. Africans, translocated to the West Indies, Britain, North America, Canada, and South America, have consistently used carnival performance to defy, mock, reject, interrogate, and deconstruct individualism" (Irobi 902). Carnival, as both

topic and form, encapsulates Nichols's expression of identity and the vibrant contradicting fragments that compose it. As Irobi explains, Carnival is not a single, static occurrence but rather a dynamic, continuous process with interactions across borders of all kinds—so cyclical forms are fitting for its representation. Nichols states in an interview, "I love writing in cycles . . . Cycles offer me more imaginative scope for exploring a subject or character" (Bishop interview 3). Nichols's organizational approach in "Sunris" is summarized in these twice-repeating lines: "Spread, re-echo / regather" ("Sunris" 69). The "rise-and-fall" of the "tranced unstoppable rhythm" carries the narrative through a spiral, passing moments that echo but somewhat differently each time, building, revising, and extending (55). As the poem "Sunris" functions cyclically, so does *Sunris* in its entirety as a collection.

The introduction to *Sunris* explains that the title poem's speaker connects in name to Nichols's mother: "the word Sunris resonates with the name of my mother, Iris, who like her mythic namesake was for me a 'bridging rainbow'; it incorporates the spirit of Isis and celebrates my own need for the Sun whose golden 'Iris' (though it doesn't come out often) keeps me going in England" ("Introduction" 5). The image of the bridge lingers in the periphery of the collection's poems, especially in immigrant narratives like "First Generation Monologue" and "Hurricane Hits England" that exist in the spaces between Great Britain and the Caribbean. The goddess Isis is often noted for her role as a maternal figure, as well as for her resurrection of Osiris—a connection to the fleshly "incarnat[ing]" objective expressed in "Sunris" ("Sunris" 51). Mother-daughter relations involving Nichols's mother, Nichols's daughters, and historical and mythical embodiments of motherhood occur throughout *Sunris*. In "Icons," for example, Nichols discusses the many "English icons" worshipped in her childhood, considered "better than local," such as "glistening red" apples, and she writes that

"it gladdens the heart" now in England's supermarkets "To see how both my apple-eating daughters / Have emerged; carefully avoiding the pith and pips, / While drooling endlessly over the mango" ("Icons" 29-30).

Nichols's epigraphic poem that follows *Sunris*'s introduction has a subtle maternal connection through Nichols's mother's namesake, the goddess of the rainbow, toward whom the speaker stretches:

> *Slipping the earth-bounders*
>
> *Who always tried to pin her down*
>
> *Grabbing at the knees,*
>
> *She began to dance her own sea-tree*
>
> *To stretch towards her rainbow raiments,*
>
> *Rising with the fireflies,*
>
> *The flickering little stars*
>
> *That sparked her own divinity.* (*Sunris* 6)

The epigraph roughly summarizes Sunris's journey in the poem: extending past boundaries toward all the spirits and people with whom she dances, discovering "*her own divinity*" (6). She finds herself, as she says, "Among wings" ("Sunris" 64). However, rather than "*Taking flight from dih ground*," as the poem's refrain narrates, and fully departing the earth, she "*stretch*[es]" up toward the sky, "*danc*[ing] *her own sea-tree*" that stays rooted as it rises upward (54, 6). Denise deCaires Narain argues that the tension between "an insistence on a groundedness in the past, in history, and the desire to transcend that past" exists within all of Nichols's collections of poetry due to her "frequent shifting between perspectives" (Narain 193). The dilemma between roots and wings in the face of dislocation, or as Narain writes,

the "sometimes contradictory appeals of a 'return to roots' and 'flights elsewhere,'" factors into the entirety of the collection but receives most explicit focus in *Sunris*'s penultimate poem, "Wings"[69] (193). Nichols writes that

> . . . though we pretended to be
> bright migrant birds
> it was always an inward yearning
> for the compelling earth
> of our roots – lost Africas, Indias,
> then the love-tugging land
> of our immediate birthmothers. ("Wings" 77)

But she notes that "it [is] wings, our own wilful wings, / still taking us into migratory pull / still taking us into homing instinct" (78). In "Hurricane Hits England," composed in response to the Great Storm of 1987, the speaker asks Huracan (Maya god of storms), Oya, and Shango (Yoruba goddess of wind and god of lightning and thunder),

> . . . why you visit
> An English coast?
> What is the meaning
> Of old tongues
> Reaping havoc
> In new places? ("Hurricane Hits England" 34)

Nichols depicts the hurricane, a common occurrence in the Caribbean, that "visit[s] / An English coast" in a disastrous rare occasion as a "dark ancestral specre, / Fearful and

[69] This poem, Nichols notes, was inspired by Jamaican poet John Figueroa's comment that "as Caribbean people we're preoccupied with Roots, when maybe we should be signifying ourselves by Wings" ("Wings" 77).

reassuring," dangerous yet familiar: "It took a hurricane, to bring her closer / To the landscape" (34). The "old tongues . . . In new places" refer to the storm deities' voices, but the word choice also evokes the intermingling of languages in diaspora. Glissant writes that "creolization, which overlaps with linguistic production, does not produce direct synthesis, but *résultantes*, results: something else, another way" ("Creolization in the Making of the Americas" 83).

Rooting in Language

In an essay on language, Nichols refers to these linguistic interactions, what Glissant calls "chaos . . . from the extraordinary complexity of the exchange between cultures," as "the battle with language": "I tend to want to fuse the two tongues because I come from a background where the two worlds, Creole and standard English, were constantly interacting" ("Creolization in the Making of the Americas" 89; "The Battle with Language" 284). She writes that because of its treatment as inferior by colonial powers and enduring "social stigma," many Caribbean poets "are now reclaiming our language heritage and exploring it" as "an act of spiritual survival" (284). For Nichols, language opens access to identity, familial history, and community—in other words, language itself is a form of home, an idea commonly explored by diasporic writers. Sophia Lehmann writes in her article on language and mother tongues that "the Jewish-originated term diaspora becomes a significant one for understanding Caribbean experiences, and the Caribbean idea of language as home becomes reciprocally edifying with respect to Jewish American writing. Both Caribbean and Jewish American communities strive to mold English into a language which can become a home within diaspora" (Lehmann 101). Lehmann's description resonates in Nichols's use of

language, as well as in a project that (Riding) Jackson spent decades writing with her husband, Schuyler B. Jackson, titled *Rational Meaning: A New Foundation for the Definition of Words and Supplementary Essays* (1997), which Charles Bernstein[70] depicts as "call[ing] us back to our rootedness in language, which is our human house, our destined home" ("Riding's Reason" 267). The Jacksons argue that words are rooted in their inherent meanings: "words as being intrinsically what they are ostensibly . . . The word does not symbolize; it means" (*Rational Meaning* 79). Over time, the authors claim, people have become unnaturally alienated from language[71], and their aim is to reestablish this relationship, to reveal "the disastrous extent to which language has been unlearned, and how it may be learned again" (*Rational Meaning* 44). When (Riding) Jackson famously renounced poetry, she did so because she felt that it distorted words' "natural properties" in its "reliance on metaphor and linguistic materiality (sound play, puns, and rhymes)" ("Riding's Reason" 257, 261). As Bernstein explains, the origins of *Rational Meaning* lie in (Riding) Jackson's 1930s dictionary project gathering "24,000 crucial words of the English language to be defined in such a way as to erase any ambiguity that might have accrued to them over years of improper usage" (259). While Nichols fuses, alters, and expands words, (Riding) Jackson essentializes them. Despite twentieth-century thought's frequent emphasis on the exploration of meaning through specific sociohistorical contexts, the Jacksons reject the notion of relativity in interpretations of meaning: they stress the "rational" over the

[70] Bernstein wrote the introduction to *Rational Meaning* once it was published several years after (Riding) Jackson's death.

[71] "The natural attachment has given way to a general false freedom with words, in which their users become increasingly tolerant of and insensitive to irrationalities in their use . . . out of this detachment a new word-wisdom is offered to the speaking-public, that makes a virtue of keeping words at skeptical distance" (*Rational Meaning* 80).

"relative" and seek meaning within words themselves rather than elsewhere, with only one meaning per word.

For the Jacksons, the human-language connection is not a matter of technicalities but a world-altering issue: Schuyler Jackson asks in his 1967 epigraph to the project how the world might be different "if we used words entirely as, by their meanings, they call on us to use them," therefore having to "mean what [we] meant" (*Rational Meaning* 5). Her biographer Elizabeth Freidmann explains that for (Riding) Jackson, "truth is not a metaphysical mystery to be pursued but the natural expression of human consciousness" (Friedmann xix). An obsession with truth in meaning and truth in telling runs through (Riding) Jackson's entire oeuvre, and *Rational Meaning*, published posthumously, claims that language is "itself the anatomy of truth, a skeletal frame of elementary judgements" (*Rational Meaning* 46). Words for (Riding) Jackson are more than human expression—they are at the core of humanness, "an integral part of it, that which makes the whole function as a whole—the co-ordinative organ of their life-system" (*Rational Meaning* 80). Bernstein acknowledges the immense problems with this "idealization of meaning," [72] but he finds resonant "the longing for rootedness in language's intrinsic meanings," the search for truth as "indwelling in the telling of human being in and as language" ("Riding's Reason" 259, 265). (Riding) Jackson even dislikes the label "fiction" for her work because of its representation of a form of "literary tourism" that "focused on individual writer-talent, and was thus a corruption of story's traditional function of revealing the nature of human beings to themselves" (Friedmann xvii). Yet, Paul Auster questions in a review of two of (Riding)

[72] "Regrettably, their blanket rejection of all types of linguistic divergence or difference as an affront to 'human self-sameness' elides distinctions between 'bad' grammar, 'broken' English, new words, acronyms, advertising slogans, obscenities, vulgarities, dialects, and slangs" (Bernstein 263).

Jackson's books, if "the truth in language she is seeking is a human truth, it would seem to be contradictory to want this truth at the expense of what is human," for in "refusing to acknowledge that speech is an imperfect tool of imperfect creatures—this seems to be exactly what she is doing" (Auster).

In a sense, (Riding) Jackson and Nichols show two diverging approaches of diasporic writers. While Nichols finds inspiration in the image of a bridging rainbow that juxtaposes differences horizontally, in relation to one another, "Galleries of colour" and "labyrinth of sounds," (Riding) Jackson ventures toward monochrome sameness, overlaying differences vertically in search of a universal, shared space: "You come to this place or that place and you think of yourself as being in the place . . . But there's still all the rest. And the first village is really not very different from the country you have left behind" ("Sunris" 64; "A Crown for Hans Andersen" 275). In her 1982 preface to *Progress of Stories*, she calls this shared reality "the story of us all, the compacted story of everything" (1982 Preface xxxii). Nichols's and (Riding) Jackson's linguistic concerns parallel these approaches. The two authors share a deep investment in language as fertile ground for exploring roots and wings, but their conclusions diverge. Nichols embraces the freedom from the linguistic restrictions of her childhood, interweaving tongues in "the challenge of trying to create or chisel out a new language," while also making art true to a personal and communal history of living between worlds ("The Battle with Language" 284). (Riding) Jackson, on the other hand, roots herself within the English language, in some ways taking flight from familial connections and heritage by assimilating into words themselves. Deborah Baker's *In Extremis: The Life of Laura Riding* details some of (Riding) Jackson's fears regarding language. Baker remarks that growing up in a multilingual household made her "acutely

sensitive to the way words sounded, particularly her own" (Baker 37). At one point, John Crowe Ransom assumed based on her pronunciation that "Riding was of foreign birth '(Perhaps Polish Jew?),' with English not her first language, 'greatly to her mortification'" (37). Early in her life, poetry began to seem, she wrote, "a place 'where the fear of speaking in strange ways could be left behind' and 'as a way of speaking differently from the untidy speaking ways of ordinary talk'" [73] (37).

Along with leaving behind strange ways of speaking, (Riding) Jackson tried to sever her familial history from her works and others' perceptions of them. She asks in her first preface to *Progress of Stories* whether "there [is] a single paragraph at which you can sneer 'Oh, she is talking about herself'? And in everything that I have ever written have I ever brought myself in, except in the most discreet way?" (1935 Preface xix). (Riding) Jackson viewed others' conversations about her background as insulting, mere attempts at exoticization. *An Anthology of Modern English and American Verse* (1963), prepared for publication in Russia and edited by Norbert Guterman, describes (Riding) Jackson as born "in the family of a tailor" and brought up by her father "sternly in his Socialistic faith" ("Literary Mention, Literary Prejudices"). (Riding) Jackson responds that while the headnote in this anthology includes four lines about her father's Socialism, two lines about her education, and less than a single line about her life in Europe, there is nothing about her "intensive application . . . to the defining of linguistic standards for poetic work, and the work of writing, generally" ("Literary Mention, Literary Prejudices"). In the same essay, (Riding) Jackson writes that the little family history that she has made public has been "put to uses invidious in their implications in writing on me of an inimical spirit . . . the information

[73] Baker quotes from "Twentieth Century Change in the Idea of Poetry, and of the Poet, and of the Human Being," *P.N. Review*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1987, review supplement 1, pp. 77-78.

about my father's beginnings was expanded with an identificant of both my parents as 'immigrants,'" and her characterization as "tailor's daughter" have "figured in the tradition of representing me as a creature whose make-up was all self-confounding contrast and discrepancy."[74]

To avoid the 'strangeness' and 'contrast' she dislikes, rather than embracing the contradictions as inevitable and poetically productive as Nichols does, (Riding) Jackson compartmentalizes her identity into separate, detached parts. As she changes her name in the course of her lifetime, from Laura Reichenthal to Laura Gottschalk to Laura Riding Gottschalk to Laura Riding to Laura (Riding) Jackson, with each successive iteration, she discards entire previous parts of her history, in life and in writing.[75] Scholars writing about her often choose which name to use based on the publication dates of the texts they analyze.[76] In "Queen Story," a review of the 1982 edition of *Progress of Stories*, Harry Mathews uses "Laura . . . for simplicity's sake" as the "one element in common" among her names, a decision that unsurprisingly enraged (Riding) Jackson, as she expresses in several of her letters (Mathews). The paratext of *Progress of Stories* exemplifies her self-classification: the 1982 edition's book cover lists the author above the title as "Laura Riding," maintaining the authorial name at the time of the original 1935 publication, and on the bottom, the cover calls the book "A New Enlarged Edition with Commentary by Laura

[74] (Riding) Jackson's presence within *my* project would have posed similar problems for her. Her letters indicate that before agreeing to contribute to any anthologies, she insisted on knowing which other writers would be included, as well as their motivations for writing, to ensure control over how her material might be presented.

[75] The connection between (Riding) Jackson's name changes and her transformations as an author have been made by a number of scholars, especially succinctly by Deborah Baker in *In Extremis: The Life of Laura Riding*.

[76] I am using "(Riding) Jackson" here despite my primary focus on works originally written by "Laura Riding," since I cite from the republications with her later written prefaces.

(Riding) Jackson."[77] Letters exchanged between (Riding) Jackson and Frances McCullough, editor at Dial Press, show the nonnegotiable necessity of this precision for (Riding) Jackson. She writes in 1981 to McCullough about "the need of my late authorial name as a presence in this descriptive text. The name Riding is used in your draft as a covering name for me, and this excludes my living self after 1941 . . . I am averse to having the 'Riding' brought into a term for habitual reference in my entire regard" (Letter to Frances McCullough [March 1981]). In a different letter, she explains her name's visual fragmentation: "I never use the 'Riding' element without parenthesis. The name 'Laura (Riding) Jackson' is my authorial name: The 'Riding' incorporated parenthetically for continuity of authorial identity with 'Laura Riding' . . . I'm aware of the difficulty I make for others with this names load, but I can find no alternative" (Letter to Frances McCullough [Jan. 1981]). She explains elsewhere that the "reason of this procedure is in the radical nature of my renouncing, in the first years of the 'forties, my affiliation with past literary associates, and with literature itself as a professional intellectual guild" (Memoir). (Riding) Jackson's later and republished works are overloaded with appendices, commentaries, and notes with this kind of information.[78] In "Some Stories in Review," she expresses a preference of adding explanatory notes rather than revising, arguing that stories are too fragmented to risk alteration: she writes that they "are not composed, as poems are, or essays, but constructed, made of pieces put together: changes could have destructive consequences. They are more fragile than they seem" (365). When McCullough tried to convince her that "there has been delight over the stories and its

[77] Similarly, *Four Unposted Letters to Catherine* is written by Laura Riding but concludes with a postscript by Laura (Riding) Jackson.

[78] For twenty years after renouncing poetry, (Riding) Jackson refused to republish her poems, but then, "she modified her ban to allow republication if the poems were accompanied by a statement of her changed view of poetry" (Masopust 53).

opposite over the commentaries," suggesting that the commentaries "will take away from the stories and antagonize the reader," (Riding) Jackson was furious ("your exhorting me to obliterate the appendix pages en masse astonished me dismayingly") (McCullough to (Riding) Jackson [March 1981]; Letter to McCullough [March 1981]).

(Riding) Jackson's adamant insistence on precise explanations, along with explanations of the explanations, results from her belief in language's ability to convey everything if used 'correctly.' While Nichols views poetic composition as "attempts to say the unsayable . . . a way into those parts of yourself that are beyond words," for (Riding) Jackson, the truth of oneself cannot be beyond words (English Association interview). (Riding) Jackson comes to renounce poetry because of what she considers its deliberately indirect approach to truth, even attempted replacement of truth: "Poetry is conditioned by the arbitrary postulate that there is an inexpressible . . . that, somehow, it can express: words are used . . . to create physical impressions of what is left verbally unexplored for the sake of the exercise of the art of poetry!" ("What, If Not a Poem, Poems?" 244-245). (Riding) Jackson thus posits herself as an anti-aesthetic once-poet, or as Jerome McGann puts it, a "humanist who would unburden writing from the illusions of art" (McGann 64). She unburdens her own stories from illusions through their overwhelming awareness of their own status as stories—making them almost unbearably disillusive. In "Reality as Port Huntlady," despite all of its characters and numerous events, including death, birth, and marriage, in a sense, nothing really happens in this "place where one felt a town might one day be, or where one felt that perhaps there had once been a town," a place that might be analogous to a real place "as a lie stands to the truth" ("Reality as Port Huntlady" 85, 96). Everything that happens is incessantly negated by the story's deconstruction of itself: "no amount of ingenuity can save

a story from seeming, in the end, just a story—just a piece of verbal luggage, belonging to anybody who cares to be bothered with it" ("Reality as Port Huntlady" 132). In a book review in *The Courier-Journal*, Catherine Sutton writes that in *Progress of Stories*, "Riding often takes her fairy-tales so seriously that she deprives them of their magic" (Sutton). In a *New York* magazine book review of the collection, Edith Milton remarks that although the stories' openings establish a fairy tale mode, the universe within the stories is one existing "within the minds of Laura Jackson's characters, who are paralyzed by a sort of inner vacuity," apathetic and "unfelt" (Milton 73). Milton characterizes the book as a "solipsistic nightmare,"[79] ultimately all "stories about the writing of stories" that "create a ceremony for the unreality of their subject matter" (Milton 73). McGann depicts the stories as "explicitly de-creative, stories that unravel the fictions of creativity" (McGann 65). In her prefaces to *Progress of Stories*, (Riding) Jackson claims that her objective is not to "construct stories but to *tell* stories," not to make art but "to make things plain" (1982 Preface xxi-xxii; 1935 Preface xii). She claims to want to distill rather than complicate, but ironically, her obsession with clarity makes her far from clear, in part through her use of repetition. She reiterates what she writes multiple times with minor differences,[80] as if searching with frustration for the most precise way to express what she means.

The repetition in *Progress of Stories*, like in *Sunris*, creates a sense of cadence. Specifically discussing "Christmastime," (Riding) Jackson describes writing based on "the sense of a pattern of movement, of a rhythmic beat of consciousness of how 'things' happen"

[79] This phrase seems especially apt for the story of Miss Banquett, who populates a world, "the world of self . . . which she made out of fear of uncertainty," until she eventually "swallowed herself. She felt herself solidly inside herself" ("Miss Banquett" 187).

[80] Some scholars have noted resonance between (Riding) Jackson's style and Gertrude Stein's, which seems an apt comparison in their methods of repetition. This claim displeased (Riding) Jackson, as did most juxtapositions of her texts with those of others.

(1982 Preface xxvii). The stories in the collection move cyclically, often returning several times to the same verbal moments. For example, parts nine and ten of "Miss Banquett, or the Populating of Cosmania" both begin with "'Enough, then,' said Miss Banquett," and parts one and three of "Reality as Port Huntlady" start with "Dan the Dog came to the town of Port Huntlady with two friends, Baby and Slick," eradicating the possibility of locating a beginning or an end ("Miss Banquett" 158, 164; "Reality as Port Huntlady" 85, 100). Carla Billitteri describes the "progress" of (Riding) Jackson's stories as "temporally nonlinear . . . narrative progressions turn backward; story lines return to their beginnings, or undo themselves in complications, or fragment in multiple open outcomes," presenting "an arrangement of sites without determining order" (Billitteri 92). Baker traces the "'progress' of the title" to the "evolution of the book from a proposed collection of fairy tales entitled *The Story Pig* to a book whose stories and essays deconstructed the very assumptions with which she had begun" (Baker 295). In "A Crown for Hans Andersen," (Riding) Jackson articulates this narrative construction:

> What are stories, indeed, but a direction away from one place that is also a direction toward another? And the end of stories comes when the direction away from turns entirely into a direction toward: when the direction toward is almost the same as the place toward which it is the direction, because in a little while one is sure to arrive. (275)

(Riding) Jackson describes the movement of minds in a similar manner: "our minds are still moving, and *backward* as well as *forward*; the nearest we get to truth at any given moment is, perhaps, only an idea" (1935 Preface xiv). The link between progress of stories and progress of minds is intentional—her aim was to compose "stories that are products of

nature, that come naturally to the mind for telling, reflecting the infinite progression of circumstances in which the reality of live being consolidates itself reiteratively, mirroring to the mind its own live reality" (1982 Preface xxii). In this way, life is always in the process of "mak[ing] itself into a story, stories, it begins and ends as a story, or is a continuous story, or a world of stories" (1982 Preface xxii). Though story is not equivalent to but is rather an imitation of life, for (Riding) Jackson, story still exercises the "faculties of the mind suited to employment in the telling of truth . . . The progress is only story-progress, but the *feel* of the progress is precious to the mind, helps the mind to feel its beat . . . a beat of what I should prefer to call . . . meaning-progress" (1982 Preface xxiv). Her progress of stories attempts to follow mind's 'natural' beat, the rhythm of thinking—something beyond a particular time or place, but rather something shared, always true to being human.[81] She seeks

> open areas of knowledge and understanding that all minds share as the world of intelligent being—partaking, in their unitary reality as minds, of the identity of mind . . . Our minds, which we call 'human', give mind—mind unparticular—earth-place for the universal story of being it has to tell. We become, as minds, propitious points of departure for and return from experience of the universal content of being, the exploring of what . . . manifests a connectedness of consciousness-like mutuality. (1982 Preface xxiii)

The goals of universality and perpetuity are what draw (Riding) Jackson to the form of fairy tales, especially to those of Hans Christian Andersen. In "A Crown for Hans Andersen," (Riding) Jackson compares the world of Andersen's tales to the world recorded

[81] The limitations of this—the insurmountable distance between the story and the real—are painful for (Riding) Jackson: "the actuality of the told is not true, rather, an accidental course of thought that has timed itself to the narrative proprieties of truth. The effect—the name of the quality—is *heart-breaking* . . . The satisfaction a story yields . . . is that of the passingly sweet flavor of knowledge of what might be" (1982 Preface xxv).

in "history": "Hans Andersen was alive *now*. *Then* is the now of the history-men. The now of fairy tales . . . is a little moment in always. But the history-men are not satisfied with a little moment in always shared . . . They want an always of their own. And so their now is only a then" ("A Crown for Hans Andersen" 257). Andersen's fairy tales, even when they involve magic, are steeped in the real,[82] often within small, specific moments: "Hans Andersen looked at the truth and saw small and talked small: this is what his Fairy Tales are" ("A Crown for Hans Andersen" 257). For (Riding) Jackson, the small particulars hold within them the realness of the world: "A part, thus, can be as a little world: some intelligence of unity inheres in each . . . there cannot be, even, a story of *a* life: there is no fractional unit smaller than 'lives'" ("Variously, As to Stories"). She juxtaposes the fragment that holds everything with the inflated largeness of "history," which she calls "the most discouraging word that I know" in *Four Unposted Letters to Catherine* and as "consist[ing] of inaccurate statements" in "A Last Lesson in Geography" (*Letters* 69; "A Last Lesson in Geography" 251). (Riding) Jackson describes her own *Progress of Stories* as having "an edging of the real," giving the stories "the shape of something believable within limits of the nature of the telling as story-telling" ("The Missing Story" 75).

(Riding) Jackson and Nichols both favor particular details over vast historical claims or grandiose myths. They view literature as holding the potential to show certain truths that are obscured by retellings of history, stereotypes, mythologies, and other massive or generalizing perspectives. In her fourth letter to Catherine, (Riding) Jackson refers to history as "the muddle" for most of the text, the learning of which glorifies certain people and

[82]Joseph Katz wrote to the editor of *Chelsea* that (Riding) Jackson's intense commitment to the 'real' "must be painful . . . Struggle for certainty of meaning, however, is to be expected of someone committed to the agony of reality" (Katz).

events, “making cities and nations of people’s minds—making an important muddle of what had been better left as unimportant nature” (*Letters* 65). Nichols responds in her work to “certain images and archetypes that have come down to us over the ages” that have been “destructive . . . to the black psyche . . . We feasted on the world of Greek myths, European fairy tales and legends, princes and princesses, Snow Whites and Rapunzels. I am interested in the psychological effects of this on black people even today and how it functions in the minds of white people” (“The Battle with Language” 287). Nichols’s response to the violence of history’s and myths’ untruths is to “come up with new myths and other images that please us” (“The Battle with Language” 287). In “The Telling,” (Riding) Jackson writes that “We wait, all, for a story of us that shall reach to where we are,” and Nichols turns to literature to compose precisely such works, to “recreate the world a little more to [her] own liking”: “I do not have to accept a world that says that the black woman is invisible . . . or a world that tries to deny not only black women but women on the whole the right to participate in the decision making necessary for change and an improved quality of life. I can introduce my own values. I can write against stereotypes” (“The Telling” 339; “The Battle with Language” 289). While Nichols proposes literature as a way to reveal *and* actively work to change the world as it is into the world as it could be, (Riding) Jackson strives to *solely* reveal—but for her, revealing or telling, if telling truth, tells everything—for it is singular. While Nichols’s works move simultaneously in diverging directions, expanding falsely simplified narratives and stereotypes into a multiplicity of polylingual conversations, (Riding) Jackson abstracts a multiplicity of stories, like word definitions, into one monolingual vision “related to the unities of human concern”: “(ultimately) there is only one

subject, a subject impossible to change . . . (ultimately) all conversation is all the same conversation" (1982 Preface xxxi).

In one version of the preface to her story "Christmastime," the only one added to the 1982 edition of *Progress of Stories* from her later decades of writing, (Riding) Jackson explains, "That I used the word 'progress' in the titling of this book signified my irrevocable commitment to the living course of things as progressively self-revealing as making, in eventual reality, all, one subject for consideration, one topic, all, of conversation, one story only for telling" ("Christmas Time, to precede…"). Billitteri argues that part of (Riding) Jackson's wish for oneness, for one "monolingual conversation" rather than many conversations, connects to her fear of miscommunication or misreading—her desire to control interpretations of her work[83]: "If stories are part of a dialogue . . . then the dialogue must be controlled in order for the story to communicate truth" in a society where there is "not *meeting* of minds, but *scattering* of minds, in the contemporary flooding of the attention of human beings with an endless out-streaming common-intelligence fabricated from imitations and parodies of the unities of human nature" (Billitteri 97; *Rational Meaning* 42).

But in part, there seems a genuine fear in (Riding) Jackson's writing of fragmentation as the "dissolution of human identity" ("The Missing Story" 74). She worries that people "have become fragments of human nature," and contemporary literary works "reverberate the fragmentariness of the thought of human beings of contemporary time about themselves, one

[83] (Riding) Jackson's correspondence in March 1982 highlights her anger about the publisher's paratextual decisions, including the jacket design. She wanted to permanently attach a note to the 1982 edition of *Progress of Stories* stating that the pictorial design of a bird on the jacket "offends against the substance and spirit of the stories contained in it . . . The emphasized bird-emblem is the most inappropriate bid of the jacket-design for attention to the book on the reader-market: the implication it makes of a coyly fluttering whimsy is grossly misrepresentative of what is <u>inside</u> the book" (Author's note). Furthermore, the final section departs in typographical respects "considered important by me for unity of reader-mind with author-mind as to the intended textual form and course of things" (Author's note).

another, existence itself" (75). In spite of the generally detached tone of "Reality as Port Huntlady," one seemingly sincere moment is an expression of anxiety about stories being nothing more than distractions, a "substitute for any more profound experience of each other, an emotion-screen in whose making we both co-operate," rather than as she defines story in her commentary on "Eve's Side of It": "the communication of human beings to human beings of beliefs as to what the life of human beings is 'really' like" ("Reality as Port Huntlady" 98; "Some Stories in Review" 375). The depth of her concern echoes within (Riding) Jackson's letters to her longtime friend Esther Antell, or Polly, in which she reveals difficulty in reaching others: "It's a tremendous venture: the attempt to reach another person . . . a disconcerting one" (Letter to Antell [Aug. 1924]). In a different letter sent prior to her divorce, (Riding) Jackson tells Polly of her desire to be at times alone but never lonely: she wants to move to New York because of "friends and associations there" but also calls it the "best place" for her as "the general and immense guardian of the solitary" (Letter to Antell [Feb. 1925]). In the same letter, she writes that she wishes to live in some measure of "solitude without incurring deliberate isolation." These thoughts about identity as simultaneously separately individual and vitally collective, of the collective and the individual being interrelated and interdependent, mark a point of intersection for (Riding) Jackson and Nichols. (Riding) Jackson underscores in "A Crown for Hans Andersen" the urgency of repudiating the idea of only oneself, of sole singularity: "The important thing was to keep going just long enough to reach an end—somewhere else, something else, a life not so hatefully one's own only . . . the journeying out was really a journeying back," as the speaker of "Sunris" likewise discovers through the course of her narrative ("A Crown for Hans Andersen" 273).

Wordplay as Child's Play

Nichols's and (Riding) Jackson's concerns about finding and being one's genuine self extend to younger audiences. In their works directed toward children, specifically Nichols's *Paint Me a Poem* and (Riding) Jackson's *Four Unposted Letters to Catherine*, the authors endeavor to teach the next generation how to see themselves in the world anew through creativity and linguistic play—and how to resist others' efforts to make them any different than themselves. If, as the Jacksons claim in *Rational Meaning*, the "sense of human identity can be lost with the loss of trust in words," then using language for its 'true' purposes and saying what one means results in being true to oneself as a human being (*Rational Meaning* 81). Being oneself and true to oneself is at the core of (Riding) Jackson's *Four Unposted Letters to Catherine,*[84] which she addresses to Robert Graves and Nancy Nicholson's[85] eight-year-old daughter: "A child should be allowed to take as long as she needs for knowing everything about herself, which is the same as learning to be herself" (*Letters* 15). Each of the letters revolves around a particular theme—knowing, doing, learning, and history—and each of the previous letters weaves into the content of the next, with phrases repeating and building upon each other, as in her stories. Although (Riding) Jackson writes in her 1963 postscript that she would "probably not write such letters to a child, now, or to a grown-up, even—such easy-speaking letters, treating with so much diffident good-humor the stupendous, incessantly-urgent matter of Virtue and the lack of it," at the time of

[84] Written in 1930, postscript added in 1963, published in 1993.

[85] For a while, (Riding) Jackson referred to her relationship with Graves and Nicholson as "a marriage of three" (Letter to Antell [1926]).

composition, the letters seem to articulate her instructions for the younger generation for how to be true to oneself within a world that makes this goal difficult to attain (74).

One of the letters' main claims is that self-knowledge is the foundation for world-knowledge: "the important thing is knowing everything about oneself, because that is where knowing everything about everything must begin from" (14). She explains later that the reason for this is practice: "knowing everything about yourself is thinking building itself up, training itself, making itself strong, sure, exact" (64). (Riding) Jackson laments that "children are hurried along and made to grow up and start doing things . . . before they have finished with knowing about themselves," and so as grownups, "They do things hurriedly and blurredly in order to seem to be people, though not definite people" (14, 15). The way to avoid becoming an 'indefinite person' as a grownup, or only seemingly a person, is through play: "People say to them when they think that they have been playing long enough: 'You are no longer a child. You must begin to do something.'[86] But although playing is doing nothing, you are really doing something when you play; you are thinking about yourself" (17). (Riding) Jackson's letters show that deep within the drive to define, limit, and make precise, to find and tell truth, is counterintuitively the impulse to *play*, which she ties to knowing and thinking about oneself, and therefore about everyone and everything else. In a sense, much of what (Riding) Jackson does with narrative construction and cyclical experimentation is in itself a form of play.

Play with language and rhythms is a vital element of Nichols's poetry for children. Together with her husband, John Agard, Nichols has authored children's books and edited

[86] On "doing," (Riding) Jackson writes, "Catherine, this is the way the world is. Only a small part of the doings in it are done for comfort or fun. A lot of the rest is just showing-off. The greatest showers-off and busy-bodies are men. And so this world is ruled by men, because it is a world not of doing but over-doing" (25-26).

poetry anthologies for children that emphasize wordplay, rhyme, rhythm, and vibrantly juxtaposed images. In an interview with the English Association, Nichols stresses the importance of poetry for children: "It helps them to see the world with new eyes, as each poem is like a freshly created little universe, at the same time awakening them to the power and rhythm of language" (English Association interview). Her encouragement of children toward linguistic play takes material shape during her year at the Tate Gallery in London from 1999 to 2000. In her role as poet-in-residence, Nichols explored the relationship between poetry and painting: "there is a very close relationship between the two art forms. In the compositional balance of a painting, one can almost speak of a certain colour 'rhyming' with a similar colour" (*Paint Me a Poem* 5). The residency involved working with children from London's primary schools to respond to art through poetry, as well as writing her own poems inspired by art from the Tate's collection. The project resulted in the 2004 publication of *Paint Me a Poem*, which gathers together the children's and Nichols's poems, placed next to the respective images of the art that prompted the verse—art that the children imbued with life and story through their words. Instead of simply teaching the children the short descriptions that accompany artwork in museums, the project engaged children by giving them the agency to see the artwork from their own eyes, learning about themselves and their own thoughts along the way. As Nichols writes, "Literature is not static," so it creates space to "keep on creating and reshaping" ("The Battle with Language" 288). At the end of *Paint Me a Poem* are writing tips and poetry games as suggestions for children to participate in the project, to play with artworks and develop their own creativity—a form of "thinking building itself up," as (Riding) Jackson encourages Catherine to do (*Letters* 64).

Writing, Nichols explains, is "my way of participating in the world and in the struggle for keeping language and the human spirit alive (including my own). It is a way of sharing a vision that is hopefully life-giving in the final analysis" ("The Battle with Language" 288). As (Riding) Jackson describes fairy tales as taking place in "a little moment in always," she uses a similar phrase to describe the composition of poetry in *Four Unposted Letters to Catherine*: "Having fun and being comfortable is connected with being alive for a good long time, a year or maybe a hundred years. But a poem brings up the idea of being alive for always" ("A Crown for Hans Andersen" 257; *Letters* 31). Regardless of all that separates them as artists, Nichols and (Riding) Jackson both write for the sake of life—for figuring out what it means to be alive, with others, in a world they know to be fragmented. Lehmann asserts that because the "power of the word to both create and transcend reality is central within both Afro-Caribbean and Judaic tradition . . . creating a mother tongue which incorporates both history and contemporary culture and experience is tantamount to creating a home within the diaspora" (Lehmann 115). Recurrent formal experimentation in Nichols's and (Riding) Jackson's texts enables the authors' dynamic reshaping and recreating of language as they move back and forth between "roots" and "wings," groundedness and groundlessness. With the repetition of phrases, echoing of sounds, cycling through particular moments—key elements for teaching by means of oral storytelling—Nichols and (Riding) Jackson continuously practice, as they instruct children to do, to shape language into a home true to their experience and vision.

V. Linguistic Fragments: Forms of Sound in Walcott's and Brodsky's Poetic Translations

> The formal structure of a poem is not something distinct from its meaning but as intimately bound up with the latter as the body is with the soul.
> —W.H. Auden[87]

> Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about.
> —Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

For Derek Walcott and Joseph Brodsky, form exists at the junction of the secular and the sacred. The shaping of their poetic language, on paper but especially in recitation, embodies the poets' relationships with language, identity, and the idea of "home." In an essay on Walcott, Brodsky writes that a "poet's biography lies in his twists of language, in his meters, rhymes, and metaphors . . . the choice of words is invariably more telling than the story line" ("On Derek Walcott"). In turn, Walcott describes Brodsky in an interview as "somebody who lived poetry. He proclaimed it every time I met him . . . Joseph didn't make a distinction between his calling and his life" ("Almost Medieval Devotion to his Craft" 442-443). Walcott was born in 1930 in Saint Lucia, and Brodsky was born in 1940 in the Soviet Union, and through difficult paths, both poets achieved worldwide recognition during their lifetimes: they became Nobel laureates within five years of each other,[88] as well as received numerous other literary awards. After meeting at Robert Lowell's funeral in 1977, the two writers became close friends, actively involved in each other's literary work: Walcott says in an interview, "I have two very dear friends, Seamus Heaney and Joseph Brodsky. I love them because they are poets naturally, first of all, but also I love them because they are friends"

[87] Quoted by Bengt Jangfeldt in his opening remarks to an interview with Brodsky and Walcott in 2001

[88] Brodsky in 1987, Walcott in 1992

("A Merciless Judge" 346). The critical essays Walcott and Brodsky wrote on each other's poetry collections and the poems they dedicated to each other show a deep mutual recognition as well as convergence in their uses of language and form to teach their audiences about the realities of displacement and fragmentation. While the content of their English poems functions as an entryway for monolingual English readers, or at least those unfamiliar with the poets' other languages, the formal choices and the manipulation of sound in the verse—including choices in translation directly tied to recitation—subtly immerse readers in the poets' own fragmented and complexly polylinguistic contexts. In other words, Brodsky and Walcott offer ways in which Anglophone authors can evoke a plurality of language worlds in spite of writing in English.

The Movement of Meaning

As poets whose lives involved major movement around the world, voluntary or not, Walcott and Brodsky turn to language itself as a form of "home," as Nichols and (Riding) Jackson do in the previous chapter. Walcott's and Brodsky's methods of experimentation with poetic form is their way of accessing that home—while also making tangible for their readers the conditions of exile. For Walcott, displacement is rooted in entire countries' banishment from their languages and cultures and the ongoing individual repercussions of this history of colonialism. Michelle Cliff details the consequences of linguistic power dynamics in the Anglophone Caribbean in her essay "A Journey into Speech," explaining that an effect of "passing into the anglocentrism of the British West Indian culture is that you believe absolutely in the hegemony of the King's English," with Milton, Wordsworth, and Keats held up as an ideal "with an assurance that we were unable . . . to compose a work of

similar correctness" (32-33). In her own work, Cliff sometimes "alternate[s] the King's English with *patois*" to reflect the consequent split consciousness: "It would be as dishonest to write the novel entirely in *patois* as to write entirely in the King's English" (33). Though Walcott lived and taught in a variety of places, including Trinidad, the United States, Canada, and England, he wrote often about Saint Lucia, bringing knowledge of his birthplace to the other spaces where he lived. Early in his career, in the 1950s, he found a broader audience through *Caribbean Voices*, BBC World Service's weekly radio program that was broadcast from London from 1943 to 1958 and became one of the most significant venues and catalysts for modern Caribbean literature. Brodsky's experience of displacement is individual rather than collective: after undergoing multiple interrogations, commitments to psychiatric hospitals, and a trial in 1964 for "social parasitism"[89] that led to a sentence of hard labor and internal exile in the Arctic Circle, he was forced into involuntary exile in 1972 and ultimately settled in the U.S., eventually moving to New York in 1980. Within the Soviet Union, Brodsky also experienced state-sanctioned anti-Semitism and alienation as a Jew, which he describes to an extent in his autobiographical essay "Less Than One."[90] In "Earth and Sound: The Place of Poetry," M. NourbeSe Philip writes that for displaced poets, displaced "from homeland, language, culture or race; from the means of production or the product of one's labour; from one's truths or wisdoms . . . the struggle and search is for that place—psychic, psychological, spiritual, economic, geographical, cultural or historical—that is theirs by

[89] The accusation was "having a worldview damaging to the state, decadence and modernism, failure to finish school, and social parasitism . . . except for the writing of awful poems" ("Chronology" xviii).

[90] Brodsky briefly depicts the anti-Semitism of his teachers, whose common practice was purposely leaving records of students' addresses and nationalities on the desk so that all the students would know who was Jewish, and he mentions that his father had a difficult time finding a job after being "discharged from the navy in accordance with some seraphic ruling that Jews should not hold substantial military ranks" ("Less Than One" 8, 12).

rightful belonging" ("Earth and Sound" 58). Walcott and Brodsky enact that search in their poetry through interlacing fragments of the words, sounds, and rhythms of their past and present environments.

No matter in which language Brodsky and Walcott write, much of their poetry is inherently polylingual and often investigates the implications of entangled linguistic attachments. In *The Location of Culture*, as he explains the notion of cultural translation, Homi Bhabha argues that the "liminality of migrant experience is no less a transitional phenomenon than a translational one; there is no resolution to it because the two conditions are ambivalently enjoined in the 'survival' of migrant life" (Bhabha 321). He defines "translation" as "the performative nature of cultural communication," the "*movement* of meaning" between cultures (326). Walcott's five-part poetic sequence "Sainte Lucie" consists predominantly of English words but does not fit neatly into a single lexicon. As the speaker in "Sainte Lucie" tries to recuperate his memory of the eponymous island and its language, he interweaves English and Saint Lucian Kwéyòl, intermittently juxtaposing words and phrases as adjacent translations. Brodsky's poems written after his exile, along with their translations (completed by or in close collaboration with the author), also exhibit unconventional approaches that resist full translation into another linguistic existence. Brodsky's English self-translation of "Folk Tune" attempts, through rhythm and rhyme, to blend the sound and phrasing of Russian with English words, and "Lullaby of Cape Cod" plays language games with English even in the initial Russian version. Presuming the feasibility of transparent translations perpetuates an illusion that obscures the difficult, even painful negotiations that occur in the process—concealing the jagged splinters of the passageways between languages. Walcott and Brodsky disrupt such illusions by making

more evident the chaos involved in carrying narratives across cultural worlds. These poems as case studies foreground the act of translation rather than mask it—the texts transpire within the interplay *between* languages rather than inside one artificially monolingual reality. The linguistic fragmentation is echoed in the poems' splintered sense of time and space as the words and images transport their narratives telescopically closer to and farther from present contexts—moving across memories and between local and global perspectives.

Walcott's Border Thinking

Walcott has been reprimanded for making his poetry "not West Indian enough," "too much concerned with world literature and international sophistication" (Morris 178). Across his career, a number of scholars and critics tried to pigeonhole Walcott as the epitome of cosmopolitanism or as a traitor to his background. Among the alleged evidence for these claims, Mervyn Morris lists Walcott's wide-ranging allusions, stylistic influences, and subject matter: "Poems which happen to be about death, love, evil, art, the loss of faith, are not relevant enough for those who find compassion or complex ambiguity decadent luxuries in our emergent society, and call instead for poems which speak stridently of politics, class and race" (178). As Morris proceeds to explain, Walcott often wrote poems of the latter type, as well, if not bluntly enough or in the form suiting these critics' expectations. *New World Fortnightly* condemned Walcott for a "pre-occupation with being published abroad," even though his first publication was at his own expense in the West Indies, and Kamau Brathwaite classified Walcott as a "humanist poet," one who receives inspiration from his society but whose voice often speaks "away from that society rather than speaking in towards it" (Morris 177-179). From a different lens of criticism, in her discussion of Walcott's code-

switching in poetry to reflect his "divided mind and inheritance," Helen Vendler wrote in a review of Walcott's *The Fortunate Traveller* that "mixed diction has yet to validate itself as a literary resource with aesthetic power." The suggestion from these critiques is that Walcott is always either leaving his culture in the past or representing it ineffectively. Conversely, Walcott's literary position may be more aptly characterized as engagement with what Walter Mignolo conceptualizes as "border thinking," the "rearticulation and appropriation of global designs by and from the perspective of local histories" (39). Edwin Gentzler investigates identity formation within "border spaces" in which "distinctions between the 'original' and 'foreign' cultures tend to disappear, for cultures tend to be both simultaneously" (145). Through the speaker in "Sainte Lucie," who embodies these forms of plurality, Walcott carries his reader back and forth between split yet tied existences—the more distanced contemplations of someone exiled from his past, and the immediate perspectives from the center of the island, in the middle of its sounds, smells, and atmosphere.

The first part of "Sainte Lucie," a single sentence titled "The Villages" that spans across twenty-three lines, opens the poem in the middle of remembering. This section comprises a succession of prepositional phrases, ethereal descriptions of the island's villages that envelop within them the primary subject of focus: "I am growing no nearer / to what secret eluded the children . . . something always being missed" in the past, something that the words attempt to recreate ("Sainte Lucie" 35). The speaker grasps at evanescing images, the specificity of the village names in the first line obscured by the rest of the passage's reiterated dwindling in its diction ("floating shadow," "house-shade," "sun-bleached," "grey," "smoke," "drifting") and the hushing effect of the breathy "sh" alliteration throughout the section ("shack," "shuttered," "shadow," "shallows," "shade") (35). There

appear a noteworthy number of compound nouns and adjectives—for example, "sea-net" and "grey-scurfed"—verbal elements pushed together with a hyphen as if to access expressions not readily existing in the English language. Passed around between Britain and France for hundreds of years, alternating colonial rule fourteen times, Saint Lucia's multilingualism is marked by its painful history. In many of Walcott's poems and plays, he experiments not only with code-switching, but with forms of deviation from standard English—in diction, syntax and rhythm, grammar and intonation. In an interview with Kwame Dawes, Fred D'Aguiar remarked that Walcott "seemed to retain in his standard English usage rhythms more akin to Creole. A strong visual and sensual impulse permeates his work" (D'Aguiar 229). Constantly in a state of oscillation, Walcott's narrative of language and translation emerges through polylanguaging. In his study of border epistemologies and the geopolitics of knowledge, Mignolo celebrates "bi or pluri languaging," which is "precisely the celebration of the crack in the global process between local histories and global designs . . . and a critique of the idea that civilization is linked to the 'purity' of colonial and national monolanguaging" (250). The second, unnamed section of "Sainte Lucie" amplifies Saint Lucia's soundscape by submerging the poem's reader more definitively in a space of linguistic fusion.

Part II begins with a list of local fruits, the initial ones linked in language to the apple:

Pomme arac,

otaheite apple,

pomme cythere,

pomme granate,

moubain,

z'anananas

the pineapple's

Aztec helmet,

pomme (35-36)

Aside from the Edenic symbolism to which the speaker returns in the poem's fifth ekphrastic section,[91] Part II is compelling in a pedagogical sense. In the first two lines, "otaheite apple" provides a more globally recognized term for the regionally common name "pomme arac"—but the former misses the connection to the Arawaks, who lived in Saint Lucia since around 200 A.D. until their decimation by European invasion (35). In the next three lines, the pomegranate is sandwiched between "pomme cythere" and "moubain," which the preceding poem in Walcott's *Sea Grapes* collection, "Names," translates as "hogplum"[92] (36). "Pomme cythere" and "moubain" refer to the same fruit, sometimes called ambarella or golden apple, but the fruit has more than a dozen other names, varying by location. In "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?" Walcott describes the natural elements of his childhood home as "so overpowering in their presence that awe is deeper than articulation of awe. To name is to contradict" (12). Barbara Cassin regards the plurality of languages as a "determining factor in the constitution of the world because, far from expressing in a different manner the same thing, as is commonly thought, the plurality of languages places difference at the heart of the essence of things" (58). Rather than seeking to simplify and conflate particular local terms with more globally transportable ones, Walcott instead provides an irreducible sampling of

[91] The poem's fifth section, "For the Altarpiece of the Roseau Valley Church, Saint Lucia," draws parallels between Roseau Valley and the Garden of Eden. Significantly, this altarpiece, painted in 1973 by Dunstan St. Omer, depicts the Holy Family as local Saint Lucians.

[92] "Listen, my children, say: / *moubain*: the hogplum / *cerise*: the wild cherry, / *baie-la*: the bay, / with the fresh green voices / they were once themselves / in the way the wind bends / our natural inflections" ("Names" 34).

possibilities. In an essay originally published as the introduction to one of Walcott's collections,[93] Brodsky asserts that "Walcott's lines are so resonant and stereoscopic precisely because . . . language itself is an epic device. Everything this poet touches mushrooms with reverberations and perspectives, like magnetic waves whose acoustics are psychological, whose implications are echo-like" ("The Sound of the Tide" 167). At the final "pomme" of the "Sainte Lucie" excerpt, the speaker pauses, explaining that he has "forgotten / what pomme for the Irish potato" ("Sainte Lucie" 36). The absent name is "ponm tè" in Saint Lucian Kwéyòl, or "pomme de terre" in French—the missing factor is the earth, the ground that keeps one rooted. Through the landscape, the earth and what it grows, the speaker struggles to recall forgotten words and their histories, inseparable from his sense of self and home: he calls out, "Come back to me / my language. / Come back" (36).

The process of approximate translation in "Sainte Lucie" has two important implications: dissociation and polyphony, qualities that Philip uses to characterize what she calls the "fugal societies" of the Caribbean: "Societies in which the harsh melodies of loss and exile," belonging and longing for a return, are "repeated over and over again in different keys and at different intervals" ("Fugues, Fragments and Fissures" 12). Russell McDougall observes that although the poem's "poetic consciousness is in exile, apparently unable to remember much of its French patois and worried that it might not be able to regain access to the inner experience of the language—the feeling in verse is for the most part in French patois" rather than English, so the "condition of exile" results in a "dissociation of sensibility, which is dramatized by voices in different languages" (McDougall 71). The grammatical structure of the unnamed section in "Sainte Lucie" also epitomizes its dissociative quality:

[93] *Poems of the Caribbean* (1983)

the seven sentences sprawling across four pages of verse are each on average nineteen lines long, with the longest sentence continuing for forty-five lines before a terminal punctuation mark. The often ambiguous enjambment, which juxtaposes short-lined images more than clarifies sentence structure, perpetually defers finality; the poem's edges hold together its scenes and sense descriptions uneasily and contingently:

> ciseau
> the scissor-bird
> no nightingales
> except, once,
> in the indigo mountains
> of Jamaica, blue depth,
> deep as coffee (36)

The lack of fluidity creates a tension between the words. The phrases are absent of smooth transitions, unable even to fit into a single language. The poem's speaker describes himself as a "wild golden apple / that will burst," overfilled with love for Saint Lucia and its people, regretting that he "never told enough" about it in his poetry: "moi c'est gens Ste. Lucie. / C'est la moi sorti; / is there that I born" (39). Bishnupriya Ghosh stresses the violence inherent in "mak[ing] the local globally communicable" and describes such forms of joining together as "'cultural grafting'—the suture on the skin of text ever a reminder" of the insurmountable incommensurability in cultural translation (45). However, Ghosh also draws attention to translation's regenerative power and the potential it holds for the "activist reader" who responds to the call of "everyday cultural translations" and can then "further be 'borne across' to the local and vernacular contexts" of literature (12). Through the laborious

attention and scrutiny that Walcott asks of his audience, he challenges us to become precisely such active and activist readers.

As Walcott's speaker's plea for recovery articulates the trauma that has occurred to Saint Lucians and their language, the voice also exhibits resilience in its demands. Walcott as speaker struggles to remember his language, but Walcott as poet already remembers—and he teaches his English-speaking public through techniques of musical improvisation. After establishing the apple, for example, as the basis for his performance, he plays with the reader's image of the familiar fruit by moving through its linguistic relations. The initial reading is not overly jarring because of the comfort of recognition and approximate translation, but every successive reading unveils the many variations in the forms, sounds, and tastes that Walcott evokes. Each recitation, which Walcott calls the ultimate "function of poetry," brings the reader further into the poem's—and poet's—affective environment (Hirsch interview 62). Rather than reducing a text by either refusing nearness or immediately assuming solidarity, the translator must lovingly embrace it with a careful, creative awareness of its alterity. As Ghosh argues, "if we pay attention to the rhetoricity of the text, then we embark on everyday acts of performative translation that move toward context-specific linguistic learning" that resists "fetishistic claims on local cultural space" (120).

The second stanza of Part II in the poem teaches cultural context through language immersion, but it also incorporates the context's untranslatability as Walcott glides across the Creole-Standard continuum:

> Evening opens at
> a text of fireflies,
> in the mountain huts

ti cailles betassion

candles,

candleflies

the black night bending

cups in its hard palms (37)

Movement permeates this passage, even as its components stand still. Brodsky compares Walcott's depictions of natural elements to those of "Joseph Banks, except that by setting his eyes on a plant 'chained in its own dew'[94] or on an object, he accomplishes something no naturalist is capable of—he animates them" ("The Sound of the Tide" 170). In an interview with Edward Hirsch, Walcott asserts the impossibility of separating the "richness of Creole . . . from the landscape" because the language's descriptive metaphors "were not like the Latin names . . . The metaphor is almost calligraphic: when it is pronounced, you can almost see it . . . It was the experience of a whole race renaming something that had been named by someone else and giving that object its own metaphoric power" (Hirsch interview 58). Walcott conveys this power through the blending of descriptions and languages in "Sainte Lucie." The evening that "opens at / a text of fireflies" alludes to the final line of "Names," in which Saint Lucian children read star patterns in the sky not as Western-tradition constellations ("Not Orion"), but as "fireflies caught in molasses" ("Names" 34). The pair of lines that follows in this stanza exemplifies Walcott's strategic partial translation: "in the mountain huts / ti cailles betassion" (37). Walcott uses French orthography rather than

[94] Quotation from Walcott's *Another Life* (1973)

spelling according to the Saint Lucian Kwéyòl writing system,[95] so for an English speaker with limited knowledge of French but no experience with Saint Lucian Kwéyòl, the poem's language becomes even more confusing: some words are misleadingly different from what they resemble in French, and the spelling variations turn dictionary work into guesswork. Does "cailles" refer to "houses," in which case the line translates the "mountain huts" into "little country houses"? Or does it come from the French word "écailles," in which case Walcott translates the literal image into a more metaphorical one of scales covering the countryside? By offering multiple versions and resisting definitive interpretations, Walcott simultaneously suspends his readers in the sensuous and linguistic world that the poem recalls, evoking the fragmented consciousness that Philip and McDougall depict, *and*, along with the verisimilitude, teaches them the impossibility of equivalence in translation: the familiar Orion is a poor translation of the night's text of fireflies, and "mountain huts" do not convey a vision of home as effectively as the repetitive yearning for "betassion" throughout the poem.

Rey Chow posits that "writers of multiple ethnic and cultural descents often introduce readers to entirely exotic dimensions of human encounters, transforming the English language at their disposal into a discordant, vertiginous discourse archive" and unleashing "linguistic multiplicities," thus enacting multiple, simultaneous systems of meaning-making (60). Brodsky pertinently describes Walcott as giving readers "a sense of infinity embodied in the language" ("The Sound of the Tide" 174). In a study examining the Creole-Standard

[95] In her book on the formal teaching of Kwéyòl in the Caribbean and U.K., Hubisi Nwenmely explains that while efforts toward a Saint Lucian Kwéyòl orthography can be traced to at least the beginning of the twentieth century, the first systematic attempt to develop and promote a writing system was in the early 1980s (after the publication of "Sainte Lucie" in 1976). In 1993, Walcott controversially publicly undermined the new orthography's spelling patterns: "I do not think the orthography does justice to the elegance of Kwéyòl. If you want to write the word *d'leau* which they might write *dlo* to me that's barbarous . . . my feeling as a guardian of Kwéyòl is that I'm not going to write this illiterate" (Nwenmely 79).

tension in Walcott's work, John Figueroa remarks that since feelings of "home" are tied to language, "we do not feel comfortable . . . whenever our language antennae cannot pick up with ease and accuracy the subtle movements in the ether of the spiritual environment" (153). While the embedded translations in "Sainte Lucie" help the reader reach cognitive conclusions necessary for at least limited comprehension, the recurrence of unfamiliar sounds of words, which Chow calls "xenophonic memories," disrupts clarity and works more through affiliation (59). The "xenophone" and the performative nature of translation manifest particularly in the third and fourth parts of Walcott's poem. Walcott notes directly above the third section, "Iona: Mabouya Valley," that it is a "narrative Creole song, heard on the back of an open truck," and the fourth section is the song's side-by-side English translation ("Sainte Lucie" 40).[96] The bilingual rendering of the overheard song invites the *reader* to overhear a communication between languages, one language performing another. Through the parallel placement and its correspondence with the English, the reader can also learn in the process about the construction and rhythms of the Creole:

Moin 'tendre un corne cornait	I heard a horn blowing
a sur bord roseaux-a.	by the river reeds down there.
Moi dit: "Doux-doux, moin kai chercher	"Sweetheart," I said, "I'll go looking
volants ba 'ous." (42)	for flying fish for you." (43)

Glissant proclaims that "a plural, multiplying, fragmented identity is no longer given or thought as a lack of identity but rather as a huge opening . . . an astonishing expansion of personal or collective identity throughout the field of the world's unforeseeable variations"

[96] The translated fourth section is dedicated to Eric Branford, an actor and director who was a member, together with Derek and Roderick Walcott, of the Saint Lucia Arts Guild.

("The Unforeseeable Diversity of the World" 288). Through polylanguaging, a synchronous staging of the narrative song and its English translation, Walcott is able to situate his reader in the fragmented position of the poem's speaker, and subsequently, to offer a key for listening and interpreting.

The final section of "Sainte Lucie," an homage to the altarpiece of the Roseau Valley Church on the island, brings into relation all the senses that were evoked throughout the poem into a single synesthetic experience—a painting "signed with music" that "turns the whole island" ("Sainte Lucie" 47). The speaker observes the massive mural created by Walcott's friend Dunstan St. Omer,[97] an art work depicting Biblical figures and cultural traditions in Saint Lucia: "life / repeated there, / the common life outside / and the other life it holds" (46). The speaker's resonant descriptions expand and contract, between biblical imagery and everyday life, between the present and the past, as well as moving outward from the painting's images, "Its roads radiate like aisles from the altar towards / those acres of bananas, towards / leaf-crowded mountains" (46). St. Omer referred to this altarpiece as a personal breakthrough in asserting Saint Lucian identity: "A white Christ was always used to dominate blacks, and in Jacmel, I painted my first black Christ" (Popovic). The Holy Family expands in the mural to include "members of the community: a chanteur, dancers, a chak-chak band, an Amerindian woman and child, a banana worker, the artist himself," so to the church's attendees, "it suddenly seemed as if the church belonged to them" (Popovic). After "the deaths / of as many names as you want," the destructive history of colonialism and its lasting effects on language and memory, the speaker in "Sainte Lucie" imagines a homecoming while examining a canoe in the mural—"your faith like a canoe at evening

[97] Prior to this mural, St. Omer designed Saint Lucia's national flag, adopted in 1967. Walcott features St. Omer in *Another Life*.

coming in"—so in looking through the altarpiece's vision of the island's people, the speaker can see "the real faces of angels," a divinity in resistance and survival through art in motion ("Sainte Lucie" 49). The painting brings together various aesthetic forms, the music and art of a place Walcott considers home, and this fusion parallels what Walcott tries to express through the intertwining of linguistic and cultural worlds, a braiding of sensibilities.

Brodsky's Acoustic Crossings

From the purposeful rhythms and arrangements of words in the first two sections, to the rendition of a song in the third and fourth sections as a duet between languages, to the musical imagery of the last section, music—in its various forms and meanings—plays an integral part in Walcott's methods of drawing the reader into the consciousness and environment of "Sainte Lucie." For Brodsky, too, musical movement is uniquely significant in his process of translation from Russian to English: specifically, he privileges the comprehensive translation of the verse's pulse and sound, even when it is untranslatable in the same form, to the extent that the process precludes the translatability of other factors in the poem. In "Magic Industry: Joseph Brodsky," Walcott admires the difficulty of self-translation that Brodsky undertakes, the "crossing to another place" requiring the "shadowing of sensibility as the original poem pauses at the frontier" for its creative transposition (136). While the self-translations have "difficulties," Walcott feels "grateful that the knots are there, that the rough nap of the lines is not smoothed over by the flirtation of an even English diction," unlike the "fatal levelling that has so often made [Brodsky's] compatriots, Pasternak and Tsvetayeva . . . acquire in translation the sheen and gloss of greeting cards" ("Magic

Industry" 135).[98] In his seminal essay on translation, Friedrich Schleiermacher delineates two opposing methods for translating: moving the reader toward the writer, thus compelling awareness of the author's dissimilar world, and moving the writer toward the reader, eliminating all evidence of the foreign to present the work as if composed within the reader's own culture (49). For poetry especially, this methodological decision involves a concurrent search for a compromise between the form and content of a text. For Brodsky's translations, the main cause of the tension between these sets of decisions—and embodied in the roughness that Walcott appreciates—is the music of his verse. The sound of his poetry is for him the essential core that he refuses to carry across into English in the same way that he tries to translate the content—and his attachment to the sound has consequences for the translation of the latter.

In a note at the beginning of his collection *A Part of Speech*, Brodsky expresses gratitude to his translators—friends and contemporary writers (several of whom do not read in Russian[99]) including Walcott, Anthony Hecht, George L. Kline, Daniel Weissbort, and Richard Wilbur—for "long hours of work in rendering my poems into English" and for their "indulgence" allowing him the "liberty of reworking some of the translations to bring them closer to the original, though perhaps at the expense of their smoothness" (*A Part of Speech*). Svetlana Boym aptly portrays the plurality of Brodsky's work in English, "written in a

[98] Brodsky expresses similar exasperation with Constance Garnett's domesticating translations of Russian literature: "The reason English-speaking readers can barely tell the difference between Tolstoy and Dostoevsky is that they aren't reading the prose of either one. They're reading Constance Garnett" (Remnick).

[99] Brodsky collaborated with translators such as Walcott and Wilbur with the use of his own literal interlinear translations (Weissbort 29; "A Merciless Judge" 348). Walcott's translation of Brodsky's "Letters from the Ming Dynasty" has been praised as "flawless" ("A Merciless Judge" 348). Weissbort suggests that when "Walcott had a hand in things . . . it was presumably a matter of bringing an auto-translation into contact (or conflict?) with another's poetic sensibility" (38).

foreign language that is not one; it circulates around cultural and linguistic untranslatables and uses syntax that bears resemblance to the poet's mother tongue" (295).

Anglophone critics and poets who have read Brodsky solely in translation diverge radically in whether they appreciate what Brodsky strives to accomplish within English or denounce him as failing in translation, or even being overrated as a poet. Craig Raine, for example, calls Brodsky a "nervous, world-class mediocrity" with "incompetence" in English, and Christopher Reid accuses him of "[e]lementary errors" in English grammar and of occupying a "position of statelessness somewhere between Russian and English, in the neutral zone called Translationese," having come into prominence due only to "an interesting personal history" (Raine 19; Reid). Brodsky's polarizing approaches also affect his own readings of translations. In one scathing critique regarding W.S. Merwin's and Burton Raffel's translations of Osip Mandelstam's poetry, Brodsky claims to find problematic not the "mistakes which abound" but the "absence of sound," the translators' rejection of Mandelstam's meter and rhyme ("Beyond Consolation"). In *From Russian with Love*, Weissbort catalogues the transformations of his own relationship with Brodsky's English poetry. He focuses particularly on the poetic sequence "A Part of Speech": after receiving a prize for his translation of Brodsky's poem, Weissbort learns of the author's revisions of the translation for the 1980 *A Part of Speech* collection. With particular help from Walcott, Brodsky revised segments where he felt that Weissbort's version was "metrically weak," since "all he wanted to achieve was a certain consistency in the metre" (Weissbort 24-25). Weissbort, initially angry and certain that his version was "'more English' than Joseph's," as Brodsky often "substitutes a tortuous and unidiomatic trope for some relatively elegant solution," sent Brodsky numerous accusatory letters and refused to have his name included as

the translator of the revised version, either by himself (as Brodsky hoped) or jointly with Brodsky (55). In time, however, he comes to admire Brodsky's ultimate aim of "bringing his poems, in translation, syntactically and acoustically (metrically, rhythmically, above all), closer to his own Russian" (37).[100]

Walcott characterizes Brodsky's translation process as propelling the original through "a chaos of transformation" ("Magic Industry" 138). Brodsky's self-translated poem "Folk Tune" exemplifies his often chaotic approach to interactions between Russian and English. The poem amalgamates images and phrases from folklore—transformations between human and animal, deadly trials in the wilderness to prove a hero's love—and the poem's rhythm and rhyme evoke the quality of a Slavic folk ballad, or *bylina*. The original poem, indexed by its first line, has no need for a title because its Russian-speaking audience readily recognizes its traditional influences. From the first stanza, the poem establishes a tendency to entangle elements of older oral narratives with aspects of popular culture:

То не Муза воды набирает в рот.
То, должно, крепкий сон молодца берет.
И махнувшая вслед голубым платком
наезжает на грудь паровым катком.
("To ne Muza" 464)

It's not that the Muse feels like clamming up,
it's more like high time for the lad's last nap.
And the scarf-waving lass who wished him the best
drives a steamroller across his chest.
("Folk Tune" 273)

The following roughly literal translation of the first stanza demonstrates the poem's referential complexity, as well as clear deviations in the English version above: "It is not that

[100] The novelist Tatyana Tolstaya describes Brodsky's self-translated poems as "Russian English," "with the accents that find themselves in the same places and coming in the same order as a Russian person speaking English would find" (Weissbort 214).

the Muse is collecting water in her mouth. / It is, surely, deep sleep taking hold of the fine fellow. / And [she who once] waved behind [him] with a light blue kerchief / drives a steamroller over his chest." The "молодец" in the second line conventionally connotes heroism associated with honorable knights or *bogatyrs* in Slavic legends, while the third line plunges into the 1940s with an allusion to "Синий платочек" ("The Blue Kerchief"), a popular wartime song about a soldier pining for his lover, whom he last saw with a blue kerchief she promised to safeguard until his return. Because these references do not carry over with the same associations in translation, Brodsky replaces the images' specificity with a generalized "lad" in the second line and a "scarf-waving lass" in the third. "Collecting water in the mouth" in the first line is an idiom meaning "becoming silent," so "clamming up" makes sense as a literal parallel, but it omits the water imagery (other than its proximity to "clammy") that echoes throughout the poem, including in the fourth stanza:

Я бы заячьи уши пришил к лицу,	I would have hare's ears sewn to my bald head,
наглотался б в лесах за тебя свинцу,	in thick woods for your sake I'd gulp drops of lead,
но и в черном пруду из дурных коряг	and from black gnarled snags in the oil-smooth pond
я бы всплыл пред тобой, как не смог ‹‹Варяг››.	I'd bob up to your face as some *Tirpitz* won't.
(464)	(273)

In this stanza, the speaker proclaims his willingness to take a bullet for the woman he loves—and return from the dead afterward. In the Russian version, the speaker declares, roughly, that he "would have surfaced before [the woman], like the *Varyag* could not." The claim is thematically fitting: many Slavic folk tales involve an evil figure throwing someone into a dark pond, and as the outcome of some quest for true love, that character emerges from

death and returns to a waiting lover. In terms of Brodsky's particular simile, the naval cruiser *Varyag* rose to its fame during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) when the ship's crew, rather than surrendering to the Japanese forces, abandoned and sank the ship. A song commemorating this event and the crew's heroism remains popular today, so Brodsky's allusion is apparent to his Russian audience but likely not to most other readers. Brodsky consequently transforms the *Varyag* in his English translation into "some *Tirpitz*," the name of a World War II German ship destroyed in a fatal bombing. But while both ships sank, the substitution falls short of the original image's heroic, as well as widely recognized, connotations that mirror the folklore narrative of Brodsky's speaker.

Walcott, like all of Brodsky's translators, acknowledges that "[t]he thing Joseph is particularly concerned about is approximating the Russian metre," so a considerable challenge in translating "Folk Tune" is preserving its rhythm and sound while minimizing loss of cultural references and successfully enacting in Anglophone readers the affective responses that Brodsky elicits from Russophone readers ("A Merciless Judge" 348). The possibility exists as well that Brodsky simply does not believe in sufficient translatability from Russian into English, at least visually rather than aurally: "it's been my impression that any experience coming from the Russian realm, even when depicted with photographic precision, simply bounces off the English language, leaving no visible imprint on its surface" ("Less Than One" 30). In my own translation of the poem, I experimented with the overall musical structure and attempted to create a version bearing a stronger resemblance to similar poems in English. I therefore transposed "Folk Tune" into the ballad form within the English tradition, using an abcb rhyme scheme and roughly three or four primary stresses per line.

Below is a comparison of the first and fourth stanzas in translation, with my version on the right:

It's not that the Muse feels like clamming up,
it's more like high time for the lad's last nap.
And the scarf-waving lass who wished him the best
drives a steamroller across his chest.

(. . .)

I would have hare's ears sewn to my bald head,
in thick woods for your sake I'd gulp drops of lead,
and from black gnarled snags in the oil-smooth pond
I'd bob up to your face as some *Tirpitz* won't.
("Folk Tune" 273)

It is not that his Muse is just choking back words,
but that sudden, deep sleep is defeating him.
And the blue-shawled girl who once dreaded farewells
now drives a steamroller into him.

(. . .)

For you, I'd sew hare's ears into my brows
and in the woods, quaff any lead in your path,
and still, from the deadly pond's sinister snags,
emerge before you—a forsaken ship's aftermath.

The meter in my translation is approximate because the number of syllables in Brodsky's lines varies more than in regularly metered poems in English: as Weissbort explains, "Russian words, no matter how long, have only one stress, whereas polysyllabic English words often have secondary stresses or two stresses" (39-40). My method of adjusting the poem's sound, though, diametrically opposes Brodsky's approach. His self-translation preserves the original aabb rhyme scheme, and both of Brodsky's versions of "Folk Tune"

use exclusively masculine rhymes; but while the Russian lines typically end with polysyllabic words, the English endings are all stressed monosyllables, so the end-stopped lines halt more abruptly in translation.

Furthermore, Brodsky's insistence on maintaining the rhyme scheme leads to content substitutions that sometimes dull the sharpness of his resonant images. For example, in the fifth stanza, the lines "Больше длинных жил, чем для них кровей, / да и мысли мертвых кустов кривей," roughly translated as "More long veins than blood for them, / and thoughts more crooked than dead shrubs," become "There are more blue veins than the blood to swell / their dried web, let alone some remote brain cell" ("To ne Muza" 464; "Folk Tune" 273). As Walcott comments, "if you're coming across with a certain metaphor and for the sake of the rhyme you have to change it, that was OK with [Brodsky], if the intent was the same, so long as you found a parallel equivalent, rewriting it almost" ("Almost Medieval Devotion to his Craft" 449). The "dried web" effectively evokes the ominous forest, but the Russian version's uncontrollable twisting of thoughts, reflecting the speaker's fear of aging in the fifth stanza and his struggle to regain a sense of authority over words and language in the second stanza, is markedly more compelling than "some remote brain cell." I tried to capture some of these connections and implications in my own translation of these lines: "There are more long veins than blood flowing within them, / and thoughts, like decaying shrubs, twist astray."

However, read aloud with a focus on the movement of sounds and stresses more than the words' meanings, Brodsky's self-translation is significantly closer than mine to his Russian poem, the original rhythm echoing in the very pulse of the words. Weissbort refers to the results of Brodsky's self-translations as a radical, "experimental blending," one that

has "less to do with semantics than with an acoustical pattern. Joseph brings the two languages closer together, as it were, enabling Russian to *speak* English, syntax, accent and all" (55). The musical elements of Brodsky's poetry register more in recitation than in silent reading. Recordings of Brodsky's own poetry deliveries are reminiscent of chanting trope. Weissbort notes that many compare Brodsky's recitation to "liturgical chanting" because he "oscillates before settling onto individual tones" (43). Brodsky's poems also often use non-standard syntactical units, such as prepositions and particles, for end rhymes, an unusual form of enjambment that mitigates the threat of a mechanical effect from regularity, as well as continuously defers the possibility of conclusiveness. This stylistic feature is aurally discernable during Brodsky's readings: he often holds on to a note unexpectedly rather than coming to a full stop, and the pitch of his voice rises more frequently than falls, so the energy of his words seems constantly to move up and forward rather than roll downward to a full stop. Like Brodsky's distinctive use of similes, the implications of all of his phrases are open-ended, continuing past the apparent restraints of the poem's structure.

Brodsky compares form and meaning to a vessel filled with liquid, insisting that a translator cannot sacrifice poetic form without damaging the content's meaning: "Break the vessel, and the liquid will leak out" ("Beyond Consolation"). While my translation tries to reshape the vessel, Brodsky is willing to adjust the poetic liquid, the content that is not as legible for a non-Russian-speaking audience, but he is adamant about maintaining the traditional musical framework through the rhythm and the rhyme scheme, regardless of the risk of rejection in translation.[101] Brodsky is *not* seeking an equivalent English folk tune, but

[101] Walcott admires that in another self-translated poem, "In Italy," the "translated Russian risks, in its usually hexametrical design, a metre which English associates with the comic, the parodic, or the ironic. There is no modern English or American poet who will take such risks—being utterly serious with feminine endings, of

is rather teaching his English-speaking audience the sounds of Russian folk culture, appealing to the ear rather than purely to cognitive comprehension. In Walcott's words, Brodsky strives to "give the one work, simultaneously, two mother tongues," and he achieves this hybrid condition by regarding the aim of translation not as a complete transmission of a culture from one linguistic world into another, but rather, as Bhabha calls it, an "encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and hybridity that marks the identification with culture's difference" ("Magic Industry" 136; Bhabha 321). Bhabha's description likewise applies to Walcott's artistic process in "Sainte Lucie," except Walcott makes explicit the interactions among the various languages *within* the work itself.

The Linguistic Conditions of Exile

Through the layering of language in his poetry, viscerally marked by a history of colonial rupture, Walcott draws the reader into the intricacies of local polylingualism, refuting the idea of what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls "the mediation of a universal, homogenizing middle term" through which one can easily navigate between the worlds of cultures and languages (85). "Sainte Lucie," with its concurrent pain and beauty, responds to the 'well-meaning' writers who, as Walcott discusses with disdain in his 1992 Nobel Lecture, lament the "unfinished," still "evolving" cities of the Caribbean ("The Antilles" 76). In his speech, Walcott denies the traveler and the exile the right to judge the proportions of the Caribbean city, which is to be measured solely "by its own citizenry and architecture": "To be told you are not yet a city or a culture requires this response. I am not your city or your culture" (76-77). Azade Seyhan similarly draws attention to modern diasporic writers' need

attempting to reach the sublime and noble without the pseudo-humility of the dying fall, the retractable conceit. Double rhymes and long lines threaten the contemporary poet in English" ("Magic Industry" 143).

to "reclaim cultural heritages whose emotional and intellectual force had been suppressed by a monolingual and monocultural parochialism that masqueraded as successful acculturation" (20-21). Walcott impresses upon his audience the fruitlessness, as well as danger, of imagining an exterior system of measurement for another tradition, of presuming simplicity of comparability and classification.

In Brodsky's poetry, the history and culture of his country are likewise subjects laced with both admiration and pain, intensified by his rejection, punishment, and deportation, and the linguistic is intricately interwoven with the personal for him: exile from his country implies exile from his culture and language as well as from his family. Walcott recalls seeing the "depth of the wounding of Joseph when he was going absolutely crazy, trying to reach his father and the mother . . . How do you forgive a country when it prevents you from seeing your dying father" ("Almost Medieval Devotion to his Craft" 451). Recreating memories and narratives in English—improvisationally, through fragments of various times and places[102] from the country that exiled him—provides Brodsky with a new approach to writing about his parents. In a sense, for Brodsky, the new language does not further "their captivity, their reduction to insignificance," but instead gives them a "margin of freedom": "English grammar may at least prove to be a better escape route from the chimneys of the state crematorium than the Russian" ("In a Room and a Half" 460). Boym similarly relates the process of composing in a foreign language to accessing an alternative world: "Foreign verbs of motion can be the only way of transporting the ashes of familial memory. After all, a foreign language is like art—an alternative reality, a potential world" (Boym 307). Though

[102] Brodsky explains in "Less Than One" that lack of linearity and certainty is a defining factor of his craft: in banking, one accumulates expertise and then receives a profit, "[w]hereas in the business of writing what one accumulates is not expertise but uncertainties . . . I would be lying if I resorted to chronology or to anything that suggests a linear process" ("Less Than One" 17).

not prone to discussing his Jewish background or the effects of anti-Semitism on his life in the Soviet Union (in general, he characterizes it as another symptom of the overall political system),[103] Brodsky does address the topic with greater depth through the lens of language. In "Less Than One," Brodsky recalls that his first lie, when he was seven years old, was pretending he did not know he was Jewish when filling out an application for a school library membership. Brodsky explains that he was not ashamed of his identity as a Jew, but he "was ashamed of the word 'Jew' itself—in Russian, '*yevrei*,'" which rarely appeared in print and was mostly used aloud as a curse word: "When one is seven one's vocabulary proves sufficient to acknowledge this word's rarity, and it is utterly unpleasant to identify oneself with it; somehow it goes against one's sense of prosody" ("Less Than One" 8). For both Brodsky and Walcott, with their keen sensitivity to the sounds and implications of words, the process of translation, though entangled with difficult associations, forges an imaginative space of linguistic intersection for the recollecting, rewriting, and decentering of collective and personal memories and narratives.

In "The Condition We Call Exile," Brodsky recognizes the threat of unconstrained nostalgia, of living fully in a different time, as especially pertinent to a writer in exile, in whom retrospection plays an excessive role, "overshadowing his reality and dimming the future into something thicker than its usual pea soup . . . doomed to a limited audience abroad, he cannot help pining for the multitudes, real or imagined, left behind" (27). Boym emphasizes the fluctuation of nostalgia in Brodsky's work: "Instead of obsessive homecoming, Brodsky reenacts a ritual of fleeing home, of repeated leave-taking, of

[103] Weissbort writes that in some way, Brodsky's "Jewishness was a given," but "better not stated, since it could so easily lead to identification with victimhood" (63). Weissbort wonders if that fear also prevented Brodsky from ever re-printing his only poem with overtly Jewish content, "The Jewish Cemetery in Leningrad" (63).

retaining the past in one's memory in order to never come face to face with it" (288). Translation, and his approach to poetry in general, allows for Brodsky the repeated back-and-forth movement between future and past, between existing and potential realities and worlds. Brodsky states in an interview that "if there is any deity to me, it's language" (Birkerts interview 90). He elaborates on his spiritual understanding of the construction, potential, and form of language in "Footnote to a Poem," an essay on Marina Tsvetaeva's "Novogodnee,"[104] in which he defines a poet as "someone for whom every word is not the end but the beginning of a thought; someone who, having uttered *rai* ('paradise') or *tot svet* ('next world'), must mentally take the subsequent step of finding a rhyme for it. Thus *krai* ('edge/realm') and *otsvet* ('reflection') emerge, and the existence of those whose life has ended is thus prolonged" ("Footnote to a Poem" 265). Rhymed words, then, are not purely for sound, but for the very extension of language, and therefore worlds and lives, offering the ability to constantly shape new mosaics out of prior pieces and avoid getting stuck in one strain of thought or memory.

In *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition*, Yasemin Yildiz asserts that due to "multiple, and even contradictory, attachments" that people often have to languages, "we need to reimagine subjects as open to crisscrossing linguistic identifications, if not woven from the fabric of numerous linguistic sources . . . Languages do indeed relate to identities, but not in any predetermined, predictable way" (205). Brodsky's linguistic entanglements are due in part to the consequences of involuntary banishment, forced to be outside his linguistic domain. Walcott discusses the literary and linguistic circumstances of Brodsky's political condition: "banished from his country, and in a sense banished from his

[104] "New Year's"

language: the conditions are the same. Banishment from your country implies that you are forbidden to use that language . . . and that is the full and complete intention of banishment" ("A Merciless Judge" 343). Brodsky experienced a spatial displacement that, with the inability to return, was simultaneously a temporal shift: his memories of particular locations in the Soviet Union became frozen in his memory—frozen in time—so space and time are tightly interwoven in his poetry. Brodsky's poem "Kellomäki"[105] expresses this time-space relationship through an extended personification:

С точки зрения времени, нет ‹‹тогда››:	. . . From time's point of view,
есть только ‹‹там››. И ‹‹там››, напрягая	there is no 'then,' only 'there.' And 'there,'
взор, память бродит по комнатам в	through
сумерках, точно вор,	empty rooms, memory roams like a thief at dusk,
(. . .)	(. . .)
запуская руку к себе в карман.	—picking the pocket which is its own.
(Келломяки 462)	(Kellomäki 315)

"Time" or "memory" is personified as a thief—looping around and stealing from itself as the speaker moves through the past in his mind. Space and time fuse, bleeding into each other, in spite of Brodsky's frequent insistence on their differences[106]: what would appear to be "then" is really "there," paused within a particular instance. From the perspective of Brodsky as an exiled emigrant, the convergence of time and space is logical. Brodsky writes profusely about Saint Petersburg, but he has no concrete knowledge of the city as it exists after his departure from the Soviet Union—all he has is the "there" that existed within his past

[105] Translated by Brodsky

[106] In an interview with Eva Burch and David Chin, Joseph Brodsky calls time "the only thing in the world," "much more interesting than space . . . if I were to describe the thing I'm interested in, it is what time does to a man" (Burch and Chin 59).

experiences of the city. What would be "then" remains his only possible "now." Boym depicts the nostalgic's blurring of time and space in a similar manner: "The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition" (Boym xv). Valentina Polukhina argues that much of what Brodsky does in his poems is "imitating time's merciless effect on us" ("Similarity in Disparity" 167). Brodsky's self-translations illustrate a longing for his "there," the place from which he was forcefully expelled, through familiar music, tropes, literary allusions—cultural elements separate from the state as a bureaucratic entity that displaced him. His complex nostalgia materializes in his attachments to the rhythms and sounds of Russian language in poetry—and he is drawn to the power of poetic language to structure time through its form.

The ability of language to counter time points back to Brodsky's love of a particular passage in W.H. Auden's "In Memory of W.B. Yeats": "Time that is intolerant / Of the brave and innocent . . . Worships language and forgives / Everyone by whom it lives" ("To Please a Shadow" 362). In his essay "To Please a Shadow," Brodsky deduced that if "time worships language, it means that language is greater, or older, than time" (363). But if this is so, "where then does language come from? And then isn't language a repository of time? . . . And isn't a song, or a poem, or indeed a speech itself, with its caesuras, pauses, spondees, and so forth, a game language plays to restructure time?" (363). If the formed speech of a poem is a linguistic game that restructures time, then the poet has the ability to be flexible with time rather than purely fear its effects on man. In "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Walter Benjamin argues that historical materialists must view the present as "not a transition," but a state "in which time stands still . . . the present in which [the historical

materialist] himself is writing history" (Benjamin 262). To replace the model of history as a determined course of "homogeneous, empty time," Benjamin visualizes history as a composition of indefinite breaks of stopped time, recognizing the present's potential to "blast open the continuum of history" and radically reread it (261). Bhabha, in his analysis of Walcott's "Names," locates the poem within such a moment of "stopped time." In the first half of the poem, which examines the interrelationships among words, memory, and self-identity, the speaker declares, "I began with no memory, / I began with no future, / but I looked for that moment / when the mind was halved by a horizon" ("Names" 32). He asks whether in this "moment," through colonization, he and the "goldsmith from Benares," the "stone-cutter from Canton," and the "bronzesmith from Benin" all "melted into a mirror, / leaving our souls behind," to exist now as mere reflections of the words and circumstances that others forced upon them (32). As it traces the Europeans' violent imposition of their own names and nouns on the spaces they claimed to possess, Walcott's poem shifts—or "blasts open history"—with the response to these names: "The African acquiesced, / repeated, and changed them" (34). Walcott develops more fully the speaker's concern of becoming only a reflection or imitation of a language and culture in his essay "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?" Walcott theorizes mimicry not as the fate of unoriginality but as an "improvisation" that "supercedes its traditional origins," an act of imagination rooted in repetition but resulting in invention (9). The process of reimagining through existing fragments, in both art and day-to-day survival, allows perpetual regeneration, a resistance against the threat of melting into a stagnant image.

Brodsky's poetic sequence "Lullaby of Cape Cod," or "Колыбельная Трескового Мыса" ("Kolybel'naia Treskovogo Mysa"), exemplifies his linguistic experimentation and

improvisation as an interrelated stance against stagnation and homogenization, both in the function of English in the poem's Russian version and in the way the Russian carries over into the English version (translated by Hecht, presumably in collaboration with Brodsky). Like the image of the apple in "Sainte Lucie" that spirals through various iterations in the poem, images of fish and sharp cape-like descriptions recur throughout "Lullaby of Cape Cod." Both poets begin with simple, recognizable names and shapes as starting points from which to explore a multiplicity of forms, terms, and languages. As the transliterated title suggests, rather than preserving Cape Cod as a proper name, Brodsky translates its parts literally into something like "lullaby of the cape of cods" in Russian, a choice ironically absent from the title's translation back into English. Weissbort argues that Brodsky "phrased English, as though it were Russian," but here, he phrases the Russian as though it was English, with a result as strange grammatically as are some of his English translation choices (Weissbort 213).

Another similarly interlingual interaction occurs in a stanza that offers an interpretive account of human evolution, as well as improvises on the "cod" of Cape Cod:

Человек выживает, как фиш на	. . . man survives like a fish,
песке: она	stranded, beached, but intent
уползает в кусты и, встав на	on adapting itself to some deep, cellular wish,
кривые ноги,	wriggling toward bushes, forming hinged leg-struts, then
уходит, как от пера—строка,	to depart (leaving a track like the scrawl of a pen)
в недра материка.	for the interior, the heart of the continent.
("Колыбельная Трескового	("Lullaby of Cape Cod" 114)
Мыса" 104)	

The portrayal of a human adapting to unfamiliar circumstances is reminiscent of the exiled writer that Brodsky describes in "The Condition We Call Exile," thrust from home and forced to learn a new way to survive. In the first line of the Russian stanza, Brodsky uses the transliterated English word "фиш" ("fish") rather than the standard "рыба" ("ryba"), marking the foreignness of the environment for the fish—sand, dry land—in a way that resonates with Brodsky's personal experience: what he knew as "ryba" had to become a "fish." Notably, as this play on words does not exist in the English, the third line of the English version that explicitly describes adaptation "to some deep, cellular wish" does not exist in the Russian. Like the fish leaving a trail of pen-like marks, the exiled speaker hopes to keep surviving through the tracks of writing, and to leave those tracks behind for the sake of others: "it has to do with the necessity of telling about oppression," as well as with embodying the "disheartening idea that a freed man is not a free man, that liberation is just the means of attaining freedom and is not synonymous with it" ("The Condition We Call Exile" 34).

One of the general themes of "Lullaby of Cape Cod" is precisely this widespread lack of freedom, a feeling of claustrophobic sameness across the places the speaker lives in spite of geographical and political differences. In "Less Than One," Brodsky writes that life "never looked to me like a set of clearly marked transitions; rather, it snowballs, and the more it does, the more one place (or one time) looks like another" ("Less Than One"18). The "lullaby" is an attempt to cure the speaker's insomnia on a stuffy, humid night in part through the lulling monotony that characterizes the poem: a repetition of words, phrases,

images, and rhythms.[107] As the speaker describes the same objects, plants, and problems that exist in every region and across the ocean, the one-word sentence "Stifling" ("Духота") repeats ten times across the stanzas. The poem's global vision reduces the world into components that merely repeat and multiply, echoes that keep reverberating, as if all in the same location that eventually wears away:

> Духота. Неподвижность огромных растений, далекий лай.
> Голова, покачнувшись, удерживает на край
> памяти сползшие номера телефонов, лица.
> В настоящих трагедиях, где занавес—часть плаща,
> умирает не гордый герой, но, по швам треща
> от износу, кулиса. ("Колыбельная" 101)

> Stifling. Great motionless plants. A distant bark.
> A nodding head now jerks itself upright
> to keep faces and phone numbers from sliding into the dark
> and off the precarious edge of memory.
> In genuine tragedy
> it's not the fine hero that finally dies, it seems,
> but, from constant wear and tear, night after night,
> the old stage set itself, giving way at the seams. ("Lullaby" 111-112)

In this passage, time tears apart space, the "stage" of the "hero's" evanescing memories from elsewhere. The English translation obscures the implication in the fourth Russian line that the

[107] Musically, outside of the references to lullabies, there is also a cod in the poem's eighth section that sings to the speaker about time and space.

stage is itself the "hero" or protagonist undergoing trials, or at least inescapably entangled with the hero's tragic journey: "В настоящих трагедиях, где занавес— часть плаща," or, loosely translated, "In real tragedies, where the curtain—is part of the [hero's] cape." Perhaps Brodsky is also thinking (in Russian) about the multiple meanings of "cape" (in English). The third line alludes to Mandelstam's "Leningrad,"[108] in which the speaker returns to St. Petersburg, but what was once the city of his youth had been changed and renamed, and all who were once friends have since departed: "I'm not willing yet, Petersburg, to perish in slumber: / It is you who retains all my telephone numbers. / I have plenty of addresses, Petersburg, yet, / Where I'm certain to find the voice of the dead"[109] ("Петербург, я еще не хочу умирать: / У тебя телефонов моих номера. / Петербург, У меня еще есть адреса, / По которым найду мертвецов голоса") (Mandelstam 56-57).[110] Time has erased the bodies who once owned these phone numbers and devastated what was once the speaker's home, turning it into a mere extension of other unfamiliar space—as every place has become for the speaker in "Lullaby of Cape Cod": "there's nowhere to go. / Elsewhere is nothing more than a far-flung strew / of stars, burning away" in the distance as time drives forward ("То есть, дальше некуда. Дальше — ряд / звезд. И они горят") ("Lullaby" 112; "Колыбельная" 102).

The condition of the speaker's exile reveals that any kind of "elsewhere," the "paradise men seek," is "a dead end, a worn-out, battered cape / bent into crooked shape"

[108] Leningrad is Brodsky's birthplace, the name of which he "abhor[s] . . . the city which long ago the ordinary people nicknamed simply 'Peter'—from Petersburg" ("Less Than One" 4). Like Mandelstam's speaker, Brodsky nostalgically writes about it as the "most beautiful city on the face of the earth," with an "immense gray river," "immense gray sky," "magnificent palaces," and a "civilization. Which ceased to exist" (32).

[109] Translated by Andrey Kneller

[110] The poem was published in 1930. St. Petersburg's name was changed to Petrograd (1914-1924) and then to Leningrad (1924-1991).

(“ибо рай — тупик. / Мыс, вдающийся в море”) – there is only time, “Chronos and thin air,” beyond the known (“Lullaby” 116; “Колыбельная” 106). But at the end of the poem, after zooming further and further out to long monotonous stretches of land, a longer sea, “countless days; / and nights,” “angels in paradise, demons down in hell,” and “longer than all, / the queer, vertiginous thought of Nothingness,” Brodsky abruptly zooms back inward:

. . . но глаз	But the eye can’t see that far. In fact, it must
вряд ли проникнет туда, и сам	close down its lid to catch a glimpse of things.
закрывается, чтобы увидеть вещи.	Only this way—in sleep—can the eye adjust
Только так—во сне—и дано глазам	to proper vision. Whatever may be in store,
к вещи привыкнуть. И сны те вещи	for good or ill, in the dreams that such sleep brings
или зловещи— смотря кто спит.	depends on the sleeper. A cod stands at the door.
И дверью треска скрипит.	(“Lullaby” 118)

(“Колыбельная” 108)

After expanding into the vastness of everything and Nothingness, Brodsky takes his audience behind the eyelid, which is finally closing after the long lullaby, bringing the immensity within to better see and focus. The concluding line differs in the two versions. “A cod stands at the door” suggests the image of the cod that has been present throughout the lullaby now waits at the edge of the speaker’s dreams. In Russian, however, the line ends with sound-based wordplay: “И дверью треска скрипит,” or transliterated, “I dver'iu treska skripit.” “Treska” means “cod,” while “tresk” means “crackle,” and “skripit” means “creaking,” so the line grammatically indicates that “a cod creaks [open] the door” but simultaneously sounds like “a crackling creaks the door.” After the telescopic vision of an overwhelmingly giant, monotonous world, encompassing the constantly recurring tragedies of empires and

histories and suggesting the futility of hoping for anything better, what calms the speaker are the noises imagined through wordplay—a continuation of the sounds of the lullaby, of the cradle's[111] creaking from earlier in the poem, through the language most familiar to him.

Brodsky elucidates his faith in the sounds of poetic language as the sole way of facing time and nostalgia in the penultimate stanza of the eponymous poetic sequence of *A Part of Speech*, the translation of which led to Weissbort's one-sided argument with Brodsky:

...и при слове ‹‹грядущее›› из	…and when "the future" is uttered, swarms of
русского языка	mice
выбегают черные мыши и всей оравой	rush out of the Russian language and gnaw a piece
отгрызают от лакомого куска	of ripened memory which is twice
памяти, что твой сыр дырявой.	as hole-ridden as real cheese.
После стольких зим уже безразлично,	After all these years it hardly matters who
что	or what stands in the corner, hidden by heavy
или кто стоит в углу у окна за	drapes,
шторой,	and your mind resounds not with a seraphic 'doh,'
и в мозгу раздается не неземное	only their rustle. Life, that no one dares
‹‹до››,	to appraise, like that gift horse's mouth,
но ее шуршание. Жизнь, которой,	bares its teeth in a grin at each
как дареной вещи, не смотрят в пасть,	encounter. What gets left of a man amounts
обнажает зубы при каждой встрече.	to a part. To his spoken part. To a part of speech.
От всего человека вам остается часть	("A Part of Speech" 105)
речи. Часть речи вообще. Часть речи.	

[111] In Russian, the words are connected: lullaby is "kolybel'naia" and cradle is "kolybel'."

(“ Часть речи” 93)

The stanza establishes a number of striking metaphors: the future as mice, the *word* future as mice, the Russian language as a mouse’s habitat, memory as cheese riddled with holes, life as a teeth-baring horse, and man as a linguistic or literary feature. Polukhina describes the power of juxtaposed contrasting images in Brodsky’s poetry: “The inclusion of words and numbers into the similarity and opposition of spiritual and material, abstract and concrete, living and inanimate allows Brodsky to remove the boundaries of established conceptual orders, to reinterpret some of the most fundamental existential situations” (“Similarity in Disparity” 168). Through his similes and metaphors, Brodsky increases the number of semantic classes, which at the poetic level “extend[s] the boundaries of poetic language,” and at the conceptual level, leads him to continuously change “the point of observation,” constantly employing “‘linguistic’ and ‘mathematical’ analogies to invoke a further abstraction of both the material and the spiritual” (“Similarity in Disparity” 170-171). In the case of the passage from “A Part of Speech,” Brodsky explains that the memorable vision of mice rushing out of language and eating the past originates in sound: “the phonetics of the Russian word for ‘future’ . . . phonetically resembles the word for ‘rodents.’ Therefore, I spin it off into the idea that the future, that is, the word itself, gnaws—or whatever it is, sinks its teeth—into the cheese of memory” (Burch and Chin interview 59). The word “future” itself becomes material and eats away at memories, dulling their clarity, perhaps even through writing about the memories in the future. What is written may become life itself: the “Life” that “bares its teeth” parallels the chewing mouth of each gnawing mouse. This interpretation fits the multidimensional ending of the stanza well: “От всего человека вам остается часть / речи. Часть речи вообще. Часть речи,” or in rough translation, “From the whole person

you are left with a part / of speech. A part of speech in general. A part of speech." Significantly, the English version includes the clarification, "To his spoken part," whereas the Russian implies the oral quality of Brodsky's statement: all that remains is a part of speech—but in recitation, the sound of that speech. If we expand the meaning of "part of speech," then people are absorbed into the language of which they become a part, and thus a part of its literary history (though *which* language becomes a question in the case of the exiled writer). What lingers is a part of what was, but what is *formed* is a part of the large, collective memory that the person joins afterward. Polukhina describes "A Part of Speech" as simultaneously an expression of the "psychological and linguistic situation of the poet in exile" as well as "a word about the word, a dialogue with other writers," a community that extends past the poet in solitude that typically figures into Brodsky's poems (*Joseph Brodsky: A Poet for Our Time* 179).

Cassin's book on home and homelessness ends as follows: "When are we ever at home? When we are welcomed, we ourselves along with those who are close to us, together with our language, our languages" (Cassin 63). Tracking Walcott's and Brodsky's unsettling of language in their oscillation between cultural contexts recalls Glissant's statement in *Poetics of Relation* that "the first thing exported by the conqueror was his language . . . Relation, in contrast, is spoken multilingually. Going beyond the impositions of economic forces and cultural pressures, Relation rightfully opposes the totalitarianism of any monolingual intent" (*Poetics of Relation* 19). Walcott's approximate mode of linguistic and cultural translation refuses full submergence within monolingual expectations. Rather than sacrificing form to preserve meaning, Brodsky flexibly substitutes the particularities of references and allusions, yet he adamantly maintains prosody typical of Russian poems but

unpopular in modern English verse. The two writers' poems evoke musical patterns specific to their own cultures, and both suggest the inseparability of self-identity from the poetic shaping of language. In spite of forces of history and politics attempting to throw both poets out of their own languages, these languages not only inform but provide the driving energy in their poems, even those crafted specifically for the English reader, whom they invite and teach how to enter their poetic realms. Through the methodologies and practices within them, Walcott's and Brodsky's poems articulate and crystallize into alternative, more relational literary mappings—marking affiliation among the worlds they interlace but also maintaining the differences. In lieu of adopting the premises of a philological tradition that partitions linguistic environments, the poets emphasize—and train their readers to adapt to—relations and multiplicities: they lay out languages adjacently, contingently, revealing the tensions in the spaces between linguistic and cultural worlds rather than allowing any one world to absorb another.

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