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Introduction

"Stages," the preface to Amiri Baraka's *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones* (1984), begins by pairing the retrospective focus of the genre with an essayistic quality. Asserting that "Stages here are Steps and attempts at evaluation (essays, assays)," the preface then expands the autobiography's conventional focus from an individual to a collective concern, as Baraka notes how "these stages are like essays trying to help us understand and illuminate a portion of the American experience."

> Within that American experience is the history and life of the African American Nation; a piece of the whole, yet *unintegrated* into that whole, black noncitizens whose only forward direction must be toward Self-Determination!
> For me, being here has always been a condition of struggle and, hopefully, growth.[1]

The notion of stages becomes a fitting descriptor for a life such as Baraka's, which comprises several contrasting episodes in a complex arc of historical transition. After spending his youth in Newark, Baraka's life began a phase of frequent displacement. Shifting from one stage to another, he would embark on several contrasting projects, spending a brief time at Howard University before joining the army, later getting discharged and taking up residence in The Village. There he began to build a network of collaboration with the most prominent groups and individuals of the New American Poetry—the Beats, the New York School, Black Mountain, and the San Francisco Renaissance. Toward the final days of his residence in the Village, Baraka acquired the public notoriety that marked him throughout most of his career as a black nationalist; he assumed an overtly political and confrontational stance and moved to Harlem to found the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School (BART/S), in what is generally described as his revolutionary nationalist phase. He then returned home to Newark to begin building a

[1] Amiri Baraka, *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1997), xxvii.

community through several cultural and social projects. This stage of Baraka's life is associated with cultural nationalism due in part to his attachment to Kawaida, Maulana Karenga's doctrine, which advocated practicing what were perceived as traditional African ways of life.[2] After his disenchantment with Karenga, he adopted a Marxist perspective aligned with the Third World working class, which had nonetheless been present in his thinking since years before. It is at this point that we catch up with him, when he writes his *Autobiography* in the mid seventies.

Referring to him as "perhaps the most polyvalent American poet and critic of the twentieth century," Dorothy J. Wang characterizes Baraka's work as "endlessly inventive over the decades, never standing still."[3] Wang's description echoes Baraka's own understanding of the tradition he affiliated with, a tradition that finds prominence with blues music and is characterized by a perpetual returning to black experience; Baraka termed this tradition, evoking his own artistic ambitions, "the changing same": "The Negro's music changed as he changed, reflecting shifting attitudes or (and this is equally important) *consistent attitudes within changed contexts*."[4] With the changing same, Baraka conceptualized historical variations and continuities in black expression as registers of the same collective experience.

The interpretation I offer of Baraka's work and thought foregrounds this episodic and essayistic practice in relation to his struggles and to the changing same of black experience. Poetically and politically, Baraka's life can be interpreted as an experimental search for the proper position to reflect the experience of black people and to struggle against their oppression.

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[2] While noting the difficulties in establishing clear-cut categories for the proliferating groups of Black Power organizations, James Edward Smethurst describes revolutionary nationalism as an elastic term characterized by an open engagement with Marxism. Cultural nationalism relies on a self-proclaimed national culture and the search for self-determination within a community. James Edward Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
[3] Dorothy Wang, *Thinking Its Presence* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2013), 21.
[4] LeRoi Jones, *Blues People*, (New York: Morrow Quill, 1963), 153.

All the different stages of his life, in Baraka's own account, belong within an ampler US experience, within a whole that contains an African American fragment in which his life unfolded. Yet for a life of struggle such as his, the depiction of frames within frames, part and whole, is troubled by the kind of belongingness that black noncitizenship poses. Black noncitizenship strains the relation between black individuals and a general US experience, particularly as it concerns the presence and mediation of an African American nation. What is the constitution of this collective of citizens-noncitizens with regards to the US? How to account for the historical direction of an unintegrated social and/or national body heading toward self-determination within the constraints of another nation demanding belongingness and obligation? What is the historical, conceptual, and rhetorical purchase of formulating African American collectivity, or any other minority for that matter, as a nation within a nation?

Baraka's complex and shifting, even contradictory, theorizations of community and self-determination describe the search for an aesthetic and political register of belonging: I call this register the anational. As a polyvalent writer and a prominent figure of the period after the civil rights movements, Baraka offers a paradigmatic case of refusal to the multicultural terms of national belonging put forth by the US. By multicultural belonging in the US I refer to how, during the last decades of the twentieth century, the nation underwent a reformation that aimed to incorporate the dissenting minorities of the civil rights movements under a single nation state.[5] This dissertation's understanding of the nation's official embrace of multiculturalism amounts to a strategy seeking what Howard Winant terms "the capacity to *incorporate opposition*."[6] In other

[5] Throughout this dissertation I refer to and render the concept of a "nation state" without a hyphen in order to unfix the conceptual assumptions that conventionally bind the two ideas together. Beyond noting the separate nature of each of these two entities, my research scrutinizes the specific function of the nation as mediating between a governing state and a governed population.
[6] Howard Winant, *The World is a Ghetto* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 174.

words, official multiculturalism refers to the hegemony of the nation, as well as to its reactionary response to the insurgent demands of the civil rights movements—a response aimed at co-opting, not redressing their demands.

By way of the plurality of these civil rights movements in relation to the multicultural nation, I anticipate the multiplicity of histories that concern this dissertation. In each chapter I interpret exemplary works from intercalated minoritized contexts which mobilize expression to acquire meaningful political agency against the constraints of the nation and the entangled persistence of colonialism and racism. Baraka's polyvalence is illustrative of the expanding horizon of possibilities that become available to other minority poets who are unwilling to consent to the nation—yet it doesn't exhaust the available strategies for the withdrawal of consent. Through the poetry and poetics of Gloria Anzaldúa, Jennifer Tamayo, Myung Mi Kim, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Simon J. Ortiz, Craig Santos Perez, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, and Fred Moten, I trace a constellation of political potentials and drives toward formal innovation that turn away from the nation and cohere through their own anational concerns and logics, each attuned to their collective histories. Within this dissertation's broadly described period of official multiculturalism in the US, my inquiry dwells on questions of alternative belonging and political agency, exploring expressions aimed at inciting and fostering communities beyond the available forms, poetic and political, sanctioned by the US and the nation.

Throughout the dissertation, my analyses of these poetries and poetics rely on the concept of the nation form as a lens to interpret together the political and aesthetic registers of form. As a preliminary exposition, by nation form I refer to a set of historical and geographical configurations deployed with the purpose of subsuming a specific collectivity under the spatiotemporal logic of the nation. Although complex and shifting, the spatiotemporal logic of

the nation becomes most manifest as it dictates the limits of inclusion and exclusion of a collectivity. Such an active self-fashioning describes how the nation's insides and outsides are continually projected as fixed, even though they continue to shift historically. A recurring concern in each of the chapters is tracing how the nation constantly disguises its historical becoming, its shifting exclusions and inclusions, as its perennial being.

The nation form foregrounds the nation's inclusive and perennial appearance while it simultaneously hides its excluding function—which in the US entails distorting the reality of the nation to its complete opposite. As Adam Goodman points out, "During the last century, federal officials have deported more people from the land of freedom and opportunity than they have allowed to remain on a permanent basis." The latter not only highlights how these "various means of expulsion have been a central feature of American politics and life since 1900, and particularly in the post-World War II era," but also the importance of the nation form in disguising and sustaining the opposite appearance.[7]

Likewise, the nation form is instrumental in coordinating the nation's function within the prevailing capitalist system. As Michael Taussig argues, the modern state relies on a constant rhetorical and tropological circulation that animates the nation, gives it a form, as it facilitates the global flows of capital within and beyond its demarcations.[8] One line of reasoning this dissertation follows is that the nation form played a historically significant role in the naturalization of both capitalism and the modern state; in Harry Harootunian's phrasing, the nation served as capital's factotum, facilitating its dispersion and development across the globe.[9] In accordance to this description, my interpretations trace the ways in which labor participates in

[7] Adam Goodman, *The Deportation Machine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 1, 6.
[8] Michael Taussig, *The Magic of The State*, (London: Routledge, 1997).
[9] Harry Harootunian, *Marx After Marx: History and Time in the Expansion of Capitalism*, (Columbia University Press, New York: 2015), 35–6.

the production and reproduction of capitalism and the nation. Such an approach lets us conceive of the labor that constitutes the nation form in more nuanced ways, particularly by foregrounding its incorporative drive, its nationalizing dynamics, which can be understood through the concept of formal subsumption. Originally, for Marx, formal subsumption defined a specific moment in capital's appropriation of labor wherein the previous modes of production began to be transformed without fully assimilating into capitalism. Marx referred to the formal subsumption of labor

> because it is only *formally* distinct from earlier modes of production on whose foundations it arises spontaneously (or is introduced), either when the producer is self-employing or when the immediate producers are forced to deliver surplus-value to others. All that changes is that compulsion is applied, i.e. the method by which surplus labor is extorted.[10]

For Marx, "formal" change did not entail a substantial historical or economic shift, but rather a superficial adjustment brought about by coercive compulsion. For Harootunian, formal subsumption registers the different temporalities inherent to capitalism's spread over the planet, demarcating its outsides.

In this light, formal subsumption can be understood as charting the incorporative drive of the nation, as capital's factotum, as well as its incapacity to incorporate every population it encounters. Along these lines, J. K. Gibson-Graham argues that capital's overdetermination is a repercussion of assuming its complete overtaking of human activities; formal subsumption points to the epistemological adjustments necessary to work through overdetermination and its ensuing hypervisibility by charting the limits of capitalism and, by extension, the nation.[11] In an

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[10] Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1990), 1025.

[11] By overdetermination I refer to the psychoanalytic concept as adopted by Marxist theory to qualify capitalism's conditions of existence. With the acceptance of capitalism's hegemony, J. K. Gibson-Graham argues, its concrete manifestations become elusive, never actualizing in singular events or processes. Gibson-Graham quotes Althusser to describe capitalism's overdetermination by noting how "the 'existing conditions' of capitalism are its 'conditions of existence'" in such a way that "a capitalist site or practice

observation more specific to poetry and poetics, Edgar Garcia argues that formal subsumption can be utilized "to show how poetics in particular bear world systems other than the capitalist one, which logically integrate events, materials, and people into themselves."[12] Anational poetics thereby unfold in the possible worlds made visible by the lens of formal subsumption, attending to these other communal logics occluded by the hypervisibility of capitalism and the nation.

By scrutinizing these processes that contribute to the nation's overdetermination, we can observe the different poetic strategies that minority writers employ to subvert them. In all of the cases considered in this dissertation, poetic form affords the required resilience to convey the distinctive experiences of minorities with regards to the US. Through an explorative and innovative impetus, these poets employ and create forms that respond to their separate histories and cultures. In the process, they articulate and practice their own poetics to express the singularity of their experience in relation to social and political forms beyond the purview of the nation. Poetic form, in this regard, is the axis coordinating aesthetics and politics, expression and experience.

The anational potentials discernible in these poetries unfold through the occlusions of the nation, which lends them a minor character beyond their minority status. According to Deleuze and Guattari's readings of Kafka, the difference between major and minor literatures is the process by which they are articulated: whereas the major departs from a specific content (which already displays a specific form) to find an expression, the minor departs from expression that only later finds content and form. "Expression must break forms," Deleuze and Guattari advance,

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is […] constituted by all other practices, processes, events." Furthermore, as stated before, my description of the nation's overdetermination follows Harry Harootunian's portrayal of the nation as capital's factotum, i.e., as participating and partaking of the same conditions of existence. J. K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

[12] Edgar Garcia, *Signs of The Americas* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2020), 46.

"encourage ruptures and new sproutings. When a form is broken, one must reconstruct the content that will necessarily be part of a rupture in the order of things."[13] As the emergence of expression forces the creation of new, in this case anational forms to accommodate its historical singularity, the content of the expression projects a different perspective, a reordering of things. Against the nation form's prevalence during this period, the minor character that these poetries acquire describes a disruptive capacity inherent to certain minority positions.

After elaborating Baraka's anational poetics as a preamble to examining official multiculturalism, the dissertation proceeds to analyze the types of relationships that the nation makes available to minorities. A constant in the prevailing terms of national belonging is the prominence of war as one of the most significant factors in how the US addresses its minorities. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson describes the importance of war as evidence of the sacrificial drive that the nation demands from its citizens: "the great wars of this century are extraordinary not so much in the unprecedented scale on which they permitted people to kill, as in the colossal numbers persuaded to lay down their lives."[14] Yet the spread of war as intrinsic to the nation's behavior is more extensive among minorities, and more complex when we take into consideration the varying possible responses minorities give to its nationalizing function. For example, as James Edward Smethurst notes, the military played a primary role in catalyzing black men's awareness of their status as minorities in the US: "At the same time that the military alienated (or further alienated) these men from the United States government, it also brought together African Americans from across the country and with widely differing political, cultural,

[13] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka, Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 28.
[14] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006), 144.

and social experiences and values."[15] By alienating minorities, the militarized US produced the kinds of antagonisms that are conducive to counternationalism; and counternationalism remains an important facet of nationalism, even more so during this period of global decolonial struggles—a fact that becomes evident in the Black Power movement in general and in Baraka's specific poetic and political praxis. But the Black Power movement was not the only US decolonial struggle organized through counternationalism: the parallel movements of other ethnic minorities would similarly strive toward nationalism. Due to its magnitude and public presence, the Black Power movement "had some of the most visible influences on the radical activist struggles of Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans," Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar observes, "giving rise to a visible movement of *radical ethnic nationalism*."[16] In many of the cases that this dissertation considers, radical ethnic nationalism appears as the most efficient form of collective resistance.

US imperialism is at the heart of the nation form's multicultural interpellation of minorities. Throughout this dissertation, the prominence of war is paramount for every minority's experience of nationalism and of the US during the second half of the twentieth century. Whether similar to the insider experience of black men, as was the case of Native Americans who joined the army, traveled abroad and perceived the incongruities of US imperialism only to return to perceive the same incongruities in their own communities, or the outsider experience of Korean Americans and Chicanas whose communities were appended to the national territory through invasion, war is the pivot for the available forms of minority

[15] James Edward Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 33.
[16] Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, "The Formation of Asian American Nationalism in the Age of Black Power, 1966-75" in *The New Black History*, ed. Manning Marable and Elizabeth Kai Hinton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 123.

identification. Considering Michel Foucault's reassessment of Carl von Clausewitz's dictum, "war is the continuation of politics by other means," we can note the imbrication of war and politics during this multicultural period as "two different strategies (but one always liable to switch into the other) for integrating these unbalanced, heterogeneous, unstable, and tense force relations."[17] US multiculturalism operates through such an imbrication of war and politics by establishing its terms of belonging in relation to the demarcation of alliances and enmities in its numerous bellicose interventions throughout the globe during this period. At the same time, the internal organization of the nation through the political incorporation of multiple cultures relies on retaining the possibility of war whenever minorities became unmanageable. This is a possibility that becomes evident with the nation state's militarized response to the rise of the Black Power movement's insurgency, particularly as it presented a counternationalist stance. Such counternationalist or radical ethnic nationalist stances are crucial for an understanding and elaboration of the anational in the multicultural US.

Because of the reactive character that these radical ethnic nationalisms adopt to resist the US, their collective organization remains coded within an antagonistic stance that make it difficult to perceive alternative paths of action other than those dictated by the nation. They operate through the same binding logic of dichotomies, of political and/or warring allies and enemies. Antagonism locks resistance into a chain of reactions to the nation, thereby restricting the possibilities of meaningful agency within a circumscribed situation—one imposed by the nation through its imperial interpellation and its subsequent hypervisibility. Radical ethnic nationalisms show us how the nation form, apart from organizing the nation internally, also organizes inductively by subsuming referents, contents, and populations, under its logic.

[17] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 93.

The anational, in contrast, denotes all possible paths of action beyond the nation and nationalism; it aims to reorient and reappraise the available forms of agency and communing occluded by the nation. Anational poetics proceed by way of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick terms periperformatives: the range of possible disinterpellations from a performative locution. Periperformatives question the assumed consensus that a performative, such as the nation's interpellation, take for granted. Sedgwick claims that to "disinterpellate from a performative scene will usually require, not another explicit performative nor simply the negative of one, but the nonce, referential act of a periperformative."[18] Translated to this dissertation's framework, Sedgwick's periperformative shows that adopting an oppositional stance against the nation does not entail disengaging from the national scene. Instead, periperformatives help to unlearn the national scene and its imposed assumptions. They open to a panorama of possibilities that remain adjacent to the national scene and induce a questioning of the assumed consensus upon which the nation's interpellations rest.

In *Learning to Unlearn*, Madina V. Tlostanova and Walter D. Mignolo point to a similar disposition in their decolonial project when they "claim that future epistemologies are being and will be constructed with their 'back' toward the West, not competing with the West but delinking from it."[19] Similarly, the anational constructs futures with their back to the nation, which marks a more specific point of reference than Tlostanova and Mignolo's "the West," even though their perspectives can align. Borrowing from Tlostanova and Mignolo, the premise of the anational as a political strategy posits that "competing" with the nation "means playing by the same rules of the epistemic game" that the nation institutes, which therefore demands alternative approaches.

[18] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 70.
[19] Madina V. Tlostanova and Walter D. Mignolo, *Learning to Unlearn* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012), 12.

Throughout the following analysis, I observe how these poets convey akin gestures aimed at disengaging from the nation; either as turning away or as disinterpellating, the poetries I consider explore futures independent from the configurations of the nation and the nation form. I read such disengaging strategies as contemplating anational perspectives, even if they do not necessarily materialize as anational strategies: many of the analyses provided in the chapters point not to a fully developed concept of the anational, but to a process of unlearning the nation as a path toward alternative imaginaries of personhood, land and property, genealogy and collective belonging.

Anational Poetics is structured through comparative schema that link poets within and across chapters with the aim of following a general historical transition toward anational potentials. The historical relationships between Baraka and Moten and Gumbs, Anzaldúa and Tamayo, Cha and Kim, Ortiz and Perez, trace a passage from the civil rights movements and radical ethnic nationalism to a commitment to unlearn the nation and attend to anational configurations. Although not always ordered chronologically, the dissertation narrates the centrifugal drive of minorities away from the nation. Though their paths are all different and respond to their own perspectives and circumstances, they all share the same trajectory away from the nation.

With Baraka's case as an insightful instance of the interplay between nationalist and anational strategies of decolonization, the initial half of the dissertation analyzes the nation's rhetorical methods of minority interpellation. The first chapter reads Baraka's poetry as an ongoing experimentation to find the proper expressive forms for the experience that the changing same describes. Through this process of poetic experimentation we find conceptualizations that diverge from the tenets of the nation and that point to the incongruities that Baraka had to

grapple with. Relying on archival research in several collections containing Baraka's work, this chapter follows the arc of his poetic and political thought to trace the development of anational ideas that sustain his writing from the beginning of his career in the early sixties and only find more manifest articulations toward the end of the twentieth century.

Outlining a general national poetics, the second and third chapters foreground the tropology by which the US continually refigures its own social body during this multicultural period. This first half of the dissertation pays attention to the processes by which the nation incorporates alien populations (see the second chapter) and the subsequent animation or mobilization of those incorporated populations (see the third chapter). In very broad terms, the function of these tropes is to transform imperial bellicosity into multicultural belongingness.

Comparable in prominence and polyvalence to Baraka, Gloria Anzaldúa is the topic of the second chapter, which focuses in particular on her shifting theorizations of aesthetic and political coalitions as alternative lifeworlds to the prevailing repressive life conditions in the US. Emerging from a reparative need to resist and survive racism and misogyny, Anzaldúa's poetics attempt to come to terms with the nation's colonial violence; yet in so doing they also display the risks inherent in multiculturalism, namely, the reproduction of the nation and its conditions. Although her conceptualizations sometimes emulate the dynamics of the nation—which attests to the dominance of the nation form during the last two decades of the twentieth century—Anzaldúa's investment in reparative poetics, that is, in a kind of writing aimed at redressing the brokenness of a colonial situation, sketches possibilities beyond the nation. She turns toward anational configurations when her reparative poetics relinquish a telos, a fixed idea of wholeness, and instead embrace the collective possibilities that her unfixed situation affords. This chapter concludes by situating Anzaldúa's work as an important precedent for contemporary anational

poetics by tracking her influence on Colombian American poet, Jennifer Tamayo. Mobilizing Anzaldúa's unfixed poetics, Tamayo develops a poetics of stitching that resists national belonging by foregrounding the violence with which the nation constitutes itself and manages minorities. Furthermore, this chapter displays how the anational's focalization of divergences from the nation invites comparative approaches to networks of influence otherwise obscured by multiculturalism's identity markers. In the case of Colombia-born Tamayo and Anzaldúa, who is usually read as firmly entrenched in Chicana culture, I point to such a network in the articulation of a Trans-Latinx coalition of solidarity.

The third chapter analyzes the ways in which the tropes of national poetics attempt to animate or instill forms of attachment to the nation. Focused on Korean American experiences in the aftermath of the Korean War, this chapter reads the poetry of Myung Mi Kim and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha in order to assess the role of dictation as a form of interpellation into national belonging. Kim's acute attention to the national and nationalizing character of language acquisition sheds light on the labor required to reproduce the nation as labor alienated from the individuals performing it. Her poetry ignores the official injunction to reproduce the nation by disinterpellating from it and attending to and reproducing the planetary context that frames the nation's finite space and time. Kim's focalization of an encompassing panorama where the nation occupies only one position, serves to describe anational potentials as immanent alternatives to how we conceptualize the world. This idea of immanence is one I trace back to an earlier period in Cha's work, who writes from the sedimented layers of colonial rule over Korea to also portray dictation as instrumental to the construction of the nation. Aiming to give space to different and contrasting historical voices, Cha repurposes dictation from a nationalizing practice in order to channel the heterogeneous temporalities that inhabit the present. In so doing, Cha's

poetics bypass the ubiquity of nation and nationalism in decolonial struggles, attending to the adjacent temporalities that together describe a general realm of anational immanence.

The fourth and fifth chapters analyze alternative experiences of space and time by turning to anational poetics articulated from indigenous decolonial projects. I read the work of Acoma Pueblo poet Simon J. Ortiz and Chamorro poet Craig Santos Perez in order to assess how their poetics are informed by their cultures' specific phenomenologies and aesthetics and how these in turn defy and subvert the spatiotemporalities that the nation imposes as reflected by its cartographical practices. The fourth chapter examines Ortiz's articulation of kinship in relation to the landscape, which allows him to express a different perception of time from those operative in the US. Through his relationship with the landscape, Ortiz manages to remain with the historical colonial violence that is constitutive of the nation; focusing on the 1864 Sand Creek massacre of Cheyenne and Arapaho people by the US Army, Ortiz retains the experience of the historical event as embedded in the land, which allows him to perceive the communities and spaces that existed before the US and continue to exist throughout its territory without abiding by its jurisdiction.

Perez's poetics offer a geopolitically different instance of indigenous decolonizing efforts by foregrounding the spatiotemporality experienced by Pacific islanders. Writing from and about Guam and its native Chamorro culture, Perez catalogues the different instances of colonial violence suffered by the island's population through Spanish, Japanese, and US occupation. His poetry salvages and mobilizes Chamorro history as a survival practice that refuses annexation into the US. By upholding Chamorro spatiotemporal perceptions, which privilege oceanic rhythms and interconnections, Perez's poetics verify the nation's incapacity to incorporate spaces

beyond the oceans, thereby demarcating the limits of nationalist imperialism and the incongruity of its claims to transcontinental belonging.

The dissertation closes with an afterword on the secretive nature of anational poetics as a political strategy against the ubiquity of the nation form. Returning to Baraka, this afterword addresses the relationship that his poetics have with Fred Moten's. By elaborating on the ways in which Baraka engages with the public sphere and mass culture, this coda marks the influence of the changing same and blues music in the forms of black sociality that Moten's poetry describes. Both Baraka's and Moten's poetries work through the inherited knowledge of the disruptive potential of the secretive. By reading Moten next to Alexis Pauline Gumbs, I argue that secrecy and obscurity become a linguistic and formal resource that minorities mobilize in more aware and resourceful ways as the civil rights movements period progressed into official multiculturalism. Furthermore, the coda closes by noting how both Moten's poetry, in relation to the changing same, and Gumbs's poetry, in relation to a tradition of black feminist fugitivity, perform a collective autopoiesis of sociality. I conclude with a reading of the opening of Gumbs's *Dub* through her engagement with Sylvia Wynter's writings as assembling anational forms of attachment. Inducing sociality, Gumbs's poetics practices radical belonging and opens onto collectivities unconstrained by nation, race, or species.

Chapter I: Amiri Baraka and The Nation Form

To establish the minor aesthetic of the anational, this first chapter argues that Baraka's search for the proper way to express politically and poetically his conceptualization of the changing same needed to discard the mediation of the nation. From the beginning of his career, Baraka's polyvalence and political impetus encompassed different threads of thought, but the most persistent (and perhaps less visible) ones unfold on an anational plane. The introduction to *Blues People*, his second book published early in his career and still penned as LeRoi Jones, begins: "I am trying in this book, by means of analogy and some attention to historical example, to establish certain general conclusions about a particular segment of American society."[1] Published more than a decade earlier, this introduction anticipates the concerns of the *Autobiography*'s preface, displaying the persistent investment in an inquiry into the collective experience of black people and their forms of expression (the latter indicated clearly by the subtitle of *Blues People*, *The Negro Experience in White America and The Music that Developed From It*). Yet at this point it is "peoplehood" that Baraka employs as a meaningful social category, not nationhood.

In order to amplify the stakes of the question of the anational in Baraka, I jump ahead to a later stage in his life, after the publication of the poetry collection *It's Nation Time* in the early 70s. After relocating to Newark to participate in several community projects, Baraka begins to exhibit the tensions between the theorization, activism, and propaganda of black nationalism and the spatiotemporal reality and oppressive constraints of the nation. The effects of the ongoing battle of attrition he waged against the US nation state become tangible as Baraka seeks

[1] LeRoi Jones, *Blues People*, (New York: Morrow Quill, 1963), ix.

alternatives to sustain Newark's community projects while remaining attached to nationalism. For example, his personal financial records from the time describe a precarious situation of debt gained with the aim of funding his many social and cultural initiatives. The documents collected in his archives at Howard University paint a difficult financial situation through numerous final notices from banks addressed to him and his wife Amina. Despite his local and communal investment, Baraka's economic needs reinsert him in a national scene of oppression.

Similarly, the Congress for African People (CAP), the political organization that Baraka led, struggled financially. CAP aimed to publish a newspaper ambitiously titled *Nationtime News* which would have a wider reach than Baraka's other community newspaper, the more stable and locally distributed *Black New Ark*. Yet, in its attempt to expand its distribution network beyond Newark, *Nationtime News* was hindered from ongoing production, with seemingly just one edition published according to the information available at his archives. Merchandise branded with the CAP's ideology was advertised in both newspapers as "Nationtime Products," which

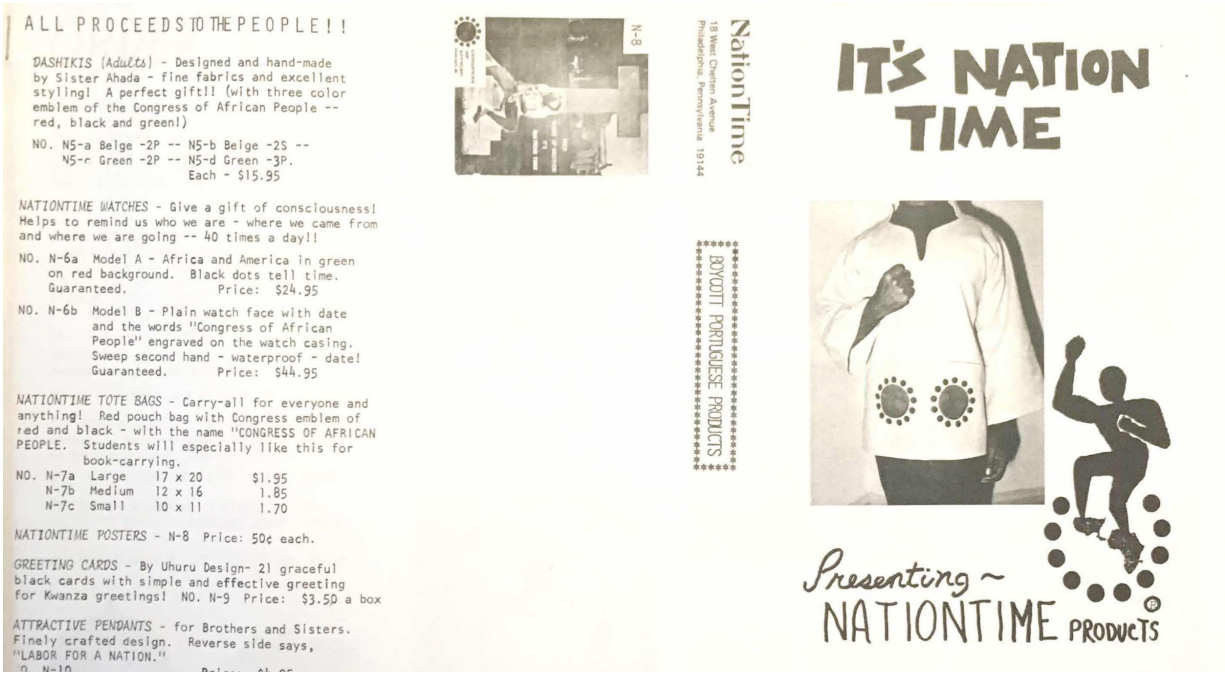

Figure 1: "It's Nation Time Advertising," Amiri Baraka papers at Moorland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University.

aimed to assuage the costs of production. Among these, "Nationtime Watches" are advertised with the caption, "Give a gift of consciousness! Helps to remind us who we are - where we came from and where we are going -- 40 times a day!!"[2]

These ads introduce a central concern of this dissertation as they implicate capitalism in Baraka's nationalism; they pose the need to interrogate the intimate relationship that capitalism and the nation develop throughout the twentieth century. In a telling reversal of his nationalism, Baraka's ambitions for his community appear bound to the circulation of commodities in the national market. The prospect of self-determination, with all its spatiotemporal, social, aesthetic, and political implications, ironically becomes an advertising slogan that fetishizes the tenets of a collectively shared consciousness of the past, present, and future of black experience. As the commodity takes precedence over the collectivity's futurity, over its claims to sovereignty, its

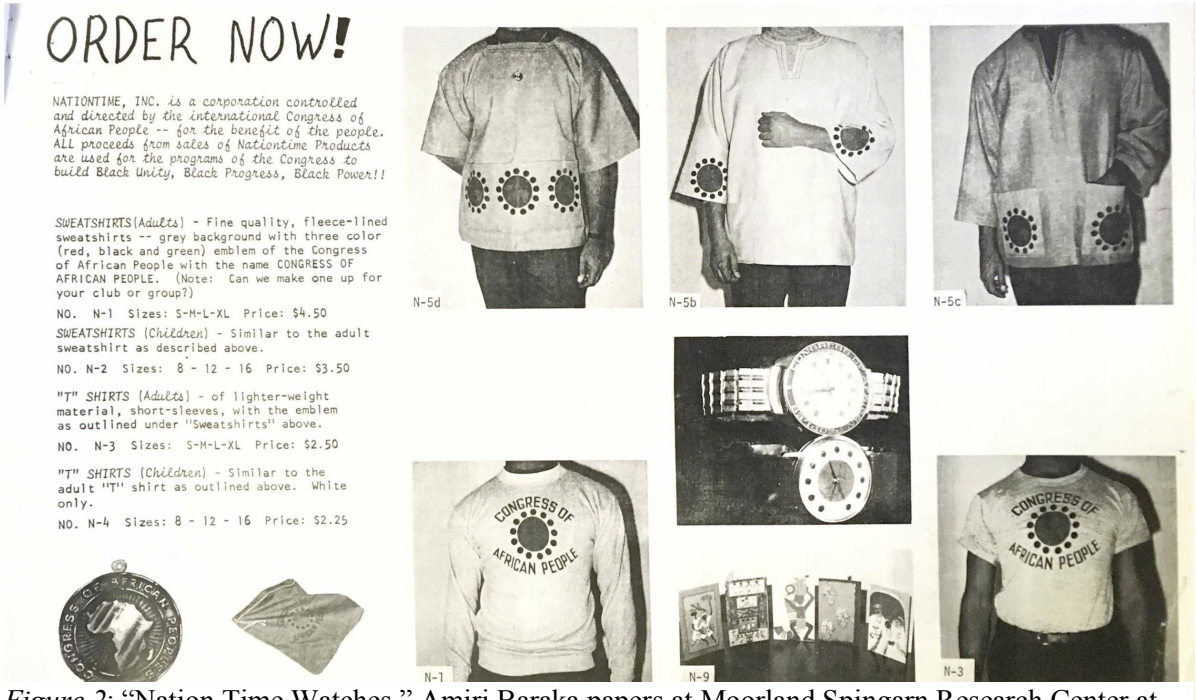

Figure 2: "Nation Time Watches," Amiri Baraka papers at Moorland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University.

[2] Amiri Baraka, Howard University Archive, box 25, folder 21.

form, like any other commodity's, appears to neutralize the singularity of black expression—the prominence of blues as an aesthetic category demarcating the uniqueness of black peoplehood is superseded by the need to sell a commodified version of African American identity. Although in the coda of the dissertation I will further nuance Baraka's thinking about black cultural products circulating as commodities in the national market, at this point I note that the lesson these advertisements give is one about the uniformity of the nation's temporal order. In its incapacity to tell no other time but the homogeneous time of the dominant nation, the CAP's watch exhibits a process of assimilation, wherein the part that *Blues People* figured as black experience is no longer singular or distinguishable from the US.

The juxtaposition of these two episodes sheds light on the contradictions that Baraka's conceptualizations had to work out during the sixties and seventies. Throughout this first chapter I track the role of nationalism through the different stages of Baraka's poetics and politics. The aim is to explain how before, after, *and behind* his most fervent nationalist ambitions, Baraka's commitment to black self-determination finds its most coherent expression through anational manifestations. Along with readings of Baraka's work, in the following section I provide a historical and theoretical framework to understand the near ubiquity of the nation in relation to capitalism as the imperative collective form during this period. In the aftermath of the civil rights movements, this situation gains in importance as the US transitions to a moment of official multiculturalism toward the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first—a period I analyze in the next chapter through Gloria Anzaldúa's work.

"The song and the people is the same"

Blues People is predominantly a study in ethnogenesis. "But what I am most anxious about here," Baraka comments in the introduction, "is the American Negro. When did he emerge?"[3] Baraka finds this emergence in the moment when the African captives realized that they were not returning home. For him this realization was coterminous with the adoption of English as the proper form of collective expression:

> The stories, myths, moral examples, etc., given in Africa were *about* Africa. When America became important enough to the African to be passed on, in those *formal* renditions, to the young, those renditions were in some kind of Afro-American language. And finally, when a man looked up in some anonymous field and shouted, "Oh, Ahm tired a dis mess, / Oh, yes, Ahm so tired a dis mess," you can be sure he was an American.[4]

Blues functions here as a transition demarcating simultaneously a break and a continuity in belongingness: while it cuts off captive Africans from Africa through the realization they would not come back, it unites them as African American—that is, unites them among themselves and to Africa through this broken link. In the persistence of this tradition as a changing same, as rupture and continuity, black experience acquires a singular character in the uniqueness of its expression.[5] As Baraka's own italicized emphases show, belongingness manifests in the linguistic content *and* form of the collective, in what their expressions were *about* and the specific *formal* renditions they exhibited. In the adoption and manipulation of English

[3] Jones, *Blues People*, xi.
[4] Jones, *Blues People*, xii.
[5] Baraka's conception of black experience is akin to Christina Sharpe's notion of the wake as an atemporal disaster problematizing thought. Unlike the nation's historical compartmentalization of slavery as part of its past, Sharpe's and Baraka's understandings insist not on slavery as singular, but as "a singularity": "Emancipation did not make free Black life free; it continues to hold us in that singularity." The persistence of this singularity is a recurring topic in Baraka's poetry especially in the nineties. Yet at this point I want to note how beyond their similarities, Baraka's focus differs in his concern for the expressive manifestation of black experience, as opposed to Sharpe's analysis of thought. Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 106.

lexicography, grammar, and syntax toward expressing their experience, black expression persists as a continual actualization of its singularity. With such an account, Baraka introduces a concern for the specificity of black expression that will remain dominant in his life and in his cultural analyses. More to the point, this concern will become pivotal in conveying the interaction of form and content as simultaneously political and aesthetic.

Baraka's first publication, the collection of poetry *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note*, has usually been read as an initial sampler of the styles and schools that interested him, but without a political guiding line. Kristen Gallagher, for example, has described the book as "equal parts field poetics, Beat, and NY School," asserting that at this point in his career "Jones hasn't arrived at a style quite yet, but instead presents an amalgam of influences."[6] Similarly, Jay Wright, writing closer to the collection's publication, acknowledged how obvious it was that Baraka was following "many of the precepts and practices of his associates in the 'New American Poetry.'"[7] However, by examining this collection closely, we can see that Baraka's poetry has a central concern from his very first publication onward: it is oriented toward the singularity of black experience as a political and aesthetic project. The influence of the several groups that Baraka was in contact during this time, living in The Village and editing the poetry journal *Yūgen* with Hattie Cohen, is unquestionable. But my reading of *Preface* rather traces the concerns that Baraka voices in *Blues People*.

These concerns are legible in the second poem of *Preface*, "Hymn for Lanie Poo," which is prefaced with an epigraph by Rimbaud, "Vous êtes des faux Nègres." "Hymn" begins:

> O,
> these wild trees

[6] Kristen Gallagher, "On LeRoi Jones, 'Preface to A Twenty-Volume Suicide Note'" in *Jacket2*, April 27, 2011. https://jacket2.org/article/leroi-jones-preface-twenty-volume-suicide-note.
[7] Jay Wright, "Love's Emblem Lost: LeRoi Jones's 'Hymn for Lanie Poo,'" *boundary 2*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Winter, 1978), 417.

will make charming wicker baskets,
the young woman
the young black woman,
the young black beautiful woman
said.
    These wild-assed trees
    will make charming
    wicker baskets.

(now, I'm putting words in her mouth…tch)[8]

The apostrophic address that begins this poem, pairing the intensifying quality of the first line ("O") with deictic specificity in the second ("these"), has an ambiguous origin as possibly reported speech. In the unfolding qualities of "the young black beautiful woman," a prolongation of the moment occurs, delaying the provenance of speech. By the moment the phrase is reasserted in indented lines not only has the apostrophic marker been dropped, but, as the parenthetical admits, the phrase has been altered. So the presence of the apostrophe is diffused as either a liberty taken by the poem's speaker or an omission in the altered reassertion of the young black beautiful woman's observation.

If, as Jonathan Culler argues, "to apostrophize is to will a state of affairs, to attempt to call it into being by asking inanimate objects to bend themselves to your desire," this desire is shared by both speakers in the poem, she projecting forward in time ("these wild trees | will make charming wicker baskets"), "I" projecting backward in time ("the young black beautiful woman | said"), in such a way that they meet in the single will of the utterance that the speaker repeats.[9] Just as the anaphoric modification of "young woman" spreads over time, acquiring more adjectives, the will of the apostrophe extends over time. And it does so, the parenthetical aside tells us, in embodied ways, going from her mouth to the indexical "tch" that marks the

[8] Amiri Baraka, *S.O.S.: Poems 1961–2013*, (New York: Grove Press, 2014), 4.
[9] Jonathan Culler, *Pursuit of Signs*, (New York: Routledge, 1981), 154.

speaker's mouth as the producer of sound. In "Hymn for Lanie Poo" a shared desire and its embodied expression unite past and present in their projection toward the future.

The apostrophic "O" in "Hymn" serves another function in the broader structure of the poem. After the quoted fragment a break occurs and numbered sections begin, which suggest that the above can be considered a preface, or a zero/"0" section grounding the poem's overall temporal organization. The rest of the poem conflates a contemporary quotidian urbanity with an imagined African reality tinted with tribal elements. "All afternoon | we sit around | near the edge of the city | hacking open | crocodile skulls" or "I wobble out to | the edge of the water | give my horny yell | & 24 elephants | stomp out of the subway | with consecrated hardons" depict a combined experience of routine as America is overlapped with Africa. This pairing led Wright to comment that when reading this poem "We are both in the past and the present. But the past is not accepted. We have distorted it. We do not see it as a real historical present where consequential events occur and consequential values reside."[10] However, what Wright observes as the poem's failure to yield consequentially to the past, I interpret as an investment in the blues tradition Baraka was studying, theorizing, and practicing. Wright's reading conceives of Baraka's exchanges with the past as distortions because he imposes an a fortiori causal view of time, which I interpret as a temporal logic attuned to national historiography, where the past is the cause for the present, and the present is always consequential. The temporal exchanges that Baraka begins to toy with during this early period, rendering past and present as responsive to each other, are not compatible with the nation's temporal linearity, where the process of becoming is continually disguised as being.

[10] Wright, "Love's Emblem Lost: LeRoi Jones's 'Hymn for Lanie Poo,'" 421.

Although written roughly around the same time, *Preface* was published before *Blues People*. Considered together, both evince Baraka's thinking about expression as theory and praxis. A parallel instance to sustain this reading of how the changing same manifested in his poetics writ large appears in 1958 in the second volume of *Yūgen*; there he published a short story titled "Suppose Sorrow Was a Time Machine" which began with the following paragraph:

> Here is Dothan, Alabama, U.S.A. 1898. This is of value. What is to be said about the place, Dothan, and the time, 1898. It is of value, but it doesn't matter what becomes of the telling, once it is told. [11]

Setting up the structural conceit of the narrative, Baraka places the reader in the past through deixis—a similar gesture to the one that opens "Hymn." The assertion of value, along with the criteria that render it thus, stands in direct relation to expression, prioritizing the moment of the utterance over its aftermath. The content of the telling is inextricable from the form of the telling. "Suppose Sorrow" continues with the next paragraph:

> Say that you are Tom Russ. It is Dothan, Alabama, U.S.A. 1898. You are a Negro who has felt the ground vibrate, and you are trying to interpret the vibration. you are trying to interpret the vibration, and what it means in 1898 Dothan. I know you Tom. You are my grandfather. I am not born yet but I have felt the ground vibrate too. And I too would like to know exactly what it means, here in Alabama 1898, 34 years before I am born. Fifty years before I realize you knew about the vibration, 50 years before I knew that I possessed the knowledge of your knowing. But now is what we are concerned with.[12]

Tom Russ was in fact Baraka's grandfather who lived in Dothan, Alabama. He owned three businesses which were all burned down by white supremacists; after the third time, Russ relocated his family to New Jersey, where Baraka would eventually be born. Considering this biographical background, the temporal structure of "Suppose Sorrow" dialogues with the past in even more intimate ways than "Hymn" did. Although concerned with a more recent past, the logic of this exchange remains aligned with a collective endeavor striving toward the expression

[11] Leroi Jones, "Suppose Sorrow Was a Time Machine" in *Yūgen*, num. 2 (1958), 8.
[12] Jones, "Suppose Sorrow Was a Time Machine," 8.

of experience. “But now is what we are concerned with” refers at the same time to 1898 and to Baraka’s moment of writing, but also, following the same extradiegetic gesture, to the reader’s moment. It is an expansive now marked by the telling, by the ongoing vibration.

The fourth section of “Hymn” further elaborates this dynamic of experiential and expressive intimacy in an expansive now through its investment in the quotidian:

> Each morning
> I go down
> to Gansevoort St.
> and stand on the docks.
> I stare out the horizon
> until it gets up
> and comes to embrace
> me. I
> make believe
> it is my father.
> This is known
> as genealogy.[13]

The cyclicality of reaching the edge of the Atlantic Ocean to daily face eastward until sunrise describes a routine oriented toward the past, where the westward trajectory of the Middle Passage is traced anew daily by the sun. Yet this orientation toward the past is not unidirectional, it does not follow, as Wright criticized, a rigorous consequential apprehension of the past as factual. Rather “Hymn” acknowledges the “make believe” quality of its orientation toward the past, opening the present’s relation to the past through a willful poetics. By meeting the sun daily with an eastward stare, the speaker of the poem participates in an active dialogue where past and present transform each other.

With this state of affairs in place, “Hymn” returns to its initial lines in order to reinstate the mutual susceptibility of past and present to each other:

> o,
> don’t be shy honey.

[13] Baraka, *S.O.S.*, 8.

we all know this wicker baskets
would make wild-assed trees.[14]

The reversal at stake in this reformulation of the relation between baskets as trees questions the predominance of the past over the present by undoing the causality of production, undoing the product into its sources. Unlike Gallagher's assessment of *Preface*, which finds that race lurks throughout the book "yet feels mostly repressed" and that Baraka "expresses no desire to move towards a political poetry," I argue that the presence of such temporal constructions already implies a political position aligned with an acknowledged racial experience that is articulated more extensively in *Blues People*.[15]

Three years after *Blues People*, Baraka published "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music)," one of his seminal essays on music that extends the line of thought from *Blues People*: "Form and content are both mutually expressive of the whole. And they are both equally expressive…each have an identifying motif and function. In Black music, both identify place and direction. We want different contents and different forms because we have different feelings. We are different peoples."[16] Although still dwelling on aspects of ethnogenesis, Baraka's register notably slides toward a more contemporary focus where the present is emphasized over the past, and political rhetoric takes precedence over cultural analysis.

Likewise, as Baraka's writing about black expression aims to participate more actively in current political debates, he begins to intercalate as synonymous and then prioritize the idea of nation over that of people. A notable substitution occurs elliptically when he explains how from different versions of reality, different kinds of singing emerge, "Different expressions (of a

[14] Baraka, *S.O.S.*, 6.
[15] Baraka's own admitted turn toward politically committed poetry occurs after his trip to Cuba, and the poetry in *Preface* is cut in half by that event, half of it composed before ("Hymn" belongs to this half) the other during and after.
[16] LeRoi Jones, *Black Music* (New York: Akashic Books, 2011), 180.

whole). A whole people…a nation, in captivity." Consolidating this transformation, Baraka engages in more conventional articulations of nationhood in the following sentences: "Rhythm and Blues is part of 'the national genius' of the Black man, of the Black nation."[17] This reconfiguration of peoplehood into nationhood resonates with how he moves toward a more actively political rhetoric, which in "The Changing Same" is most notable when the separation of whole and part, US and black people, takes the tone of a critique. That is, his interpretation of black music in the sixties at times unfolds as an attack of certain kinds of music which he perceives as deviating from the black tradition of blues. A complex hierarchy constituted by race, culture, and class—which Baraka more extensively develops as a "*Black Brown Yellow White*" categorization in a chapter of the *Autobiography*—factors in his judgment of music. For example, when writing about how Dionne Warwick's beat and sound reaches a "warmth undreamed of by the whites," he then warns that, "as the $$$ come in, and she leans for a 'bigger audience,' traveling in them circles, too, etc., then she may get even whiter perhaps. It is a social phenomenon and a spiritual-artistic phenomenon as well."[18] The thrust of the critique resides in a risk of whitening as a figuration of assimilation and turning away from the black tradition, at this point coded within a cultural matrix of class and race. The threat Baraka identifies is that of embracing belongingness to the US.

The Ascendance of The Nation

"To a growing list of 'dirty' words that make Americans squirm add the word *Nationalism*," Baraka states in the opening of his brief essay "'black' is a country," published in 1965 in the

[17] Jones, *Black Music*, 179–80.
[18] Jones, *Black Music*, 196.

collection *Home*.[19] Pairing it with "communism," Baraka argues that nationalism has acquired a negative connotation in the US despite the fact that what he assumes is the definition of the word, "'acting in one's interests," is viewed as a legitimate doctrine in the West.[20] By following this principle, Baraka explains, Western countries have been capable of amounting their wealth as well as justifying the oppression of other countries. If this is the operative logic over the world, Baraka questions, why then are these exploited countries denied the right to pursue their own interests, to follow the prevailing doctrine?

> The "rub," of course, is that when another people or country, who have been used or exploited because it served the best interests of a Western power, suddenly become politically and/or physically powerful enough to begin talking about *their* own best interests, which of course are usually in direct opposition to the wishes of their exploiters, it is then that *Nationalism* becomes a dirty word—one to be stricken from as many minds as possible, by whatever methods.[21]

This passage sheds light on the transition from country and peoplehood to nationhood and nationalism by inserting it within a colonial situation. Baraka's adoption of an outspoken political stance is an embrace of decolonial efforts. In fact, the catalyst that occasioned his transition from an apolitical perception of his role as a poet to a politically committed one in the early sixties was his visit to post-revolutionary Cuba. In 1960, invited by the Cuban government, Baraka joined a large delegation of black intellectuals to visit the island and gain first-hand knowledge of its socialist efforts. Later acknowledging it as a turning point in his life, Baraka centers his memories of the trip around the criticism that he received from two young Latin American poets for his apolitical approach to poetry. "It is bourgeois individualism, they screamed. That is all it is, bourgeois individualism. For twelve or fourteen hours on the train I

[19] LeRoi Jones, *Home* (New York: Akashic Books, 2009), 101.
[20] Jones, *Home*, 101.
[21] Jones, *Home*, 102.

was assailed for my bourgeois individualism."[22] It is this attack, paired with the insights of his trip—both the Cuba he saw and the exchanges he had with other black intellectuals—that occasioned Baraka's poetic and political epiphany by his own account.

The latter explains his adoption of a decolonial stance in that he seeks to fight US oppression in a similar organized mobilization as the one he perceived in Cuba. Yet this passage points to a significant aspect of Baraka's politics in his recognition of and turn away from bourgeois values, an aspect that troubles the apprehension of nationalism as a direct correlation of a decolonial stance. In "'black' is a country," the implicit assumption is that pursuing the interests of a country or people becomes a nationalist endeavor when it turns confrontational, when it defies exploitation and the status quo. Yet, as in the elliptical transition in his analysis of black music, there is no overt justification for this causality—and the echoes of this transformation can be perceived all the way to the "Stages" preface to his *Autobiography* in the assertion that for "the African American Nation" the "only forward direction must be toward Self-Determination!" This unexamined causal movement is brought about by the historical circumstances that revealed no other path for decolonization but the one leading to the nation.

Active in Baraka's thinking about nationalism are unacknowledged assumptions that ironically pertain to a bourgeois understanding of history as unidirectional—an understanding that in turn has its own historicity. The reduction of history to a singular process, with a single forward direction, occurs in the aftermath of the French Revolution as an attempt to domesticate the singularity of that event. Massimiliano Tomba describes this transition as the processualization of political concepts, so that notions like democracy or equality "became

[22] Amiri Baraka, *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1997), 244.

vectors of historical process."[23] The unidirectionality of the concept of history was a byproduct of the ascendance of bourgeois society in the European nineteenth century, by which "historical progress allowed the measuring of the level of (Western) civilisation attained by populations with histories different from those of Europe, thus justifying the domination of those who were represented as lower down the scale."[24] The latter was notable since the eighteenth century yet became instrumental in the twentieth century for decolonial struggles of self-determination, where "nation" comes to signify the prevailing measure of progress: the concept was not meant to idealize, attributing to the nation the capacity to liberate people from colonialism, but it established the terms of recognition. For in the twentieth century and beyond, only as a nation could a collectivity reach the European standard for recognition of its claim to self-determination.

The theoretical revision I follow here bypasses the nation's historiography as the reduction of time to a unidirectional flow of causality in order to access different conceptions of time and the latent possibilities they may offer—such as Baraka's notion of the changing same as a mutually affected relationship between past and present. Tomba observes that "This task has become difficult or even impossible, since capitalism and the modern state have become metahistorical or even 'natural' 'facts.'"[25] As I noted in the introduction, Harootunian argues that the nation can be understood as capital's factotum, as it enables its dispersion and development across the globe. Harootunian describes how "the nation-state incorporated the necessity of capitalism's 'immanent laws' of production" and opened the path "to both its own 'objectification' and naturalization of historical fate."

[23] Massimiliano Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*, trans. Peter D. Thomas and Sara R. Farris (Leiden: Brill, 2013), ix.
[24] Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*, ix.
[25] Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*, viii.

> In this way, *national* history performed merely to mask a more fundamental *natural* history, whereby the nation-form unsurprisingly managed to reveal a close kinship with the commodity form itself. Nation-form and commodity-form shared both the character of a "mystical thing" and a complicity to eliminate the historical, as such, contingency itself, in the making of history, the latter through a repression of its conditions of development (the process of production), the former through its suppression of time.[26]

In this regard, the ellipsis that occludes the particularities of the process by which Baraka transitions from peoplehood to nationhood displays a mystifying moment not unlike the commodification of an object: just as use-value recedes in order for exchange-value to attribute a commodity a place in the market, peoplehood gives way to nationhood in order that its claims to self-determination find their stake in the world stage.

Abstraction is one way to follow this mystification: similar to how the material qualities of an object are subsumed under its quantity when commodified, the specificity of a people with a singular history and form follows a homogenization process whereby its particularities are neglected in order for it to engage in the international order as another nation. Although I will further elaborate the suppression of time Harootunian mentions when discussing Craig Santos Perez's poetics in the fifth chapter, at this point I note that abstraction in this context suggests how a collectivity is coerced into emulating the same temporal dynamics which lead to the nation form as the culmination of a teleology where the nation's becoming appears as its being. In this regard, the merchandise that the CAP advertised in its newspapers more clearly reveals the kinship between the nation and commodity forms as coercive processes of homogenization that discard specificity for exchangeability.

Upon closer inspection, the abstraction occurring in the transition from peoplehood to nationhood resides on a systematization of representational dynamics, on the liberal

[26] Harry Harootunian, *Marx After Marx: History and Time in the Expansion of Capitalism*, (Columbia University Press, New York: 2015), 35–6.

understanding and practice of politics by proxy. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri observe, this logic of representation binds the multitude to the state ("the people representing the multitude, the nation representing the people, and the state representing the nation").[27] But I also want to draw attention to the intertwined role of war within this transition and its prominence for minority experiences in the US.

In a recent analysis aimed at "rethinking the entire history of capitalism—even in its most contemporary forms," Éric Aillez and Maurizio Lazzarato explain that their point of departure "is the close, constitutive, and ontological relationship between the most deterritorialized form of capital, money, and the most deterritorialized form of sovereignty, war."[28] The function of war has been placed at the foreground of analyses of the nation yet without sufficient scrutiny; for John Hutchinson, a noteworthy instance of this is found in Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, where he interprets cenotaphs as emblems of nationalism's power. Hutchinson comments, "Anderson is not alone: interpretations of nationalism tend to focus on the nation as a recent phenomenon generated by various forms of modernization, for example, secularization, industrialization, print capitalism, and bureaucratic state formation, in which war is an incidental actor." Although I do not follow several of his claims about the function of the nation, I do heed to Hutchinson's assertion of "an intrinsic connection between nationalism and war," which furthermore links to the capitalist history that Aillez and Lazzarato envision.[29] It is important to reconsider the mystifying production of the nation form to analyze how its abstractions—in close evocation of money as capitalism's paradigmatic commodity—are fueled by war's animating drive, which in this context is coded as a decolonial war for self-determination.

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[27] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 134.
[28] Éric Aillez and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Wars and Capital*, trans. Ames Hodges (Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2016), 36.
[29] John Hutchinson, *Nationalism and War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1.

Part of the theoretical gambit of undoing the unidirectionality of history entails attending to the latent possibilities that such a unidirectionality occludes. For Baraka there is a relevant historical antecedent in the early twentieth-century debate between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg with regards to a nation's right of self-determination. Although their exchange was centered on the position that a worker's party should assume with regards to struggles for national independence, with the specific case of Poland's struggle for national independence at the foreground, what I want to foreground here are two perspectives on the nation in order to salvage and focalize the one which wound up not becoming hegemonic: Luxemburg's.

The core of Luxemburg's critique of nationalism's so-called groundedness on the right to self-determination was that such a right lacked a content unless it was historically situated. She categorized the "right of nations" with similar constructs such as the "rights of man" and the "rights of the citizen" as examples of "the entire store of democratic clichés and ideological metaphysics inherited from the bourgeoisie."[30] That is, the projected universality of a right, she argued, is only a product of the historical context and, in the nation's case, this universality serves the ends of the ruling bourgeoisie. Whereas Lenin's position on the question of the nation followed a unidirectional account of history and politics, which considered the rise of the bourgeoisie a necessary step toward the eventual revolution of the proletariat, Luxemburg insisted on scrutinizing the historical role of the nation.[31]

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[30] Rosa Luxemburg, *The National Question, Selected Writings*, ed. Horace B. Davis (London: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 111.

[31] Luxemburg ridiculed such reductive interpretations of Marxism (which assume Marx's analysis of Britain's situation as prescriptive, not descriptive) by arguing that "historically speaking, the idea that the modern proletariat could do nothing as a separate and conscious class without first creating a new nation-state, is the same as saying that the bourgeoisie in any country should first establish a feudal system, if by some chance it did not come about normally by itself, or had taken on particular forms, as for instance in Russia." Luxemburg, *The National Question*, 167.

Here, in Leninist historiography, lies one of the most prominent sources for Baraka's nationalist thinking. For example, Baraka's notes and correspondence in his archives held at Columbia University's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library show him quoting Stalin's *Marxism and the National Question*, a pamphlet published in 1913 to engage in support of Lenin's position against Luxemburg. "'Thus a common economic life, economic cohesion, is one characteristic of a nation,'" he quotes Stalin to emphasize the need for the development of a bourgeois class to consolidate a black national economy, illustrating why this endeavor had failed in the past: "the 'existence of a Black market served by Black businesses' showed the existence of such economic cohesion, and that a developed class structure had begun to exist in the Black nation. It is the existence of this developed class structure that shows clearly the economic cohesion, the development of capitalism, that mark the development of nations."[32] Written in 1975, this reflection shows how Baraka's analysis still envisions national cohesion through the rise of a black bourgeoisie that could fuel economic independence in anticipation of national independence. That is, he is following the same unidirectional account of history that Lenin's view of the nation imposes.

Luxemburg's analysis, on the other hand, anticipates the constraints that nationalism would impose over twentieth-century decolonizing struggles, pointing to how capitalism and the local bourgeoisie's role within it do not restore a nation's independence but hamper it through the dynamics of the world market and the creation of financial subservience to more powerful states.[33] At her most incisive, Luxemburg arrives at an observation central to Baraka's context,

[32] Amiri Baraka Papers, 1945-2015, Rare Book & Manuscript Library Collections Columbia University, box 1, folder 1.

[33] Luxemburg notes how the nation facilitates the predominance of "states bent on conquest" among which France, Britain, and Germany provide fitting models of "national oppression in Europe and the world at large" but so does the "United States of America, a state which keeps in its bosom like a gaping wound the oppression of the Negro people, and seeks to conquer the Asiatic peoples." As Luxemburg

particularly with regards to the abstractions of the nation. This observation begins by hypothesizing: "The 'nation' should have the 'right' to self-determination. But who is that 'nation' and who has the authority and the 'right' to speak for the 'nation' and express its will? How can we find out what the 'nation' actually wants?"[34] By suspending the reification of the nation as a coalesced political body through her use of quotation marks, Luxemburg scrutinizes the mechanisms that project a general national will, implicating systems for validating sovereignty, most crucially representational assumptions embedded in democratic processes such as electoral voting. She interrogates the function of representation as enabling the projection of a uniform nation. Which is to say that representation operates in the realm of the political as aesthetic and vice versa in that it reshapes the collectivity as it demands consent from its members to do so.[35]

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points to the US as inheritor of the national enterprise, several of her critiques of the nation acquire relevance for Baraka's context, tracing the limitations of his nationalism. If the situation of black society as "*unintegrated* into that [national] whole" is at the heart of his disaffection with the US, as Baraka put it in the preface to his *Autobiography*, then her analysis foregrounds how "'the nation' as a homogeneous sociopolitical entity does not exist. Rather, there exist within each nation, classes with antagonistic interests and 'rights.'" That is, Baraka's reasons to embrace nationalism, the different nature of the part with regards to the whole, is, in Luxemburg's view, inherent to a nation's constitution. She points to how embracing nationalism will reveal further fractures within the future nation. For Luxemburg, nationalism and the nation during the twentieth century are an ideology of the bourgeois ruling classes with a particular Eurocentric investment in colonialism as a civilizing mission. (Luxemburg, *The National Question*, 131, 135, 110.)

[34] Luxemburg, *The National Question*, 141.

[35] Luxemburg here engages in the same debate over representation that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak diagnoses toward the end of the twentieth century; Spivak highlights "the complicity of *Vertreten* and *Darstellen*" as a confusion between the semantic definitions of representation—the granting of political power by proxy, on the one hand, and aesthetic production on the other.

> In the guise of a post-Marxist description of the scene of power, we thus encounter a much older debate: between representation or rhetoric as tropology and as persuasion. *Darstellen* belongs to the first constellation, *vertreten*—with stronger suggestions of substitution—to the second. Again, they are related, but running them together, especially in order to say that beyond both is where oppressed subjects speak, act, and know *for themselves*, leads to an essentialist, utopian politics.

Spivak's admonition against the conflation of these two definitions of representation, beyond her critique of utopian politics (but not of essentialism), grants an opening toward the analysis of the nation form. The adoption of nationalism as a tropological decision to refashion a collectivity, that is, as aesthetic

The aim of this brief historical review is to consider why Baraka's decolonial struggles were persuaded by the need to transform into a nation. In his perception toward the end of the sixties, this process entailed transitioning from a concern over the collective expression of "blues people" to a collective organization in a context now determined by "socio-economic military-political implications," which reasserts the centrality of war. The collectivity's "restoration of perspective and the power to make definitions" is linked to "Nationalism as forming of nation, and the idea, and will to do that. Regroup. Rebuild so to speak."[36] Nationalism is adopted as leading to the "creation of a Black state. […] Black Creation is what will free us" he argues, belying the influence of national poetics as channeling black expression, because creation is the "clear act of self determination."[37] Political agency, according to this view, requires the collective's capacity to speak which in turn dons the capacity to *internally* create and determine the path to follow. This is the aesthetic aim which reforms the collectivity through the nation in order to act together. Yet Luxemburg's questions haunt such a view in that the organizing of the collectivity into a single entity requires representation as delegation of will. It is in this sense in which the meanings of representation as political and aesthetic are interwoven within the nation form: the transition that envisions the form of the nation in order to assume the status of a state also entails a transition through compromise, persuasion, and coercion.

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representation, is different from the consent to structures of power which grant recognition in exchange for a delegation of agency, as political representation. And still the overlap of their effects and the difficulties in discerning one from the other seem inherent to the mystifications of the nation form—even though the essential national logic of inclusion and exclusion remains operative behind these mystifications. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 277, 276.

[36] Amiri Baraka, *Raise Race Rays Raze* (New York: Random House, 1971), 103.

[37] Baraka, *Raise Race Rays Raze*, 107.

Baraka's "Black state" evokes the pervasiveness of the nation state, which, in the historical analysis of the nation's development, marks the establishment of a distinct entity with an altogether different set of functions and goals. As John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan contend, this global system of nation states was imposed after World War II and is epitomized by the birth of the United Nations, where the nation's schematics of horizontal representation are extended to a planetary scale.[38] In their reinterpretation of the spread of nations, Kelly and Kaplan offer a critique of Anderson's model of the nation as an imagined community—a critique that is elsewhere succinctly glossed by Arjun Appadurai's observation that "One man's imagined community is another man's political prison."[39] Kelly and Kaplan note how the nation state follows less the logic of an imagined and voluntary commonality than it does that of a system of coercion whose main instigator was the US: as a veering point away from the imperial ambitions that characterized the first half of the twentieth century, the Cold War and United Nations paradigm inaugurate an age of decolonization and modernization coordinated by the US with the aim of installing a network of horizontal and symmetrical nation states representing not civilizations but cultures and traditions—a network which I further develop in the second chapter in the context of Myung Mi Kim's and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's migrations from South Korea to the US.

The international context of decolonial projects and coalitions is a significant background for the rise of multiculturalism in the US, as it not only encompasses opposition to white supremacy but also explains how, in Adom Getachew's account, "the nation-building project […] was insufficient" for the conception of decolonization as revolution.[40] As Luxemburg

[38] John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan, *Represented Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
[39] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 32.
[40] Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2019), 17.

anticipated, the experience of the new post-World War II states gave evidence of a persistent inequality that testified to the fact that "empire was institutionally flexible."[41] Beyond its localized manifestations, the nation form turns archetypal as a kind of fractal model for the organization of politics, wherein individual and collective agency are compromised in exchange for belongingness: just as the individual relinquishes possibilities of action in order to be recognized as citizen, collectivities assume certain political forms in order to be recognized as nations in a global order of horizontal and isomorphic units. This historical transition is largely a decolonial rearrangement that can be perceived globally in the emerging nation states, and locally in the many politicized and militarized minorities in the US that comprised the civil rights movement.

War and Capital

In 1965, Malcolm X's assassination triggered Baraka's decision to move to Harlem and found BART/S, a decision widely acknowledged as the beginning of the Black Arts movement and a turning point for Baraka's militarism, which had started to develop earlier with his trip to Cuba. As one of the outgrowths of the civil rights movements, the Black Arts movement offers the most notable frame for this global decolonial rearrangement in Baraka's context. His writings from this time—both the plays that brought him some fame (most notably *Dutchman*) and his collections of poetry (*Black Magic* and *It's Nation Time*)—are perhaps the most emblematic, for better or worse, of Baraka's entire career. Furthermore, this period exhibits the most salient manifestations of his nationalist adherence, which in his poetry bifurcates into two categories: an

[41] Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 22.

initial active militarism aligned with his revolutionary nationalism phase and a community-conscious phase paired with his return to Newark and his adoption of cultural nationalism.

Tracing the presence of war and militarization in Baraka's poetics, both in the ways he acknowledged and in the ways he did not, is necessary to analyze the constraints that the nation form imposed over what he perceived as the available political paths toward self-determination. As the adoption of a confrontational stance, militarization marks the successful reception of the nation state's interpellation by reinforcing the antagonisms through which the nation is structured. War, in this regard, is intrinsic to governmentality. That is, war subsumes any disruptive insurgency into pre-established terms of belligerent antagonism, which amount to sustaining the prevailing sovereign and capitalist system through the exercise of power. This in turn animates the circulation of the economy. War serves the nation to incorporate action as labor into capitalism's flows; it is a form of subsumption that induces a response from communities and practices beyond capitalism through racism and violence. Aillez and Lazzarato explain this relationship: "Money and capital remain empty (economic) 'abstractions' without the flow of power; war and civil war constitute the most deterritorialized modalities of this flow. […] If money is not supported by a flow of strategic power that finds its absolute in war, it *loses its value* as capital."[42] Imperialism then instigates the chain of capitalist subsumption through the violence it brings on its populations, provoking nationalism as a requirement of recognition. In this section I argue that Baraka's bellicose poetics display one end of the spectrum, the deterritorialization of sovereignty in the active and embodied need for war; while the following stage in his life, after his move back to Newark, displays the deterritorialized abstractions of money.

[42] Aillez and Lazzarato, *Wars and Capital*, 44.

In a letter located in his archives at Columbia University's Rare Book & Manuscript Library Collections, Baraka addresses "young Negro men" in order "to form some highly militant organization in the United States to combat the rise of Uncle Tomism, shallowed minded white liberalism, racism, and ignorance." Written in 1961, the letter displays Baraka's incipient adoption of a military stance; the letter does not hide its decolonial impetus and it is adamant about forming an alliance with "The new nations of Africa, and the newly independent peoples of Asia and Latin America [which] form, now, a majority of the people of the world." Yet for Baraka, in order to be considered allies of these decolonial insurgencies, black people must display their combative willingness: "They are, indeed, our brothers (as are intelligent, compassionate men of whatever race or nation)-- but we must earn this brotherhood by acting. Truth Is In The Act!"[43] It is with this axiom in mind that Baraka begins to write poetry with the ambition of action.

Baraka's espousal of military action can be gleaned through "A Poem Some People Will Have to Understand," the third poem in *Black Magic*. The poem begins with the perspective of a disillusioned individual ("A slick | colored boy, 12 miles from his | home. I practice no industry. | I am no longer a credit | to my race.") who knows he lacks "the preciseness a violent man could propose." These lines create a general scene of passivity and reflection, where the absence of industry figures as the absence of action. Disillusionment is occasioned by the future, by the lack of progress: stagnation prevails because without industry no product of labor can be expected, and without credit there is no debt to be collected at a later point. Evoking gendered connotations of warring, which summon the homophobic and anti-Semitic perspectives that Baraka voiced against intellectuals during this time, the possibilities that "a violent man" confers to this

[43] Amiri Baraka Papers, 1945-2015, Rare Book & Manuscript Library Collections Columbia University, box 1, folder 1.

stagnant situation begin to acquire a militaristic tone. They anticipate the poem's transitions toward a different situation in its last lines:

> We have awaited the coming of a natural
> phenomenon. Mystics and romantics, knowledgeable
> workers
> of the land.
> But none has come.
> (*Repeat*)
> but none has come.
>
> Will the machinegunners please step forward?[44]

The speaker's self-awareness of a romantic and mystical disposition leads the poem to a shift in register. The imperative to repeat, with an insinuated pause in the indented reassertion, conveys patience by protracting repetition without desperation. This renders the call for a more violent approach not passionate but contained, sober: the bellicose option is not chosen spontaneously but is the outcome of meditating on the need to act. The last line evokes the poem's title in that it provides a rationale for those who cannot understand why confrontational politics is the necessary response to the situation, why the passivity of waiting for a natural phenomenon no longer suffices.

"Black Art" is perhaps the most notorious example of the kind of bellicose poetry Baraka was writing at this time: loud and belligerent, it aims to personify the "machinegunner" that "A Poem Some People Will Have to Understand" seeks. "Black Art" displays Baraka's use of avant-garde jazz forms translated to poetry in order to articulate a motto or poetics for his work at the time: "Poems are bullshit unless they are | Teeth or trees or lemons piled | On a step." He proposes and performs an instrumentalization of poetry that animates the objective and material

[44] Baraka, *S.O.S.*, 122–3.

qualities of the poem as agential prostheses—words that do things in extension of the poet.[45] "Assassin poems, Poems that shoot | Guns. Poems that wrestle cops into alleys | And take their weapons leaving them dead | With tongues pulled out and sent to Ireland." The aggressive stance adopted by the poem follows a strategy aimed both at portraying action and at acting by shocking its readership and audience, impacting them with the violence of its content—passages like this, where calm has given way to passionate anger, display a xenophobia closer to fascism than to decolonial alliance-making.[46] Another way to frame this xenophobia is to consider how the nation form affectively incites its logics of inclusions and exclusions, which lead, in a militaristic context, to mediate and produce such expressions of hate and violence.

No section of the poem displays this strategy clearer than the coalescing of poetry and warfare in "Airplane poems, rrrrrrrrrrrrrrr | Rrrrrrrrrrrrrrr…tuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuh | …rrrrrrrrrrrrrrr…Setting fire and death to | Whities ass." Baraka's experience in the US Air Force, piloting bombers and training to identify targets from the air, flares up in this section of "Black Art," actualizing to a superlative extent the goal of his bellicose poetics during this period: striving for pure expression, his onomatopoeic articulations of aggression *drop* their semantic content to favor the material properties of sound. Cause disjointed from effect, the uttered sound disjointed from the meaning dropped over the enemy, "tuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuh | …rrrrrrrrrrrrrrr" set apart from "Setting fire and death to |

[45] Olson's influence over Baraka, in particular his projective verse, is significant here. As I will argue in the fourth chapter, Olson's poetics were attuned to a post-World War II paradigm where militaristic imperialism served as the blueprint for the expansion of the poet's self over space through poetry.
[46] This with regards to the mutilation of tongues sent (back) to Ireland, which at the time was, and continues to be, caught in the ongoing decolonial struggle against the occupation of its northern territory. Baraka's transition in the next years from intranational xenophobia to anational solidarity, regardless of race, can be discerned in his position toward Ireland: by the seventies, his archives at Howard show, he held a subscription to *The Irish People Newspaper*, dubbed "the voice of Irish republicanism in America." Delivered to his home in Newark, one of the numbers (vol. X, num. 17, May 2, 1981) that remains in his archives displays in the front cover Bobby Sands during his hunger strike, just days before his death.

Whities ass" distances the intention behind Baraka's bellicose poetics from its outcome—perhaps to a greater extent than he calculated, as if the result of his actions were projected into a future beyond his perception. Similar to the stratified organization of the army, where intention, execution, and consequence are disjointed by structural segmentation, Baraka's bellicose poetics are disjointed in their aims and results—expression is mediated by nationalism's agenda.

In Smethurst's genealogy of the Black Arts movement, he describes the influence of "the Poetics of the Popular Avant-Garde," which sought a similar approach to how European composers like Béla Bartók, Leoš Janáček, and Jean Sibelius repurposed folk forms into their work to don their musical language with novelty. Although Smethurst acknowledges how avant-garde "connotes a bold journey into the future," he does not trace the concept to its martial origin.[47] While he does connect earlier manifestations in the twenties and thirties of the popular avant-garde with projecting "the folk or popular voice as *the* national voice," the implications of the term in its military sense are not incorporated to his analysis.[48] I want to emphasize that the idea of an artistic avant-garde both conveys the sense of forward military action as well as a general militarization of the society or public to which said avant-garde belongs. In other words, the avant-garde not only figures certain artists as the most advanced—hence future-oriented—section of an army, but in doing so it militarizes the entirety of the society to which they belong, assuming that society follows the same path taken by the avant-garde. Bellicose confrontation is grasped as inherent to the collectivity, but so is an implicit temporal unidirectionality. Understood in these terms, such an avant-garde denotes futurity and novelty in the homogeneous temporality of the nation.[49]

[47] Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 58.
[48] Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 60.
[49] Through this genealogy of the avant-garde I want to note how its inherent bellicosity makes it susceptible to nationalization. In his analysis of the relationship between the avant-garde and ethnic

In Baraka's own account, this connection between the aesthetics of the avant-garde and war is evoked in a long passage in his *Autobiography* pertaining to his entry to the Air Force (which he refers to as the "error farce") and to his intellectual development—although the connection is barely reflected upon.

> I was trying to become an intellectual. I was becoming haughtier and more silent. More critical in a more general way. More specialized in my concerns. More abstract and distant. I was being drawn, had been drawn, into a world that Howard prepared me for on one level—blunt elitism. Though the deeper resolves of intellectualism I knew nothing about, even though I'd been prodded to hook up self-consciously with the profoundest art of the African American, black music, by one man, titillated by another, I knew nothing consciously when I got out and went into the death organization—error farce.
> Yet my reading was, in the main, white people. Europeans, Anglo Americans. So that my ascent toward some ideal intellectual pose was at the same time a trip toward a white-out I couldn't even understand. I was learning and, at the same time, unlearning. The fasteners to black life unloosed. I was taking words, cramming my face with them. White people's words. Profound, beautiful, some even correct and important. But that is a tangle of nonself in that for all that. A nonself creation where you become other than you as you. […] I was being drafted into the world of quattrocento, vers libre, avant-garde, surrealism and dada, New Criticism, cubism, art nouveau, objectivism, "Prufrock," ambiguity, art music, rococo, shoe and non-shoe, highbrow vs. middlebrow (I'd read the article), and I didn't realize the deeper significance of it.[50]

Perhaps this passage could be interpreted as providing insights into the transition from peoplehood to nationhood in everything but name. Baraka's "nonself" is the product of unlearning, abstraction, and acculturation, which insinuates a process of mystification whereby the individual becomes a visibly minority citizen, recognized as such by other citizens and the nation. But the more crucial section of this passage with regards to his bellicose poetics is the experience of being drafted into the avant-garde (and into many other Western cultural and

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minorities, Timothy Yu relies on the theorizations of Renato Poggioli and Peter Bürger to assert how both categories are similarly social and aesthetic constructs (Poggioli had noted earlier how the pluralism of bourgeois modern culture was a necessity for the survival of the avant-garde). Such similarities become more salient toward the end of the century, during the age of multiculturalism, when both ethnic minorities and the avant-garde are incorporated within the nation's frame of reference. Timothy Yu, *Race and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[50] Baraka, *Autobiography*, 174–5.

artistic trends, movements, and positions). There is a correlation between the upward social movement that intellectualism, citizenship, and the army promise with the advantageous position that the avant-garde entails—the cutting-edge position of the future citizen. Put this way, the avant-garde tempts the black artist in the same ways that Baraka analyzed in his diagnosis of jazz musicians: the avant-garde artist consents to the temporality of a militarized nation, propels it in that direction, and moves upward in its social hierarchy. The avant-garde concedes a visibility conjoined with the nation's hypervisibility—a condition that anational poetics, I argue in the coda, often subverts through secrecy and obscurity.

Baraka's transition toward cultural nationalism and more community-oriented politics began in 1967 after his visit to Los Angeles to meet Maulana Karenga and learn about Kawaida. Baraka understood Kawaida as a "Black value system" with a set of African practices and beliefs essentially alien to the Western reality that surrounded black people in America, and that could be geared toward rejecting assimilation into the US: "To many of us, Kawaida, is the most complete and dynamic black ideology of change extant. It is a synthesis of all the really Black Thought of the late 50's and 60's, indelibly Afro-American. […] Like the monster who cannot digest what he has 'eaten,' so it begins to ingest him, from the inside."[51] The latter entails a shift in register and conceptualization by way of the different set of metaphors Baraka employs to describe the situation. Ingestion suggests a de-escalation from his bellicose poetics, from his machinegunner poems, with regards to his stance toward the US. The emphasis slides from external confrontation to internal organization: "One being in harmony with itself, this is the first need to be satisfied before we can deal with an outside world. But it is internal unity that makes a

[51] Amiri Baraka, *Kawaida Studies* (Chicago, Third World Press, 1972), 15, 7–8.

single will, which is self determination."[52] Baraka's introspective search for a unified collective will has a notable correlative in the poetry collection *It's Nation Time*.

Here the idea of the nation is crafted as a reflection of the collectivity, as in, for example, the first poem, titled "The Nation is Like Ourselves," which begins with the lines:

> The nation is like ourselves, together
> seen in our various scenes, sets where we are
> what ever we are doing, is what the nation
> is
> doing
> or
> not doing
> is what the nation
> is
> being
> or not being [53]

The active quality that characterized the nationalist drive in *Black Magic*, aiming to propel dynamism and disrupt stagnation, is replaced not so much by passivity in "The Nation is Like Ourselves," but by a naturalization of the nation. As a reflection of collective being, Baraka here portrays the obverse of the transformation I have been analyzing: the people do not transform into the nation, but the nation adapts to the people. In the overlap of being and doing, the nation happens organically as a result of the internal unity and harmony Baraka sought—yet such a situation is at odds with Baraka's situation then (as his personal financial archives show) and with the rest of the poetry collection.

In a more self-critical moment, Baraka considers what must be done in order to adopt nationalism: "The nationalist must begin with the people (to paraphrase Maulana Karenga's quote of Mao), and transform their desires into a fulfillment of their needs."[54] The transformation

[52] Baraka, *Kawaida Studies*, 12.
[53] Amiri Baraka, *It's Nation Time*. (Chicago: Third World Press, 1970), 7.
[54] Baraka, *Kawaida Studies*, 34.

of desire is far from the organic being and doing that "The Nation is Like Ourselves" portrayed. This transformation is more attuned to the third of the three poems contained in *It's Nation Time*, the one bearing the collection's title:

> Time to get
> together
> time to be one strong fast black enrgy space
> one pulsating magnetism, rising
> time to get up and
> be
> come
> be
> come, time to
> be come
> time to
> get up be come
> black genius rise in spirit muscle
> sun man get up rise heart of universes to be
> future of the world
> the black man is the future of the world
> be come
> rise up
> future of the black genius spirit reality [55]

Moving away from the emphasis on community which signaled the organic unity of the nation, "It's Nation Time" is not invested in space but in the dynamism of nationalism and its unidirectional temporality, where the future is urged to "be come" the present. That is, the verbal mode in these lines anticipates the arrival of the future as the imperative to embrace what has already come. Indeed, the tension between the mode of being in the first poem of the collection against that of becoming in the last poem is notable in Baraka's articulation of nation and nationalism. This tension is more palpable when "It's Nation Time" recurs to onomatopoeic language to convey its expressive intentions as a persuasive resource that is evocative of his earlier bellicose poetics:

> come together in unity unify

[55] Baraka, *It's Nation Time*, 21.

for nation time
it's nation time…

Boom
Booom
BOOOM
Boom
Dadadadadadadadadadad
Boom
Boom
Boom
Boom
Dadadadad adadadad

Hey ahee (soft)
Hey ahhee (loud) [56]

The drive of these lines is mostly expressive, emulating the percussive rhythm of drums, yet at times it turns militaristic: the evocation of "boom" as the sound of an explosion has its bellicose complement in the final imperatives in parenthesis.

In specifying how these sounds ought to be pronounced, Baraka channels an imperative to join and conform the nation: as opposed to the unmediated expression of onomatopoeic sound, these parentheticals subtly constrain expression. The adverbs in parenthesis resemble stage directions, the kind of dramatic instructions that Baraka must have been constantly employing during this period. Along with the centripetal motion instilled by the call to "come together in unity unify," these instructions project an intention or direction over the collectivity's expression. The transformation of desire that Baraka more explicitly sought in his nonfiction suggests that these two lines are likewise oriented toward propelling the nation's becoming over the collectivity's being.

Although these imperatives certainly mark a de-escalation from the militarization that the poems from *Black Magic* proposed, *It's Nation Time* still strives to transform black being, to shape it according to the nation form. That is, these parentheticals expose the effects of the

[56] Baraka, *It's Nation Time*, 22.

nation form, where becoming aims to be rendered as being. It is in this general confusion, in the abstractions that problematize what has been attained and what has arrived, that Baraka's community-oriented national project is hampered by the constraints of the national economy. The process of attempting to articulate and materialize the black nation he envisioned encountered economic impediments. Although he continually tried to isolate himself from the US, to resist its hold over black communities, his economic necessities continually reintroduced him into the national scene and capital's flows, as his advertisement for "Nationtime Products" showed.

Caught in between war and capital, this period instills in Baraka the need to unlearn the nation. By the late seventies, he would be in a position where he could question his nationalist stance and move on to a more socialist perspective. In 1976 he published the poetry collection *Hard Facts*, wherein he stated:

> Earlier our own poems came from an enraptured patriotism that screamed against whites as the eternal enemies of Black people, as the sole cause of our disorder + oppression. The same subjective mystification led to mysticism, metaphysics, spookism, &c., rather than dealing with reality, as well as an ultimately reactionary nationalism that served no interests but our newly emerging Black bureaucratic elite and petit bourgeois, so that they would have control over their Black market. This is not to say Black nationalism was not necessary, it was and is to the extent that we are still patriots, involved in the Black Liberation Movement, we must also be revolutionaries who understand that our quest for our people's freedom can only be realized as the result of Socialist Revolution![57]

Turning away from the militaristic and combative disposition he held in the sixties, Baraka disowns the antagonism and mystifications that upheld his "reactionary nationalism." Echoing Luxemburg's diagnosis, Baraka's reassessment of reality questions his Leninist interpretation of the function of the black bourgeoisie toward self-determination, thereby recanting his support of "a Black market served by Black businesses." Although he still conceives of Black nationalism

[57] Amiri Baraka, *Hard Facts* (Newark: Congress of Afrikan People, 1976), iv–v.

as necessary for the "Black Liberation Movement," the need for a subsequent revolutionary phase frames nationalism as another stage in his life and in the path toward black self-determination. In other words, just as nationalism needed to be embraced and learned, by the late seventies Baraka understands that the moment to unlearn nationalism and embrace a more revolutionary stance had arrived.

Assessing the poetry published in *Hard Facts*, Nathaniel Mackey reflects on the turning point it entails in Baraka's life. Mackey observes how Baraka "explicitly disowns his earlier nationalist position" but he also registers other changes, such as the dropping of his Muslim title *Imamu* (meaning "teacher," an epithet he had adopted as part of the Kawaida doctrine), and his attacks against Kenneth Gibson, the mayor of Newark whom he had helped elect. These changes inform the disenchantment Baraka felt toward some of his political and aesthetic strategies, in particular with regards to his participation in the nation's governing processes and representative structures. However, as Mackey claims, "Black music continues to be invoked—respectfully invoked—serving in *Hard Facts*, as in earlier work, as a harbinger of change."[58] Returning more explicitly to the investment of *Blues People* in black expression, Baraka's conceptualization of the changing same takes priority again in his politics and aesthetics, a tendency that would prevail in his poetry in the following decades.

Unmediated Expression

"Perhaps you don't understand completely where I'm coming from, but the poetry qua poetry is not what I am interested in, but its source and its objective effect in the world," explains Baraka

[58] Nathaniel Mackey, "The Changing Same: Black Music in the Poetry of Amiri Baraka" in *boundary 2*, vol. 6, no. 2 (Winter, 1978), 357–8.

to Clayton Eshleman in a letter from 1992 located in his archives at Columbia University's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library. Although the intention behind his clarification is to contextualize an essay written "ca. 79 when teaching [Aimé] Cesaire at Yale," I interpret the statement as part of the articulation of Baraka's poetics over more than three decades. By communicating his disinterest in "poetry qua poetry," in the excision of the poetic object from its context of production, Baraka voices the concerns of *Blues People* over expression as the manifestation of a people's experience. He further clarifies his position by summarizing Eshleman's perspective:

> you think Cesaire's poetry is an artifact independent of his life which created it. It is the expression of that life, the reflection of that life. And the context and exigencies of that life are important as life, its conflicts and antagonisms profound as they exist even before they come to exist as poetry, &c! Or even if they never do. […] Cesaire as thinker, Cesaire as activist, Cesaire as Communist. […] The 'destruction of French forms' means that Cesaire wanted the language, French, to be his French, an expression of his experience, an expression of the experience of the colonized. He had to wrest the language from the colonizers.[59]

The poetics articulated in this explanation theorize an essential link between the singularity of expression and its need to steal previous forms to acquire its own. Baraka deploys an understanding of poetry attuned to its production process akin to that of minor literature as described by Deleuze and Guattari.

In his letter, Baraka points to a risk implicit in this disruption of forms when he speaks of how certain "'orthodox' surrealists, who quickly broke from Communism, become, after awhile, simply re orderers. Like the commode that 'scandalized' the bourgeois world, yeh, for a hot minute, only to become one of the chief ornaments of its museums."[60] I interpret this risk

[59] Amiri Baraka papers, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library Columbia University, box 1, folder 4.
[60] Amiri Baraka papers, Columbia University, box 1, folder 4. 1992. "The question is, for all of us, to take what there is in reality that we can use, that is purposeful in its paralleling of our desires, our path, &c our struggle and exactly to 'reject' that which is still connected to the dead, the oppressive, that which opposes life."

inherent to the process of expression, to Cesaire's taking ownership over his French, as a reterritorialization through subsumption: Baraka is aware of how expression through "the destruction of French forms" can be subsumed into the system it aims to subvert. Taking Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* as an example, Baraka points to how the artwork's initially transgressive character is eventually neutralized and assimilated into the archive of objects reordering or dictating value. Reterritorialization means assimilation through a gradual normalization of the destabilizing potential of an expression and the imminent possibility of being repurposed against its initial aims. There is something of this subsumption in the afterlife of the poetry Baraka wrote during the sixties and seventies. Although he viewed nationalism as essentially a decolonial struggle, the rupture that his poetics strive for and manage does not so much reorder things but participate in the preexisting order due to its content. Baraka's nationalist poetry has its disruptive qualities subsumed into the system because of the alignment of its expression with the nation form.

However, I argue, this most visible and salient facet of Baraka's trajectory was one historically circumscribed—it was a dominant form belonging to the political context yet subtended by his earlier investment in the singularity of black expression. Through the theorization of minor literature, I interpret in Baraka's poetry an occluded minor potential that persists as the expressive source of black experience; it is a constant return to the specificity of black history in the US.

First published in its entirety in 1995, *Wise Why's Y's* weaves different literary forms in order to elaborate a seamless aesthetic object where poetry and music interdependently relay a collective account of black history through its forced migration to America. A prefatory note at the beginning of the book informs the reader that "Before *Wise1* there is a long improvisation,

not yet completely transcribed. It is called, in its entirety, *PRE-HERE/ISTIC* Sequence."[61] This preface works in conjunction with the opening lines of "Wise 1," which read:

> If you ever find
> yourself, some where
> lost and surrounded
> by enemies
> who won't let you
> speak in your own language
> who destroy your statues
> & instruments, who ban
> your oom boom ba boom
> then you are in trouble
> deep trouble
> they ban your
> oom boom ba boom
> you in deep deep
> trouble

Returning to Baraka's use of onomatopoeic language, here "oom boom ba boom" illustrates a different reaction to the exercise of violence over the collective's expressive means. Being the object or site of contention itself, "oom boom ba boom" traces the oppressive conditions set up by the surrounding enemy as it simultaneously registers the ongoing will to persist through such expressions. That is, expression becomes the explicit locus of struggle. But the orientation of this struggle faces toward the oppressed, not the oppressing enemies: the second-person address of this passage summons a collective perspective that turns its back to the surrounding enemy and continues to utter the banned expression inwardly to the assembled collectivity. Without losing any of its initial qualities, "oom boom ba boom" gains attributes of resistance and persistence through the given context—the second time it is pronounced, its connotation is one of insurgent insistence.

[61] Amiri Baraka, *Wise Why's Y's* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1995), 5.

Onomatopoeic language in "Wise 1" is expression geared toward delimiting the collectivity's space of agency and expression. Unlike "It's Nation Time," expression is not mediated by the imperative to communicate in a specific form; unlike the bellicose poetics of "Black Art," war is not the assumed mode of interaction with the oppressor. Even more to the point, "Wise 1" figures expression as decolonial praxis and defiance of oppression simultaneously, asserting the singularity and continuity of the collectivity beyond its oppressors through the asemantic materiality of the onomatopoeic that shatters through English's existing syntax and grammar. Despite the given depth of the problem in which the community finds itself, insisted through the repeated adjective in the next to last line and the spatial perception of the situation (of being lost and surrounded "some where"), "oom boom ba boom" sustains a projection forward which the poetry contained in the collection follows, charting a sonic/ritual strategy for action.

In this regard, it is important that Baraka locates his poetry sequence within definite spatiotemporal coordinates charted by an African "PRE-HERE" that anticipates the "where" of slavery in the second line of the poem. In terms of the heuristic ("HERE/ISTIC") aim of this preface, this "PRE-HERE" serves to outline the location of the nation in a place and time from where, "Wise 1" continues, it would "probably take you several hundred years | to get | out!"[62] Rather than assert an inside-outside dichotomy, something he problematizes later on in analogy with a slavery-redemption dichotomy, Baraka develops a heuristics of the nation through space and time in order to survey its extension and, consequently, its limits; in other words, this is an assertion of that which prevailed before the nation and that which lies through and beyond it.

[62] Baraka, *Wise Why's Y's*, 6.

The presence of the US within *Wise Why's Y's* is indeed one of near ubiquity and saturation: without direct mention, the nation constitutes an atmospheric presence that always produces a scene of violence. "A NOTE TO PRESIDENT PASADOEKEEOH! & His Wise Ass Reply (16)" recreates this violence as interwoven with the nation's symbols and ideologies addressed here in the form of the national anthem:

Oh Say
we can

MURDER them
can you
See
Oh
Say
we can
you
See
MURDER[63]

These aggressive interjections exemplify Baraka's reconceptualization of the nation form at this point of his life. Throughout Baraka's sequence, the nation manifests in the violence that antagonizes its subjects through their terms of belonging, inevitably binding their participation in the nation with their hate for the nation and other nationals. That is, at this point the nation exhibits its means of induction into the bellicose dynamics of the US as opposed to a political path leading to the separation from it. In fact, the link that brings together the nation is experienced through the violence of its symbolic life/death code, a perpetual valorization of the nation's tenets that demands a devaluation of the diverging self, of the minority. Through its appearance of inclusion, the multicultural nation reveals the exclusions it performs through its operative xenophobia. Pushing against this oppressive drive, Baraka continually invokes the collectivities in constant flux that are the protagonists of his poems.

[63] Baraka, *Wise Why's Y's*, 45.

Through an interchangeably singular and plural voice, this protagonist notes how "there's white peepa voice behind my air," alluding to the linguistic intrusion of the nation in their collective identity; yet the collective voice still defines a realm of their own, infused with agency: "Thas alright, alright wit me | But I been gone, naw, I been gone | | my shape look like black on black | and fading."[64] Here, next to an otherwise violent poetics concerned with a minority's attachment to the US, lies the heuristic function of Baraka's spatiotemporally finite account of the nation: from the nationally situated perspective, we can glean the horizon of the anational with this collective voice distinguishing a part of their constitution lying beyond the order of the nation—as it were, a present constituent that is nonetheless "gone, naw," absent from the nation's realm. There, where the shape and limits of the collective and the individual are lost in the obscurity of an unknown background no longer discernible to the nation's purview, lies the domain of the anational. Baraka's process of unlearning the nation directs him toward this realm of possibilities without elaborating a fully developed account of the anational.

Returning to Negri and Hardt's model of a progressively abstract categorization of collectivities—starting with the multitude onto a people, nation, and state—I argue that the anational possibilities of Baraka's poetry at the time describe a transgressive yet hidden impetus against the nation form.[65] Baraka along with the poets I analyze in this dissertation articulate the emergence of a moment of recognition of more actual collectivities (as opposed to the nation's abstractions) that cohere through their singular histories manifested in their expressive, linguistic, and textual practices. For example, Baraka's collective speaker self-reflexively connects the flow of their people with their poetic expressiveness in a return to the earlier concerns espoused in *Blues People* to observe that "what is spoken | is the living | the flesh | & its

[64] Baraka, *Wise Why's Y's*, 17.
[65] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 102–3, 134.

| Movement."[66] This is a movement that extends beyond the realm of the nation, but that is also actively occluded by it, just as the banned expression "oom boom ba boom." These collectivities approach identifications with the multitude, that is, identifications beyond the nation's normativity that subsequently problematize the nation's interdependence with the state. Another way to frame this phenomenon is to posit how these poetries entail a denationalization of the category of peoplehood, so that peoplehood is both released (from the homogenizing category of the nation) and contained (as a specific group) through its singularity.

[66] Baraka, *Wise Why's Y's*, 72.

Chapter II: Incorporation and Fragmentation in Anzaldúa and Tamayo

In 2002, Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating edited and published *this bridge we call home*, a compilation of essays revisiting the 1981 anthology of writings by women of color *This Bridge Called My Back*, in turn edited by Cherríe Moraga and Anzaldúa. Expanding on the first anthology's critique of patriarchy and misogyny, yet moderating its critique of racism by white feminists, *this bridge we call home* argued in favor of a shift in direction. "Today categories of race and gender are more permeable and flexible than they were for those of us growing up prior to the 1980s," observes Anzaldúa in her preface, "Twenty-one years ago we struggled with the recognition of difference within the context of commonality. Today we grapple with the recognition of commonality within the context of difference."[1] Orienting recognition toward charting the contours of the political coalition she and her collaborators form, Anzaldúa aims to balance difference and commonality in both anthologies. As permeability and flexibility mark the more recent iteration of this process, her desire for recognition meets more diffused limits of belongingness.

For example, in the essay that closes the anthology, "now let us shift…the path of conocimiento…inner work, public acts," Anzaldúa readdresses this recognition of commonality in terms of her own experience phrased in the second person: "With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the preciousness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings—somos todos un paíz."[2] These last

[1] Gloria Anzaldúa, "Preface, (Un)natural bridges, (Un)safe spaces" in *this bridge called my back: radical visions for transformation*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating (London: Routledge, 2002), 5.
[2] Gloria Anzaldúa, "now let us shift…the path of conocimiento…inner work, public acts" in *this bridge called my back: radical visions for transformation*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating (London: Routledge, 2002), 558.

words in Spanish index the tensions that I want to trace in Anzaldúa's thought. The sentence manages to capitalize on the previous descriptions of harmony in the absolute inclusiveness of all beings on the planet through an epigrammatic reformulation that switches languages in the process.[3] Simultaneously, however, the sentence posits that the frame of inclusion is that of "paíz," for which the closest translation would be "country," a term that appears to summon the theoretical and historical connotations of the nation—without the two being exactly identical. These are disjointed synonyms of sorts in an asymptotic relation: although the semantic fields of "country" and "nation" predominantly overlap to the point that their meanings are understood as interchangeable, each term's specific denotations and histories diverge from the other—a divergence notable in the predominance of temporal tropes in "nation" from spatial tropes in "country."[4] This disjointed identity charts the stakes of my analytical investment in Anzaldúa's poetics: how the presence of the nation exhibits many different inflections in her writings, as in how she conjures "the unity and interdependence of all beings" through the evocation of a country, which in turn displays an asymptotic relation with the nation.

In this chapter I engage with Anzaldúa's prolific and shifting theorizations of identity, race, language, and poetry through the optic of the nation form; the aim is to track her active role in the reproduction of the nation as well as her divergences from it, her attempts to unlearn the national scene. An instance of the pervasive presence of the nation form would in fact be the

[3] The language shift also entails a register shift, moving from a standard English to what becomes an irregular Spanish in the grammatical variation of the spelling of the word *país*. I will address this and other linguistic variations below.

[4] While the etymology of "nation," from *nasci*, to be born, refers to a condition attained at birth and traces a blood-line which makes it emphatically temporal, "country" develops on rather spatial tropes from the preposition *contra*, specifying the land "in front of" someone or something or "against" another land. The word "país," whose first definition in the dictionary of the Real Academia Española is "A sovereign state," entered Spanish via the French "pays" which defines an inhabited region or land; this is why the English "country," in its spatial emphasis, appears as the most fitting translation for "país."

understanding of "the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings" as comprising a nation—which, again, is not exactly Anzaldúa's claim. Yet her use of the term "country" does imply spatiotemporal constraints that set limits on the radical belongingness she describes; "country" gives belongingness a form with limits, and in so doing, it approximates it to the form of the nation. This is the sense in which "nation" and "country" maintain an asymptotic relation; they are not identical, yet the latter shapes an unbounded community much like—and potentially in the service of—the former.

The nation form is an insightful tool to analyze Anzaldúa's writings because it helps to work through their historical context. It sheds light on the transition that occurred in the aftermath of the civil rights movements when the US was reformed as an officially multicultural nation. As we will see below, the nation form plays an essential role in this transition, expanding and intensifying its presence well beyond the constraints that it imposed during the sixties and seventies in the work of Amiri Baraka. Anzaldúa's country, in asymptotic relation with the nation, displays how multiculturalism further aestheticizes and diffuses the nation form in order to demarcate belongingness and difference intranationally. Managing the increasingly more complex set of internal contradictions that constitute the US, the nation form continually attempts to refigure the plurality of its social body as coherent. In aesthetic terms, this signals the nation form's ascendance, during the last two decades of the century, to a hegemonic position in the operative distribution of the sensible, in the regime of available forms of perception. Reaching a near-ubiquity, the nation form affects the way that individuals and collectivities identify themselves. That is, it affects the recognition of sameness and commonality that was imperative for Anzaldúa's politics and poetics, continually exposing them to national

incorporation even though the radical belongingness she envisioned continually strove to diverge from national belonging.

The Wound and the Body

From the beginning of her career, Anzaldúa understood her intellectual labor as emerging from a position of unease that reasserted the need for an ameliorative poetics. "Living in a state of psychic unrest," she noted in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, "is what makes poets write and artists create. […] That's what writing is for me, an endless cycle of making it worse, making it better, but always making meaning out of the experience, whatever it may be."[5] Aware of how her writing alternates between blockages and moments of awareness, she associates this creative process with her cultural identity: "I recognize that the internal tension of oppositions can propel (if it doesn't tear apart) […] an agent of transformation."[6] Caught in this dialectics, not unlike the internal oppositions imposed by national belonging, the act of recognition provides a fulcrum to the alternation between making it worse and making it better throughout her life. Evocative of the stages through which Baraka serialized the political and poetic episodes of his life, the different perspectives Anzaldúa held throughout her career (and the twenty-one-year transition from the aforementioned recognition of difference in commonality to that of commonality in difference) attest to her experimental impulse, to how she insisted in cognizing anew her cultural identity and political coalitions.

Her continually shifting conceptualizations sometimes acquired the form of prescriptive steps toward alleviating the historical trauma experienced by members of oppressed minorities;

[5] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lutte, 1987), 73.
[6] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 74.

among the many instances of this strategizing in her writings, an earlier version of "now let us shift…the path of conocimiento…inner work, public acts," delivered as a talk in 2000 and preserved in her archives at the Benson Latin American Collection of the University of Texas at Austin, describes "The journey and path of conocimiento [as] one of creative acts of will, and spiritual activism, and healing, of using inner resources." Translating "knowledge" into the Spanish "conocimiento," Anzaldúa's path of conocimiento is one "with a desire to grow in understanding, to grow in awareness and share the awareness" through seven steps:

1. el arrebato, seeing through the cracks
2. nepantla
3. Coatlicue, desconocimiento
   Desconocimientos--greatest evil
4. the realization, the vision, el sacrificio
5. el compromiso, the call of la Llorona
6. [Acting Out the Vision] spiritual activism, compartiendo [Corazon con razon en la mano izquierda]
7. Coyolxauhqui, creating the new story[7]

This schematized list and the titles of each step vary from the version that would appear in *this bridge we call home*. Her method unfolds from the dismembered and negative nature of "arrebato" into an intended "conocimiento" and "the creation of a new vision." This new vision in turn demands a commitment through which spiritual activism develops as a transition from an individually held perspective to a collectively shared project, a coalition. Anzaldúa's borrowing of the Aztec deity Coyolxauhqui symbolizes a transformation of the shared new vision into a collective practice, which in turn "creates a new story."

Anzaldúa's point of departure, "el arrebato" as an experience of "falling apart, of been torn, dismembered"[8] is resonant with what is likely her most often quoted statement, wherein she

[7] Gloria Anzaldúa Papers, Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, box 49, folder 5, p. 3. Sections in brackets added in handwriting.
[8] Anzaldúa Papers, Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, box 49, folder 5, p. 3

figures the site of her work as a wound: "The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture."[9] A tendency throughout her writing, Anzaldúa repurposes the trope of the body politic to express the historical violence suffered by oppressed minorities through figures of malaise, wounds, and dismemberment. Her use of this trope, however, unveils a specific vulnerability to nationalization, which would become most evident during the 1990s, about a decade after the publication of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, when Anzaldúa embraced a "mestiza nation" as a reparative decolonial strategy (which I address in the next section of this chapter).

In this context, the 1958 Supreme Court's ruling on *Trop v. Dulles*—which rejected the state's desire to strip an army deserter of his citizenship—provides a relevant historical antecedent to Anzaldúa's repurposing of the body politic trope and to multiculturalism's logic in general. Lauren Berlant observes how the Court's decision officialized the idea that citizenship is situated "in the citizen's 'body,' the abstract body that can, nonetheless, feel pain as well as the humiliation of being vulnerable, feminized, 'fair game for the despoiler at home and the oppressor abroad.'"[10] Anzaldúa's politics and poetics certainly aimed to empower and remediate the vulnerable position of women of color against oppressors at home and abroad, regardless of national frontiers. Or, more precisely, the vulnerability Anzaldúa addresses is a repercussion of the historical oppression the nation has exercised through colonial violence. Yet, consonant with the official interpretation of citizenship, the removal of which Berlant glosses as "virtually ontological torture," the wound as a site of pain opens the possibility of misconstruing citizenship as a reparative promise; the feeling of this pain *as a citizen* reifies the nation by

[9] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 3.
[10] Lauren Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 13.

misidentifying the wound as belonging to the national body. The danger for the oppressed minority here lies in mistaking the cause of the wound's affliction with its possibility of healing. The point is that citizenship stages healing and incorporation through nationalization, while it occludes the fact that "national identity requires self-ablation," as Berlant observes.[11] Both at the individual and the collective levels, national incorporation balances the prostheses and amputations that nationalized minorities go through, pointing to the exclusions that national inclusion hides.

While I interpret Anzaldúa's politics and poetics as emerging from the wound of colonial violence, I reformulate the conditions under which this wound is simultaneously prevented from healing and being reified as a third country—a reification which displays the effects of the nation form as actively inciting incorporation through similarity. As a departing premise, I posit that Anzaldúa's reproduction of the nation form is a dominant presence in her writings that is nonetheless contiguous with emergent and residual forms of divergence. This hypothesis states that a reappraisal of Anzaldúa's politics in the context of the nation state exhibits an anational potential that can only be gleaned against the dominant presence of the nation form. I exemplify the latter through an engagement with the concept behind the second step in her healing prognosis, nepantla, an idea she appropriates and adapts from the Aztec world (in the fourth section of this chapter I elaborate on the function of nepantla within the Aztec context).

For Anzaldúa, the dismemberment produced by arrebato is both experienced and perceived within and beyond the body, it is a position: "You begin to see through all your identifications, your labels of classification, the barrier that our ethnic origins set up, the walls

[11] Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy*, 4.

that cultural traditions and religious beliefs erect between us and others."[12] Contrasting with the figuration of the wound in the national body, Anzaldúa's conception of nepantla entails dwelling in this in-between position, which enables a perceptual process attuned to the dismemberment that is experienced as a result of colonial violence: "finding yourself in the cracks, in the inbetween space. You feel ungrounded, confused, emotionally vulnerable, wounded, uncertain, alienated and conflicted."[13] Although the emotions associated with nepantla may connote a negative condition, I interpret them in an anational context as conducive to unlearning the nation.

Unlike the depiction of nationalization as instigated by the continual hemorrhage that in *Borderlands/La Frontera* produces a new country, the segmented scheme of Anzaldúa's seven steps offers a protracted version of the same process; as such, Anzaldúa's conception of nepantla affords the possibility of dwelling in the process of healing without projecting a third country. Nepantla grants an alternative to the reconstitution and reproduction of the national body by letting the minority individual and community experience the wound without reifying a body. From this perspective, dwelling on nepantla can refigure the culminating step in Anzaldúa's healing process, Coyolxauhqui. Iconically represented as a dismembered body, Coyolxauhqui can hold nepantla by maintaining fragmentation without suture.

As Anzaldúa explains in the same draft, "Coyolxauhqui. Re-membrar es poner nuevamente una part del cuerpo pedida o separada, reincorporar, responer en el cuerpo que se ha sido dejada afuera o rechazada. Las partes negadas--las experiencias, las emociones y pensamientos relacionados--vuelven a la conciencia."[14] With the impending risk of misreading

[12] Anzaldúa Papers, Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, box 49, folder 5, p. 2.
[13] Anzaldúa Papers, Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, box 49, folder 5, p. 3.
[14] This section roughly translates to "To re-member is to put anew a lost or separated part of the body, to reincorporate, to respond/replenish in the body what has been left outside or rejected. The negated parts—

all of these tropes of reincorporation as nationalization, nepantla can remain active in the hyphenated separation of re-membrance as an anational insistence. Echoing how Audre Lorde urged Mary Daly in a letter published in *This Bridge Called My Back* to "re-member what is dark and ancient and divine within your self that aids your speaking," Anzaldúa's re-membrar staves off the reconstitution of the body politic by fragmenting and foregrounding the "rejected parts" of the collective memory of colonial violence as an impediment to reincorporation.[15] Re-membrar in relation to nepantla and the reproduction of the nation locates what Fred Moten describes as the "nonlocatability of discontinuity" as political upheaval: "What one begins to consider, as a function of the nonlocalizable nature or status of discontinuity, is a special universalization of discontinuity, where discontinuity could be figured as ubiquitous minority, omnipresent queerness."[16] One might say, through this lens, that through the repressed memory of colonial violence, re-membrar exhibits the nation form's porousness by inhabiting its innumerable interstices as instances of anational ubiquity.

This chapter attempts to come to terms with Anzaldúa's multifaceted and shifting poetics by parsing her conceptualizations that remain liable to reproduce the nation in order to set them apart from those that do not. While Anzaldúa is aware of some of the historical and political underpinnings of her adoption of mestizaje, I argue that the concept remains oriented toward the nation form in ways she does not acknowledge. Mestizaje then affects some of Anzaldúa's other conceptualizations, such as the borderlands and her notion of Chicanas/os, by facilitating their incorporation into the multicultural US. Unlike this nationalizing drive, nepantla organizes a

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the experiences, the emotions, and the related thoughts—return to conscience." Anzaldúa Papers, Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, box 49, folder 5, p. 5–6.

[15] Audre Lorde, "An Open Letter to Mary Daly," in *This Bridge Called My Back*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015), 92.

[16] Fred Moten, *In the Break* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 70.

different set of conceptualizations (such as her figuration of cenotes, which I address in the last section of the chapter) that attempt to unlearn the nation.

It is, however, important to stress that apart from my analysis of Anzaldúa's mobilization of nepantla, the broader structure of this chapter outlines an anational drive in itself. Anzaldúa's theorizations proposed different relationships and conceptualizations of the nation responding to different historical junctures—but her point of departure, her cultural identity, emerged from an essential unease with the status quo that the nation upholds. As a not fully articulated perspective, but rather a position rehearsing different perspectives (like nepantla) in an experimental and peremptory cognizing anew, Anzaldúa's restlessness instantiates the anational as a commitment to commune apart from the varying yet ongoingly oppressive conditions of the nation—to practice radical belongingness without the constraints of nation or country.

In the following, along with my readings of Anzaldúa, I revisit some of the critical studies of her work over the last decades to both locate them historically and elaborate on how these readings assessed Anzaldúa's relationship with the nation. This relates to my contention that some of the political claims contained in and made about Anzaldúa's writings could be expanded and updated in order to pay heed to the historical transformations that undergird her thought. To begin with, I address the relationship between Anzaldúa's work and its historical context as one constrained by multiculturalism and deconstruction; part of this historical revision hinges on an understanding of multiculturalism and deconstruction as structural to the discursive organization of the US during the last decades of the twentieth century. Following Catherine Malabou, I employ the term structural to reference a particular conceptualization that excises its meaning from structuralism and its afterlife as an a priori or original ground, and instead stresses

"an a posteriori structure, a *residue of history*."[17] From the vantage point of this retrospective orientation, in the next section of this chapter I analyze the logics of deconstruction in Anzaldúa's writings in order to gauge their formal reciprocity with US multiculturalism as they bestow plasticity to the nation form.

I take this section as attempting to turn Anzaldúa's work and criticism towards an engagement with the complex relations that multiculturalism poses in what Elizabeth Povinelli has termed the cunning of recognition: "we need to understand better the cunning of recognition; its intercalation of the politics of culture with the culture of capital. We need to puzzle over a simple question: What is the nation recognizing, capital commodifying, and the court trying to save from the breach of history when difference is recognized?"[18] In other words, this section scrutinizes the internal dynamics that afford the multicultural nation form its adaptability and how the act of recognition may be susceptible to cunning or, in Anzaldúa's words, to "making it worse." At the core of my argument lies the reassessment of deconstruction not as a strategy for reparative politics, but as a marker for the encounter with and management of difference.

Building on the historical contextualization of the second section, in the third section I analyze Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* through Michael Taussig's concurrent anthropological studies on the nation state's general economy in order to describe the specific national mechanics operative within Anzaldúa's writings; in particular, this section focuses on the dominant presence of the nation by close reading Anzaldúa's embodiment of a mestiza identity in the borderlands. Taussig's analysis, furthermore, affords a model to approach the formal divergences from the nation that Anzaldúa's later work displays. In the fourth section of

[17] Catherine Malabou, *Plasticity at The Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction*, trans. Carolyn Shread (New York: Columbia University, 2010), 51.
[18] Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham: Duke University, 2002), 17.

the chapter I develop a hermeneutics of anational poetics. By analyzing the historical provenance of nepantla, I argue in favor of interpreting this concept as both a residual *and* emergent form that provides instances of anational projections beyond the nation. Hindering the reproduction of the nation form, nepantla supplies a critical lens to foreground multiculturalism's exclusions. With anational poetics as a hermeneutics, moreover, I elaborate a different interpretation of Anzaldúa's commitment to a radical recognition of sameness, where sameness extends beyond the nation form and multiculturalism.

Finally, I close this chapter by reading with Anzaldúa's work to assess the influence of her anational poetics on another Latinx poet, Jennifer Tamayo. Foregrounding Anzaldúa's theorization of cenotes, I read Tamayo's poetics as offering an alternative to national incorporation through a poetics of stitching that is performative of the same act of re-membrance Anzaldúa and Lorde advocated for. Such a poetics attempts to make manifest the history of colonial violence in the nation's present in order to project an anational alternative developed through a matriarchal lineage of embodied memory. Furthermore, I note how Tamayo, who was born in Colombia, provides an example of Trans-Latinx feminist synergy by building upon Anzaldúa's work and articulating a coalition that moves beyond the boundaries of radical ethnic nationalism.

Multiculturalism as Deconstruction

In terms of criticism on Anzaldúa's work, AnaLouise Keating offers a fitting place to start because of her many collaborations with Anzaldúa and her extensive writing about her. In a 2008 essay titled "'I'm a citizen of the universe': Gloria Anzaldúa's Spiritual Activism as catalyst for social change," Keating argues that Anzaldúa's coupling of spiritual life and political activism is

a strategy to move beyond identity politics and "the binary-oppositional frameworks we generally use in identity formation and social change."[19] Keating's title borrows a sentence by Anzaldúa that could be read as the complement to "somos todos un paíz": in this case she affirms participation within a totality, the universe, and gives this membership of the whole the form of citizenship, the form of belongingness to the nation state. Although Keating does not offer a close reading of this fragment, I want to keep this shared form in the background while I address her claims about spiritual activism.

Through a compelling call for a keener and more open academic reception of Anzaldúa's spirituality, Keating claims that spiritual activism tends to be ignored because it couples together seemingly contradictory terms: "Although the word 'spiritual' implies an other-worldly, inward-looking perspective that invites escape from and at times even denial of social injustices, the word 'activism' implies outward-directed interaction with the material world—the very world that spirituality seems to deny or downplay."[20] Beyond the suggestion of contradiction, it is telling how this coupling of the inner and outer resembles Benedict Anderson's seminal description of the nation as an imagined community: a system that balances a structural element—the community as an outer configuration—and a symbolic or spiritual counterpart—the imagination as an inner construction.

Spiritual activism, through such a coordination of interiority and exteriority (retaining the nation's logic of inclusion and exclusion as a subtext), affords the capacity to go beyond normative binaries, to the point of collapsing the distinction between inside and outside: "'inner'

[19] AnaLouise Keating, "'I'm a citizen of the universe': Gloria Anzaldúa's Spiritual Activism as catalyst for social change," *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1/2, The Chicana Studies Issue (Spring-Summer, 2008), 60.
[20] Keating, "'I'm a citizen of the universe': Gloria Anzaldúa's Spiritual Activism as catalyst for social change," 53–4.

and 'outer' are so intimately interrelated and interwoven as to occur simultaneously; each depends on, influences, and shapes the other."[21] Similarly, in *Women Reading Women Writing*, Keating credits Anzaldúa with inventing what she describes "as mestizaje écriture, nonsymmetrical oppositional writing tactics that simultaneously deconstruct, reassemble, and transcend phallocentric categories of thought." Both of Keating's assertions, therefore, rely on the assumption that these "oppositional forms of resistance can subvert culture from within."[22] Her claims rehearse a recurrent argumentative line about Anzaldúa's writing which employs deconstruction both to classify and to gauge the political impact of her poetics and its "forms of resistance" as transcendental. This argumentative line partly emerges from Anzaldúa's own deconstructive leanings which manifest throughout the several tropes she deployed to illustrate her ideas.

For example, in *Borderlands/La Frontera* she explains how life in the frontier that separates the US and Mexico, previously figured as a wound, has produced a fragmented and conflicted identity: "I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing, no one. *A veces no soy nada ni nadie. Pero hasta cuando no lo soy, lo soy*."[23] Despite the neutralization of self that arises from internalizing the borderlands, Anzaldúa's identity still unfolds through its own instability and she embraces it as such: "But even when I am not, I am." Both in its acknowledgment of a self-destructive tendency and in its bilingual unfolding, Anzaldúa's self-definition exhibits similarities to Jacques Derrida's understanding of deconstruction, which I assess below.

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[21] Keating, "'I'm a citizen of the universe': Gloria Anzaldúa's Spiritual Activism as catalyst for social change," 59.
[22] AnnaLouise Keating, *Women Reading Women Writing* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 122.
[23] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 85.

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, the critical reception of Anzaldúa emphasized her stance on and experience of a heterogeneous identity stemming from the geographical edges of the nation state. As a Chicana scholar writing about and theorizing her experience growing up in Texas, close to the US-Mexico border, she offered a singular case of analysis for critics invested in liminality as a position capable of undoing the dominant politics of US normativity. Although her writing was predominantly received as contributing to feminist, Chicana, and queer theory, she was also interpreted through a deconstructionist framework. Read through a deconstructive framework, Anzaldúa's cultural identity could be yoked with the disruptive potential that was attributed to her language as a way to loosen the rigorous binary of sameness and otherness that ordered the nation's self-understanding. For example, José David Saldívar's interpretation of Anzaldúa's work identifies her linguistic practices along with her autobiographical theory as a disruption of the discursive homogeneity of English in the US: "Anzaldúa's *autohistoriateoría* grounds her late twentieth century work in the differential vernacular serpent's tongue, a catechristic subalternist tongue which is capable of cracking, fracturing, and braiding the very authority of the master's English-only tongue."[24] Saldívar's investment in Anzaldúa's writings takes her catechristic language as evidence of the rupture of a normative status quo of cultural uniformity. Akin to Keating's account, Saldívar assumes that Anzaldúa's writings display a disruptive excess or remainder that goes beyond the self-definition of the nation.

"Such a remainder," Derrida argues in a passage pertaining to Keating's and Saldívar's readings, "permits one at once to analyze the historical phenomena of appropriation and to treat

[24] José David Saldívar, "Unsettling race, coloniality, and caste: Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/la frontera*, Martinez's *Parrot in the oven*, and Roy's *The God of small things*," *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, Issue 2/3 (March, 2007), 353.

them politically by avoiding, above all, the reconstitution of what these phantasms managed to motivate: 'nationalist' aggressions (which are always more or less 'naturalists') or monoculturalist homo-hegemony."[25] Paraphrasing Derrida, and glossing Keating and Saldívar on Anzaldúa, liminally-situated, catechristic language affords a critical perspective capable of halting the reproduction of the nation form, of the phantasms of its historical appropriations and violence.

At this point a historical revision is pertinent, which, following the cue of Derrida's mention of a monoculturalist homo-hegemony, allows to posit a series of thoughts along the lines of the deconstruction of the nation. This historical revision attends to Anzaldúa's language in order to scrutinize what exactly escapes national reconstitution and nation form reproduction. The aim is to gauge the transformations that the nation underwent when the monoculturalist nation encountered (or recognized) difference. What I propose is to read multiculturalism as the deconstruction of the monoculturalist nation.

Already in 1992, the Chicago Cultural Studies Group commented how "multiculturalism [was] proving to be fluid enough to describe very different styles of cultural relations, and [how] corporate multiculturalism [was] proving that the concept need not have any critical content."[26] Although multiculturalism describes manifold and even contradictory ideas and phenomena, I want to scrutinize how it facilitates the incorporation of collectivities within the nation state's purview. Following Etienne Balibar, the multicultural nation can be articulated as intensifying what he termed the delayed nationalization of society: the process by which a nation continually

[25]Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University, 1998), 64.
[26] Chicago Cultural Studies Group, "Critical Multiculturalism," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Spring, 1992), 532.

integrates alien populations.[27] The delayed nationalization of society addresses an essential function of the nation form: the reconfiguration of the nation's becoming as its being.[28] In connection with his conceptualization of a delayed nationalization, Balibar argues that "in the history of every modern nation, wherever the argument can apply, there is never more than one single founding revolutionary event."[29] To assume this in the case of the US allows a perspectival shift that repositions the civil rights movements as the imperative revolutionary event for the multicultural US nation, continually renegotiating its own terms of inclusion through an extended civil rights compromise.

The point here would be to note the formal dynamics at play and how, in expanding its criteria of belonging by loosening the binary of sameness and difference in favor of flexible inclusion, multiculturalism exhibits the plasticity of the nation form as an assimilative drive. Central to such a theoretical account of multiculturalism is the notion of afforded plasticity, which emerges from Caroline Levine's conception of form as "transhistorical, portable, and abstract, on the one hand, and material, situated, and political, on the other"; affordances are the capacity of formal attributes to be shared, repeated or adapted.[30] Multiculturalism, in this regard, traces a cycle in the national body where every amendment or suture to its terms of inclusion affords further plasticity—which in turn expands the terms of inclusion.

In the US, multiculturalism followed decades after an overt yet inoperative anti-racism agenda adopted in the aftermath of World War II. During this postwar period, a melting-pot

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[27] Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein. *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 92.
[28] This is a formulation I borrow from Harry Harutoonian and that he applies to capitalism; more on his work below.
[29] Balibar, *Race, Nation, Class*, 87.
[30] Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 11.

model enforced a dominant ideology of cultural and racial normativity, which demanded assimilation from populations or individuals diverging from it. In tandem, this agenda posited the problematic of racial inequality with an anti-racist stance that morally justified a US claim to global leadership. For Jodi Melamed, this anti-racism agenda, which she terms racial liberalism, was a suture to "US nationalism, itself bearing the agency for transnational capitalism."[31] In an attempt to keep in sight this national-capitalist agency, Melamed identifies the multicultural turn following the civil rights period as neoliberal multiculturalism: "Like racial liberalism, contemporary neoliberal multiculturalism sutures official antiracism to state policy in a manner that prevents the calling into question of global capitalism."[32] Framed this way, the civil rights compromise—which was legislatively enacted by the Civil Rights Act of 1964—both outlawed racial discrimination and provided a narrative of racial inclusion aiming to support the moral legitimation of US global hegemony during the Cold War era.

In agreement with Melamed's emphasis on suturing as a strategy to expand and perpetuate capitalism, Chandan Reddy's analysis of official amendments to the constitution offers another formal interpretation of US adaptability. Focusing on the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act signed by Barack Obama, Reddy delves into the nature of the relationship between the amendment and the nation by analyzing how "the amendment seeks (as does US immigration policy after US wars abroad) to incorporate through its universal terms (of freedom from racist, sexist, sectarian, and homophobic violence) the heterogeneous histories and practices at its origin."[33] Amendments exhibit the imbrication of war and politics in the nation form's management of inclusions and exclusions, balancing the projection of alliances with the

[31] Jodi Melamed, "The Spirit of Neoliberalism," *Social text*, 24, no. 4 (2006), 2.
[32] Melamed, "The Spirit of Neoliberalism," 16.
[33] Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, sexuality, and the US state* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 15.

justification for bellicose intervention. The function of the amendment describes the conferred capacity for the amended entity—i.e., the nation—to perpetuate itself: "If amendments belatedly modify and authorize the prior textual body, it is because only through their frames can the body continue to figure as meaningful—indeed, to persist. This suggests that amendments as frames conserve and reactivate the force of their textual bodies, even while displacing the origins of that force and restructuring its appearance, through the bestowal of meaning upon the original body."[34] In other words, amendments, like sutures, provide the capacity to reshape and adapt the nation form while conserving its prior identity, its historical continuity as the US nation.

The nation form, in this context, utilizes its afforded plasticity as the capacity to morph and adapt in time, to allow the US to persist despite no longer overtly identifying with racial homogeneity. Attending to the structure of the nation, per Malabou's account, as a historical residue, we are left with the trace of monoculturalism's withdrawal, with its deconstruction *as* and *into* multiculturalism. Crucial to examine this afforded plasticity in multiculturalism is the need to question whether monoculturalism's absence is still operative. "To be more precise, it is a question of recognizing *visibility*," Malabou argues in reference to the kinds of attention that we need to bring to a deconstructed text. Because of her emphasis on form and on the afterlife of deconstruction, Malabou's understanding of plastic readings can shed light on multiculturalism's constitution: "We must therefore discuss their *form*. *The plastic reading of a text is the reading that seeks to reveal the form left in the text through the withdrawing of presence, that is, through its own deconstruction.* It is a question of showing how a text *lives its deconstruction.*"[35] By framing thus the nation's structure we can assess permanence and change in time: how does the monocultural nation live its deconstruction as multiculturalism? What is the relation of this

[34] Reddy, *Freedom With Violence*, 15.
[35] Malabou, *Plasticity at The Dusk of Writing*, 52.

deconstruction vis-a-vis Anzaldúa's forms of resistance? What are the exclusions that multiculturalism's plasticity occludes?

Anzaldúa conceived of multiculturalism as a political movement with which she was committed during the 1990s. She understood her scholarly work and political coalitions in this period as bridge-building labor aimed against exclusionary education and neo-conservative racism and misogyny. In an essay titled "The New Mestiza Nation: A Multicultural Movement," she linked the mestiza identity she had developed in *Borderlands/La Frontera* with the current situation of the US, characterizing the nation as "struggling with a crisis of identity."[36] At the center of her advocacy for multiculturalism, she envisioned an encounter with difference that would further destabilize the prevailing US identity, much like Keating and Saldívar expected: "Notions of mestizaje offer another 'reading' of culture, history, and art—that of the dispossessed and marginal. Multicultural texts show the writer's or artist's struggle to decolonize subjectivity."[37] Anzaldúa was, however, keenly aware of the risks inherent to multiculturalism: "At this time when the term multiculturalism is being completely subverted, it is important that this concept be sharply defined."[38] In her perspective, this risk was intrinsic to the ways in which multiculturalism produced theorizations of the current panorama: "Not only are they undermining us by assimilating us, but in turn, we are using these very same theories, concepts, and assumptions that we have bought into against ourselves. Mestizas internalize those theories, concepts, and labels that manipulate and control us."[39] From the perspective of a nation form framework, there is an implicit irony of sorts in the alertness with which Anzaldúa urges careful

[36] Gloria Anzaldúa, "The New Mestiza Nation: A Multicultural Movement" in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, ed. AnaLouise Keating (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 206.
[37] Anzaldúa, "The New Mestiza Nation," 209.
[38] Anzaldúa, "The New Mestiza Nation," 215.
[39] Anzaldúa, "The New Mestiza Nation," 206.

attention to the use of theory while mobilizing the twinned concepts of mestiza and nation. In order to gloss this irony, a revision of the concept of mestiza and mestizaje in the context of the nation and Chicana/o nationalism is necessary.

Anzaldúa's embrace of a mestiza nationhood began by her recognition of a specific historical identity in relation to a sense of belonging to a people:

> Chicanos did not know we were a people until 1965 when Cesar Chavez and the farmworkers united and *I am Joaquín* was published and *la Raza Unida* party was formed in Texas. With this recognition we became a distinct people. […] Now that we had a name, some of the fragmented pieces began to fall together—who we were, what we were, how we had evolved. We began to get glimpses of what we might eventually become.[40]

This account frames a newly embraced peoplehood through a particular temporalization: the acquisition of an identity impinges upon the present by informing a history that aligns a past ("what we were, how we had evolved") with a future ("what we might eventually become"). This alignment shapes history with a form suitable to the nation's, where a fiction of origin pulls together the nation. It entails a temporal manifestation of the nation form which proceeds by eschewing history's heterogeneity and producing a uniform narrative of progress.

As Laura Elisa Perez notes, with the disruption of the US national identity until then deemed homogeneous, an array of different fictive nations opened, among which were Chicana/os, who chose Aztlán as their origin myth:[41]

> Aztlán came into being during the United States' first massive national identity crisis, the 1960s, when visible sectors of the population refused to continue imagining, that is, producing the nation as usual. Unlike nations born and operative through

[40] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 85.
[41] With the adjective "fictive" I refer to what Balibar terms a fictive ethnicity as a "community instituted by the nation-state." Recalling the reconfiguration of the nation's constant becoming as its being, Chicanas/os recognition of their peoplehood anticipates how the nation generates and updates its myth(s) of origin as it simultaneously conceals the violence of how it comes to produce the peoplehood(s) that comprise it.

> discourses of "order and progress," the Chicana/o motto remains "disorder and progress."[42]

Revealingly, the Chicana/o motto also serves as the modus operandi of the parallel emergence of the multicultural nation: "disorder and progress" describe the various fictive ethnicities recognized within the nation state, which induce alternative ways to imagine the nation—yet they crucially retain the same temporal orientation towards progress, implying a teleological alignment with an imagined past. Disorder marks an opening to a heterogeneity that is nonetheless shaped in the form of the nation.[43]

Although inflected by her deconstructive practices, Anzaldúa's historization of her collective identity bears the imprint of the nation form. Most importantly, the mestiza identity that was the focus of *Borderlands/La Frontera* is particularly informed by a nationalist historiography that rehearses an appropriative narrative of the past, regardless of the deconstructive function that the neologism might play. In Anzaldúa's use of mestizaje there are both common tropes of this nationalizing drive, by which I mean normalized into quotidian usage, and more complex forms of nationalization built upon these wide-spread assumptions.

Dating the concept back to the conquest, Anzaldúa explains: "*En 1521 nació una nueva raza, el mestizo, el mexicano* (people of mixed Indian and Spanish blood), a race that had never existed before."[44] Yet, if a mestiza identity provides a link with an indigenous past, it is nonetheless a past produced by the nation, in this case Mexico's. From the outset, in her opening

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[42] Laura Elisa Perez, "*El desorden*, Nationalism, and Chicano/a Aesthetics" in *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State*, ed. C. Kaplan, N. Alarcón, and M. Moallem, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 20.

[43] Perhaps the best fitting interpretation of this disorder is formulated by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's idea of Empire, which "is characterized by a fluidity of form—an ebb and flow of formation and deformation, generation and degeneration." Empire entails the passage into a society of control with "a production of subjectivity that is not fixed in identity but hybrid and modulating." Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 220, 331.

[44] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 27.

paragraph on Chicano/a history, Anzaldúa projects a conception of the Mexican nation as timeless over the territory it currently occupies—which I identify as an instance of the common tropes of nationalization within historiography; for example, she asserts that "At the beginning of the 16th century, the Spaniards and Hernán Cortés invaded Mexico and, with the help of tribes that the Aztecs had subjugated, conquered it." In this account, Mexico is a nation that predates the historical process of its own becoming. Even going further to a moment before the Spanish arrival, Anzaldúa nationalizes the native populations that occupied the territory now belonging to Mexico: "Before the Conquest, there were twenty-five million Indian people in Mexico and the Yucatán."[45] The formal reciprocities of these and other nationalizing tropes that Anzaldúa employs as ground-laying for her understanding of the new mestiza inform a specific politics that reproduces not only the nation form but state violence on both sides of the border. The tendency to appropriate an indigenous heritage that rests strictly in the past is intrinsic to how mestizaje went through a complex reformulation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to represent the paradigm of Mexican citizenship.[46]

In Mexico, the concept of mestizaje has been mobilized in tandem with the complementing idea of indigenismo to posit a citizenship identity that subsumes the indigenous element as part of a shared past. Here I echo an incisive criticism of Anzaldúa by Josefina Saldaña-Portillo. Noting how "the Indian dissolves into the formulaically more progressive mestizo," Saldaña-Portillo glosses mestizaje's logic as one of exclusion wherein national identity displaces existing indigenous communities by defining them as belonging to the past, as a

[45] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 27.
[46] Cf., Rebecca Earle's *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810–1930*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

hindrance to the nation's progress.[47] In an insightful passage that brings to the fore the cunning of multiculturalism, Saldaña-Portillo notes how Anzaldúa imitates the official policies that the ruling Mexican party (PRI) had put in place to reproduce the nation form:

> What Anzaldúa does not recognize is that her very focus on the Aztec female deities is, in fact, an effect of the PRI's statist policies to resuscitate, through state-funded documentation, this particular, defunct Mexican Indian culture and history to the exclusion of dozens of living indigenous cultures.[48]

There is, then, a certain phantasmagoria intrinsic to the deployment of mestizaje as a multicultural identity in the US; contrary to the expected exorcism of the nation's phantasms, the invocation of mestizaje's indigenous heritage at once materializes the spirit of the nation's past, its fictive dead, at the expense of displacing the indigenous populations presently living within the nation's self-ascribed jurisdiction.

An important clarification needs to be made with regards to this and other critiques of Anzaldúa in that they correspondingly fail to acknowledge that Anzaldúa was not a social scientist, but primarily a poet and thinker drawn to different and variegated subjects. How Anzaldúa unconsciously incorporates governmental policies which were geared towards the implementation of a unified Mexican citizenry speaks both to the nation form's capacity to reproduce itself and to her historical juncture in the borderlands as one where deconstruction and the US nation meet.

Still, Anzaldúa approached her position willingly, aiming to make the most of the liminality through which she was perceived: "We, the mestiza multiculturalists, know well the dangers of this border crossing, dangers to be reckoned with as we continue to walk across the

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[47] Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, "Who's the Indian in Aztlán? Re-Writing Mestizaje, Indianism, and Chicanismo from the Lacandón" in *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader*, ed. Sonia Saldívar-Hull, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 407.
[48] Saldaña-Portillo, "Who's the Indian in Aztlán?," 416.

firing lines."[49] After all, for her, this liminal position she inhabits "has become familiar—never comfortable […] but home." At the same time, however, Anzaldúa yokes homeliness and liminality as intrinsic to the multicultural refiguration of the US:

> The actual physical borderland that I'm dealing with in this book is the Texas-U.S. Southwest/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middles and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.[50]

This passage locates the borderlands at the edge of the nation state's jurisprudence; but it also connects these specific geographical frontier with a diffused borderlands—"wherever two or more cultures edge each other"—that construct the general locus of multiculturalism as the site of interaction of multiple cultures. Anzadúa illustrates the way in which multiculturalism's general state of affairs is connected with the nation state's jurisprudential edges. In the following, I will retrace Anzaldúa's path from the geographic specificity of the US-Mexico border to the internalized national borderlands in order to suggest her itinerary as a symbolic national pilgrimage that further fuels the nation's afforded plasticity by bringing its edges to its center. By paying heed to Taussig's anthropological work, I argue that Anzaldúa's position in the US-Mexico border functions as a gateway for the delayed nationalization of society that informs the multicultural form of the nation.

[49] Anzaldúa, "The New Mestiza Nation," 206.
[50] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 27.

The Borderlands Through Mimesis

In relation to the boundaries of the US, the figural and geographic site of Anzaldúa's writings has been read and located differently through the history of their reception. In 2005, Shelley Fisher Fishkin argued in favor of a transnational perspective in her Presidential Address to the American Studies Association by taking Anzaldúa as the paradigm of the transnational voice. Borrowing a passage from *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Fishkin predicts that practitioners in the field will have to attend to perspectives like Anzaldúa's situated beyond the nation state's border: "we will probably make more of an effort to seek out the view from *el otro lao*."[51] On the opposite end of the spectrum, and in response and opposition to Fishkin's reading, Debra A. Castillo contends that "Anzaldúa is irremediably an iconic United States figure, not a transnational one."[52] A third view, from Anzaldúa herself, argues against locating her work beyond the border or within the US itself by claiming a different status wherein she belongs to no country: "As a *mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover."[53] Once again choosing the term "country" in its asymptotic relation with "nation," Anzaldúa claims an expelled condition of interstitial detachment that evokes the radical belongingness she sought, in this case, through sisterhood. In the following, I analyze how this equivocality regarding Anzaldúa's position has enabled a specific multicultural plasticity that in the long run reasserts the nation's body through the mestiza body. My reading is in agreement with Castillo's rejection of a transnational status,

[51] Fishkin's quotation from Anzaldúa, which employs a common elision and idiom of the Spanish "lado," translates as "the other side." Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies—Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004." *American Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2005), 23.
[52] Debra A. Castillo, "Anzaldúa and Transnational American Studies," *PMLA* 121, no. 1 (2006), 263.
[53] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 102.

yet it also attempts to dwell on the implications of Anzaldúa's country-less self-description in relation to her anational ambitions of sisterhood.

As I have argued, for Anzaldúa her Chicana identity was one with her linguistic practices, which responded to a geographical and historical position: "A language which they [Chicanas] can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither *español ni inglés*, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages."[54] She claims that language manifests her borderlands location, straddling Mexico and the US as she weaves Spanish and English, seemingly exceeding a dichotomy between the two national languages. In this regard, Anzaldúa's account resonates with a deconstructive situation of *plus d'une langue*, a situation Derrida terms the monolingualism of the other. The tenets of monolingualism, according to Derrida, posit that "1. We only ever speak one language. 2. We never speak one language."[55] In order to unfold this concept and mark its similarities with Anzaldúa's language, we can follow her description of the linguistic practices of Chicanas/os:

> because we are a complex, heterogeneous people, we speak many languages. Some of the languages we speak are:
>
> 1. Standard English
> 2. Working class and slang English
> 3. Standard Spanish
> 4. Standard Mexican Spanish
> 5. North Mexican Spanish dialect
> 6. Chicano Spanish (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California have regional variations)
> 7. Tex-Mex
> 8. *Pachuco* (called *caló*) [56]

[54] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 77.
[55] Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, 7.
[56] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 77.

Anzaldúa understood the linguistic practices of Chicana/o as a proliferation of languages responding to their multiple and varied experiences and situations. This understanding fits with Derrida's monolingual perception as one that offers "*uniqueness without unity*" and that qualifies the terms in which one possesses a language, as in, for example, the language *of* Chicanas/os: "The *of* signifies not so much property as provenance: language is for the other, coming from the other, *the* coming of the other."[57] Monolingualism charts difference by allowing the recognition of the multiple points of provenance of language. We can read Anzaldúa's list of languages as specifying the points of provenance through which Chicanas/os chart their linguistic difference with regards to other Chicanas/os.

However, partly pushing back against Anzaldúa's claims, I want to readdress her braiding of languages in order to analyze how it relates to the geopolitics of the borderlands, to her straddling two nations; for example, how she describes that "*Nosotros los* Chicanos straddle the borderlands. On one side of us, we are constantly exposed to the Spanish of the Mexicans, on the other side we hear the Anglos' incessant clamoring so that we forget our language."[58] More specifically, I argue that there is an imbalance between English and Spanish in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, where the editorial decision to render all the Spanish fragments in italics isolates them from English—if not subordinates them to English. The effect of such italicization is intertwined with her overall non-standard use of Spanish. Returning to the first passage I quoted, the word "paíz," for example, provides an instance of this irregularity in its divergence from the standard Spanish word "país"—which provides yet another sense in which her chosen inflection estranges its synonymous identity with "nation." As opposed to her almost impeccable thread of "Standard

[57] Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, 60.
[58] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 62.

English," the Spanish thread that Anzaldúa incorporates to her weave is characterized by errancy and irregularity.

Anzaldúa's braiding of languages displays a specific set of features where her use of English tends towards normativity by relying on the othering of Spanish through italicization. Lourdes Torres's analysis of code-switching among Latinx authors argues that the use of italics in this context is a problematic way to "cushion" the experience of an Anglophone readership: "cushioning Spanish in this way may allow the reader to sense that s/he is entering the linguistic world of bilingual Latino/as without having to make any effort."[59] Torres understands this risk in terms of a commodification and exoticization of otherness that is operative in the US, which she describes, borrowing from bell hooks, as "the idea that there is pleasure to be found in the acknowledgment and enjoyment of racial difference."[60] While I pay heed to Torres's analysis of italicized Spanish in my reading of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, I also insist on considering the geopolitical stakes of Anzaldúa's straddling two nations.

By stressing the geographical location of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, that is, by stressing the power dynamics between the two contiguous nation states, an alternative interpretation to Anzaldúa's disruptive language appears in her *printed* language. The formal rendering on the page expresses a general border interaction wherein the tendency is for English to perform as the official standardized counterpart to an irregular and extra-official Spanish. As in Torres's analysis, Spanish is exoticized as it circulates next to a standardized English. Perhaps we could relegate Anzaldúa's authorial intent here, since these decisions might have been made at an editorial or publishing level (although in a letter from August 28, 1998, regarding the editorial

[59] Lourdes Torres, "In the Contact Zone: Code-Switching Strategies by Latino/a Writers" in *MELUS*, Vol. 32, No. 1, In the Contact Zone: Language, Race, Class, and Nation (Spring, 2007), 81.
[60] bell hooks, *Black Looks, Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 21.

process of *this bridge we call home*, Keating comments that she would like to avoid italics because they "de-normalize the Spanish," which may suggest Anzaldúa preferred italics).[61] This alternative interpretation of Anzaldúa's printed word is more concerned about her text's circulation with and in multiculturalism's nascent publics—towards the kinds of readerships and geopolitics that the text assembled. Focalizing the interplay of Spanish and English thus elucidates the book's interlocutors as ideally Anglophone and provides a setting for the types of processes it ambitions, irrevocably linking the linguistic, as I argue below, to the living body.

Ultimately, Anzaldúa was the first to defend her non-standard Spanish against policing on both sides of the border but especially against the normativization of her Chicana Spanish: "Even our own people, other Spanish speakers *nos quieren poner candados en la boca*. They would hold us back with their bag of *reglas de academia*.[62] […] Chicano Spanish is not incorrect, it is a living language."[63] An insightful set of correlations is articulated with this rectification of the status of Chicana/o Spanish, particularly with regards to the link between the linguistic and the corporeal: Anzaldúa insinuates an incompatibility between the force of a spoken, living language and the existing grammar rules that regularize it on the page.

In a scaled-down perspective, this interplay of linguistic vitality and grammar regularization adumbrates the cycles of a general economy quintessential to the nation state: recalling the nationalization of the Chicana/o peoplehood, Anzaldúa's defense of a living language calls attention to the transformation of the extra-official into the official, the passage of the irregular or corrupt into the sphere of its standardization as the normative. This transformation lies at the core of the symbolic power of the nation state, fueling its cohesive

[61] Anzaldúa Papers, Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, box 39, folder 2, p. 1.
[62] "They want to put locks on our mouths."
[63] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 76–7.

imagination of how society understands itself as a nation and reinstating the sovereignty of the state as the expression of this society. Michael Taussig's analysis of these mystifications of stately being proves helpful here; about the interplay of the official and extra-official, he asserts that we "can never have one without the other. The point here is neither descriptive nor moralistic concerning corruption. The point here is the need to uphold law so that corruption can occur."[64] Such a binary, operating through the visibility of the official over the relative invisibility of the extra-official, takes center stage at this historical juncture, where the seemingly disrupted tenets of the monocultural nation are sublated through multiculturalism's deconstruction. Which amounts to conceiving multiculturalism as a partial unveiling of the extra-official constitution of the US.

In continual oscillation, the interdependence and exchange between the extra-official and the official amplifies the nation form to the extent that it encompasses its official façade, standard English in this case, along with its extra-official obverse, irregular Chicana/o Spanish. Even more to the point, the dialectical drive of "the need to uphold law so that corruption can happen" affords the nation form a specific expansiveness in its extra-official guise, which is then coupled with normalization and stability in its official counterpart. Perez's aforementioned Chicano motto, disorder and progress, also captures this interplay, as disorder describes the extra-official irruption that is shaped and assimilated into the nation state's official purview as progress. Expanding the last section's theoretical framework, I read Taussig's notion of corruption as a manifestation of the nation form, which in the case of US multiculturalism can refer to the expanding criteria of inclusion that reconfigures the nation's self-understanding. The formal correlative of corruption then can be interpreted as the nation form's plasticity.

[64] Michael Taussig, *The Magic of The State*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 58.

The passage from the extra-official into the official unfolds in a site of transfiguration and embodiment, where the extra-official sheds its prefix by acquiring an image or body recognized within the realm of the official. In short, this is a symbolically liminal topos which, in Taussig's understanding, is connected to the magic of the state as producing both a gateway and shrine brought together under the semantic umbrella of a portal:

> For the newcomer whose unaccustomed ear discerns the freshness of metaphor, providing through the juxtaposition of images the entrance to a new world, the *portal* itself was more than an apt metaphor joining *gateway* to *shrine*. It was beyond perfection, the image, indeed the metaphor, of metaphor itself, no less than its stunning literalization—a wondrous metaphor-machine designed to set the scene of spirit passing into body, possession as embodiment activating images made precious by death and stately remembrance.[65]

To read such a metaphor-machine of embodiment in Azaldúa serves to glean how the cluster of tropes, symbols, characters, and deities that she summons throughout *Borderlands/La Frontera* becomes embodied in her living presence and that of Chicanas. In a gesture concomitant with the nation form, the historicization of identity is fused with the act of embodiment, as Anzaldúa claims that her poetic artifice belongs to a time "Before the Conquest": "In the ethno-poetics and performance of the shaman, my people, the Indians, did not split the artistic from the functional, the sacred from the secular, art from everyday life. […] The ability of story (prose and poetry) to transform the storyteller and the listener into something or someone else is shamanistic. The writer, as shape-changer, is a *nahual*, a shaman."[66] Anzaldúa's claim to a peoplehood, in the context of the nation form, is problematic: instead of defining a less abstract collectivity, "the Indians" refers to the period in history "Before the Conquest," a period that only becomes available through the break that European arrival entails.

[65] Taussig, *The Magic of The State*, 35.
[66] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 88.

At this point I follow AnaLouise Keating's call for a keener understanding of Anzaldúa's spiritualism through what I above termed the phantasmagoria of mestizaje: as shape-changer and nahual, storyteller and shaman, Chicana/mestiza and Indian, Anzaldúa appropriates and reincarnates a past made available and shaped by the nation. While the contradictory embrace of these figures (e.g., mestiza *and* Indian) already foreshadows nepantla and the central theme of the next section, here I want to dwell on how embodiment entails the materialization of Coatlicue, La Llorona, La Malíntzin, of Olmecs, Aztecs, Mayans—all dead spirits gathered in the historiography of the Mexican nation state—returning to life through Anzaldúa's language. We can observe, following Taussig, how death in mestizaje's alter-stately remembrance, in its commemoration of dead indigenous populations, is transfigured through the intercalation of metaphor and presence into a living Chicana identity. "I think of them as performances and not as inert and 'dead' objects," Anzaldúa comments of her writings, "the work has an identity; it is a 'who' or a 'what' and contains the presence of persons, that is, incarnations of gods, or ancestors or natural and cosmic powers."[67] Through the figural interplay of incarnation and identity, resuscitation and appropriation, the portal displays the movement that incorporates collectivities into the nation—the officialization of Chicano identity—as it excludes others, namely mestizaje's occlusion of contemporary indigenous collectivities as described by Saldaña-Portillo.

This process unfolds in the borderlands as a site of transfiguration, a site that confers the shaman the capacity to drive the passage of the extra-official identity into the purview of the US nation state. Yet, if transfiguration requires the embodiment of difference—that is, Anzaldúa embodying another nation's stately dead—transfiguration also requires the embodiment of

[67] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 89.

sameness. The translation of the extra-official into the official is hinged upon the mimetic capacity to bridge alterity and sameness, particularly as it relates to the symbolic connotations of the borderlands. For Taussig, the prominence of the national frontier in relation to the formation of a national identity is crucial for the interplay between sameness and alterity that mimesis requires:

> Pulling you this way and that, mimesis plays this trick of dancing between the very same and the very different. An impossible but necessary, indeed an everyday affair, mimesis registers both sameness and difference, of being like, and of being Other. Creating stability from this instability is no small task, yet all identity formation is engaged in this habitually bracing activity in which the issue is not so much staying the same, but maintaining sameness through alterity.[68]

Mimesis involves a careful management of the national symbolic economy; while it entails the embodiment of difference through the adoption of a set of extra-official practices—mestizaje's phantasmagoria, in this instance—it also requires the incorporation of the living body to the symbolic economy, the nationalization of the Chicana/o body. Mimesis plays with the regime of available forms of perception by affecting the act of recognition.

In other to fully describe the plasticity and expansiveness conferred upon the nation form by Anzaldúa's mimetic performance, I want to offer a characterization of her role within this structure as that of a customs agent regulating the flow of symbolic goods; a customs agent who, as shaman, manages the symbolic economy of the nation through the body, thereby partaking of the transfigural potential of the borderlands, here understood in the sense of a portal. Her linguistic practices provide the cue to an embodiment of identity that binds race and self: "So, if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language."[69] A reappraisal of the excess that Keating and Saldívar

[68] Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A particular history of the senses* (London: Routledge, 1993), 129.
[69] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 81.

found disruptive in Anzaldúa's writing can be developed here. Anzaldúa's surplus of linguistic tropes and alter-stately conjurings resituate excess as sutured to the body, in the embodiment of identity and its recognition.

A singular passage from *Borderlands/La Frontera*, where Anzaldúa's customs agent/shaman role can be observed more persuasively, illustrates how the national body incorporates excess. This section finds Anzaldúa invoking the US constitution to legitimate her braided language: "Attacks on one's form of expression with the intent to censor are a violation of the First Amendment."[70] Straddling the official and extra-official, Anzaldúa fully embraces her role in the nation's symbolic economy by mediating the legitimization of her Chicano/a language. Through such juridical abiding, which expounds "the need to uphold law so that corruption can occur," Anzaldúa symbolically performs a national pilgrimage. She brings the borderlands with her as she discursively traverses the national territory to arrive at its official symbolic center, the national capital as the locus of law-making. In Berlant's view, pilgrimages to Washington are the citizens' attempt to grasp the totality of the nation, which in itself is a place of mediation, of trying to sort out what the nation is—a more active version of disguising the nation's becoming as its being. In this regard, the capital is a portal as well, where the liminality of the borderlands is adopted in the centrality of the capital: "As a borderland central to the nation, Washington tests the capacities of all who visit it: this test is a test of citizenship competence."[71] Anzaldúa's summoning of the law is as much of a symbolic pilgrimage as a conflation of the borderlands and the capital but, most importantly, it is an assertion that attests

[70] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 76.
[71] Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 25.

to her citizen competence. In the context of multiculturalism, this entails embodying difference just as much as sameness—being able to navigate the official and the extra-official realms.

Acknowledging the different scales at play, this mimetic management complements the sutures and amendments that the state performs towards the delayed nationalization of people. Mimesis carries out the balancing of alterity and sameness in accordance with a fictive ethnicity already present in the extra-official imaginary, thus already recognized or in the process of recognition by the nation state.[72] This analysis remains concerned with form in that mimesis is ultimately tied to the recognition of transformations, yet at this scale the plasticity of the nation form is displayed in the human body. Taussig alludes to the relevance of plasticity when arguing that "Mimesis sutures the real to the really made up—and no society exists otherwise."[73] The living body and living language, donning the tropes and fictions of the stately dead, enact this mimetic performance as it reshapes and perpetuates the central identity of the nation.

This account of mimesis, while providing support for refuting Fishkin's reading of Anzaldúa as a transnational voice, also allows us to read how Anzaldúa reproduces a nationalist narrative that counterposes the progress she embodies as a new mestiza against the stagnancy of a Mexican nation that does not progress. She deprecates the influence of the US on Mexico on politico-economic terms, but also as an essentializing projection of a national way of life: "The infusion of the values of the white culture, coupled with the exploitation by that culture, is changing the Mexican way of life."[74] The latter illustrates how Anzaldúa partakes of the interplay of sameness and alterity that allows her to embody difference while reproducing certain

[72] Anzaldúa refers to this extra-official presence when she reports that "The oldest evidence of humankind in the U.S.—the Chicanos' ancient Indian ancestors—was found in Texas and has been dated to 35000 B.C." Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 26.
[73] Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 86.
[74] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 10.

narratives of sameness which rest on the assumed backwardness of Mexico. By its own account, as the Mexican way of life vanishes south of the border, Anzaldúa's version of Chicanas/os (as new mestizas/os) rescue its national historiography by embodying the state's repertoire of past cultures.

Nepantla

In this section I analyze Anzaldúa's interaction with the multicultural nation form by focusing on the formal affordances at play in social relations of dominance. To do so, this section relies more heavily on Levine's conception of form as "transhistorical, portable, and abstract, on the one hand, and material, situated, and political, on the other," that is, on the idea of afforded plasticity as form's capacity to shuttle between one historical, geographical, or scalar context to another. Put in words more specific to this context, afforded plasticity reveals formal permanence across time and space, and across abstraction and concreteness—much in the way Anzaldúa's adoption of mestizaje does, were we to focus on the form of the concept.

The life of mestizaje within the nation state entails a specific visual arrangement of the past over the present through which a national historiography occludes the coeval presence of indigenous populations. But the form at its most basic, perceptible even before the nation state, is a bodily coordination of inclusion and exclusion. The mestizo label emerged in New Spain as part of a racial taxonomy instituted by the dominant class with the purpose of hierarchizing the colonized population. Since the term was part of a system deployed to favor the colonizers at the expense of indigenous populations, the idea of mestizos/as already displayed a form, albeit in a rudimentary stage, charting different kinds of belongingness within a social hierarchy. As Saldaña-Portillo explains, the form would be adopted during the twentieth century to promulgate

a miscegenated national identity embracing an indigenous past at the expense of an indigenous present, thereby solidifying its terms of inclusion and exclusion.[75] The new mestiza, per Anzaldúa, entails yet another stage by focalizing the displacement of Mexico's past onto its Chicana/o embodiment, as the previous section considered. Mestizaje's development, how it enables specific spatiotemporal perceptions of colonial society, reveals a catalogue of its different uses, which allows us to see its transhistorical migration.

By keeping formal affordances in mind, I want to consider the morphology of national suture and amendment from a different perspective. More specifically, and recalling the interaction between capitalism and the multicultural nation state that Melamed stresses, an emphasis in affordances reveals the historical exchange and adoption of different forms as they effectively provide *or fail to provide* sutures and amendments. The theoretical link I want to propose here states that the distinction between the felicitous affordance of a supplement and the infelicitous one is a distinction which can be translated to Marxist terms as the distinction between real subsumption and formal subsumption. This analogy opens up an analytic perspective that locates Anzaldúa's use of mestizaje within the history of transformations that chart the nation's presence as facilitating capitalism's.

For Marx, subsumption describes the expansive movement of capitalism as it incorporates historical practices belonging to other modes of production. Real subsumption defines a successful incorporation of an activity whose productivity has been fully assimilated into a capitalist logic; in this sense real subsumption entails the felicitous adoption of an alien form or affordance already assimilated as a suture. On the other hand, formal subsumption defines an ongoing process where the alien element has not been fully digested into capitalism's

[75] Saldaña-Portillo, "Who's the Indian in Aztlán?," 407.

logic—which would correlate to the infelicitous incorporation of a formal affordance, a still-rejected transplant.

As I noted in the introduction, Harry Harootunian argues that the nation "served as capital's factotum" in naturalizing capitalism's dynamics.[76] Yet, Harootunian continues with a significant caveat, the nation state did not always succeed in this endeavor. Formal subsumption stands as evidence of the nation form's failure to metabolize alien activities within capitalism. It captures and retains processes of incorporation which in turn entail different historical moments pointing to different temporalities beyond the nation's and capitalism's empty time. Formal subsumption is a phenomenon that "embodies the inscription of experience of the encounter between capitalism and what it found from previous modes of production." Such a record of capitalism's encounters with its others allows the crucial observation that "the logic of formal subsumption acted to interrupt the temporal continuum of the very process of capitalist production it also fueled."[77] In other words, capitalism's expansion depends on the absorption of its outsides whose varying degrees of assimilability in turn reveal a range of different temporalities.

Mestizaje exemplifies real subsumption inasmuch as it has been fully assimilated into the nation form and contributes to a homogeneous surface. To show how mestizaje's effects tend toward uniformity, Saldaña-Portillo compares the different biological metaphors of race employed in the US: "Unlike quantitative biological metaphors of race in the United States, where, for example, the 'one drop' rule rigidly determines your status as African American, or the 'one-eighth' rule your status as Native American, in mestizaje a third term gets produced in

[76] Harry Harootunian, *Marx After Marx: History and Time in the Expansion of Capitalism*, (Columbia University Press, New York: 2015), 35–6.
[77] Harootunian, *Marx After Marx*, 58.

the mixture that subsumes previous categories."[78] Whereas the "one drop" and the "one-eighth" rules strive to reinstate hypodescent, thereby reproducing colonial difference by having it structure contemporary racial hierarchies, mestizaje's logic obfuscates the history of its deployment by always asserting a new identity arising from miscegenation regardless of the relations of dominance at play. This is why mestizaje can be described as real subsumption, as an idea predating capitalism that has been metabolized to serve capitalism's logic.

The prose section of *Borderlands/La Frontera* closes with the following assertion: "This land was Mexican once | was Indian always | and is. | And will be again."[79] Confirming Anzaldúa's investment in preserving a native presence beyond the specific spatiotemporal delimitations of the Mexican nation state (if perhaps not explicitly the US's), these lines, however, crystallize the possibly unacknowledged conflict in the book's dependence on the idea of mestizaje as an appendix betraying the presence of the nation form. The adoption of mestizaje's logic registers tensions with Anzaldúa's political aims in the US context of multicultural recognition.

"American indians are never the same as natives," asserts Anishinaabe critic Gerald Vizenor, "The *indian* is a misnomer, a simulation with no referent and with the absence of natives; *indians* are the other, the names of sacrifice and victimry."[80] Vizenor's observations furnish a conceptual setting to assess the incorporation of mestizaje to the multicultural US. Both as misnomer and simulated other, Vizenor's idea of Indianness can describe the contradictory attempts to salvage a native heritage from mestizaje's assimilative drive; in other words, it reveals the futility of employing mestizaje as an attempt to retain the indigenous presence it

[78] Saldaña-Portillo, "Who's the Indian in Aztlán?," 407.
[79] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 91.
[80] Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 69, 27.

continually erases. Mestizaje's centrality in Anzaldúa's claim to an Indian presence reframes the terms of recognition by suggesting a simulacrum of presence.

Later in her career, Anzaldúa replied to Saldaña-Portillo ("I appreciate her critique but my sense is that she's misread or has not read enough of my work.") by questioning her objectification of an indigenous past: "We do to Indian cultures what museums do—impose western attitudes, categories, and terms by decontextualizing objects, symbols and isolating them, disconnecting them from their cultural meaning or intentions, and then reclassifying them within western terms and contexts."[81] Without acknowledging the set of implications that the adoption of mestizaje entails, Anzaldúa does not swerve from her commitment to the concept: "I claim a mestizaje (mixed-blood, mixed culture) identity. In participating in this dialogue I fear violating Indian cultural boundaries. […] Yet I also feel it's imperative we participate in this dialogue no matter how risky."[82] Akin to the awareness she displayed when discussing multiculturalism as a movement, Anzaldúa proceeds to reflect on cultural appropriations in the context of mestizaje: "Some things are worth 'borrowing.' […] But we often misuse what we've borrowed by using it out of context."[83] Both admitting misuse—probably another name for "making it wrong" within her experimental cognizing anew—and justifying the intentions behind risking an improper borrowing, Anzaldúa's stance at this point of her career reasserts an aim of radical inclusion.

Her reflections, centering as they do on politically vindicating the act of borrowing, invite a reading beyond the dominant presence of mestizaje. To consider, for example, how she borrows the shamanistic "ability of story (prose and poetry) to transform the storyteller and the

[81] Gloria E. Anzaldúa, Simon J. Ortiz, Inéz Hernández-Avila and Domino Perez, "Speaking across the Divide," *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Series 2, Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (Fall 2003/Winter 2004), 14.
[82] Anzaldúa, "Speaking across the Divide," 12.
[83] Anzaldúa, "Speaking across the Divide," 14–5.

listener into something or someone else," calls for an analysis of her incorporation of other migrating forms. This would entail reading Anzaldúa not in the sense of Vizenor's indian-as-simulation, nor as a native, but rather as a *postindian*, as someone who, again in Vizenor's words, "must waver over the aesthetic ruins of *indian* simulations," and thereby attempt to salvage other forms and affordances less constricting than mestizaje.[84]

In "now let us shift," Anzaldúa provides an alternative to mestizaje's temporality in the way of a second-person confession about her relation to the conquest's violence: "You still grieve for this country's original trauma—the most massive act of genocide in the world's history, the mass murder of indigenous peoples."[85] Once more returning to the asymptotic relation between "nation" and "country," Anzaldúa here displays a temporal orientation which lies beyond the dominant presence of the nation form inasmuch as it unveils and dwells in the violence constitutive of the US. Such an approach to the nation responds to the presence of residual forms that are already figured in the non-identity of "country" and "nation." As part of these residual forms, nepantla represents a counterpart to mestizaje and the nation form's predominance in Anzaldúa's writings.

Similarly stemming from her experience of life in the borderlands, Anzaldúa's later work explained how she perceived "something from two different angles [which] creates a split in awareness that can lead to the ability to control perception, to balance contemporary society's worldview with the nonordinary worldview, and to move between them to a place that simultaneously exists and does not exist."[86] Evincing her active will to cognize anew, Anzaldúa's split awareness bears resemblance with formal subsumption in the sense of marking

[84] Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 15.
[85] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 533.
[86] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in The Dark/Luz en Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 28.

an interruption, an anomaly in the experience of reality, capitalist or otherwise. Anzaldúa continues: "I call entering this realm 'nepantla'—the Nahuatl word for an in-between space, el lugar entre medio. Nepantla, palabra indígena: un concepto que se refiere a un lugar no-lugar."[87] By adopting this concept as a defining trait, Anzaldúa unearths an alternative orientation to living with history, and the violence of conquest in particular, entering the mystical condition/place of nepantla. Even though her adoption of the concept as an identity marker still envisioned the projection of a future contiguous with mestizaje, that is, one of homogeneity ("Las nepantleras envision a time when the bridge will no longer be needed—we'll have shifted to a seamless nosotras."[88]) nepantla nonetheless yields an experience of the historical present that is disruptive to the nation form. As I will elaborate in the following, nepantla denotes an irreducible oscillation between different perspectives that conserves the moment of the encounter of historical violence in order to qualify contemporary relations of oppression; this oscillation opens the experience of the nation form to a plurality of interjections.

Anthropologist Miguel León-Portilla traced the history of nepantla to Dominican friar Diego Durán's sixteenth-century treatise *Historia de las Indias de Nueva-España y islas de Tierra Firme*. Durán, who was fluent in Nahuatl, reports a dialogue with a Nahuatl whom he had reprimanded for his behavior because it was not in accord with the ancient Aztec customs and morals, to which the Nahuatl replied: "Father, don't be afraid, for we are still '*nepantla*.'" León-Portilla reads the episode as exhibiting "the risks, so closely related to cultural identity, that can present themselves in attempts at inducing acculturation," by explaining the concept of nepantla as "'in the middle,' or as he [the Nahuatl] later added, 'we are neutral,'" León-Portilla links

[87] "the place in-between. Nepantla, indigenous word: a concept referring to a non-place place." Anzaldúa, *Light in The Dark/Luz en Lo Oscuro*, 28.
[88] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 270.

nepantla to the experience of colonial violence as it sentenced those conquered into a state of estrangement: "The ancient institutions had been condemned and mortally wounded, while the ones the friars imposed were still strange and at times incomprehensible. Consequently, the Indians found themselves *nepantla*, 'in between.'"[89] The idea of nepantla, however, requires further clarification in order to properly describe the kind of referent it summoned for the colonized Nahuatl population.

James Maffie, in his study of Aztec philosophy, argues that nepantla holds the key to understanding Aztec metaphysics, which was organized around the idea that there is a single self-generating sacred force or energy, called teotl. Defined by process, movement, change, and transformation, teotl entailed a processual conception of reality where becoming prevailed over being. Within this all-encompassing becoming, relational dualities described the complementary forces that constituted teotl. Nepantla, as a pattern of motion, what Maffie calls a "motion-change," is one way in which these dualities interact.[90] Arguing against a conceptualization of nepantla as liminality, Maffie continues:

> Nepantla, by contrast, is neither temporary nor exceptional but rather the permanent condition of the cosmos, human existence, and indeed reality itself (teotl). Nepantla-processes such as weaving and sexual commingling serve as root or organizing paradigms in Aztec metaphysics. The cosmos is a grand weaving in progress. Nepantla is therefore ordinary—not extraordinary. The ordinary is not interrupted by nepantla; nepantla is the ordinary. Becoming and transition are the norm—not being and stasis. Ontological ambiguity is the norm—not ontological unambiguity.[91]

Understood this way, the reprimanded Aztec's response to Durán, "we are still '*nepantla*,'" does not so much refer to a temporary condition of being caught in-between the Aztec and European

[89] Miguel León-Portilla, *Endangered Cultures*, trans. Julie Goodson-Lawes (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), 10.
[90] James Maffie, *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion*, (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2014), 13–4.
[91] Maffie, *Aztec Philosophy*, 363.

worlds, but the permanence of an Aztec perspective, which, subsumes the events that the conquest entailed.

As I stated in the introduction to this chapter, the historical implications of nepantla could yield a different context for Anzaldúa's description of the borderlands were it attuned to its spatiotemporal conceptualizations: "The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture." By reifying nepantla into a third element, Anzaldúa traces a synthetic trajectory, as it were, that anticipates the homogeneity she and her "nepantleras" envision—she thereby sketches precisely the kind of movement that Maffie warns against, a movement reminiscent of the homogeneous nation in dialectical sublimation.

The critical break to be noted here separates the different logics that oppose nepantla to mestizaje, and the borderlands. An oft-cited poem from *Borderlands/La Frontera* titled "To live in the Borderlands means you" provides an insightful example showing how mestizaje's logic is inherently incompatible with nepantla's. The poem is structured through the anaphoric repetition of the title's semantic structure in an attempt to ground the experience of the borderlands in an identity by means of a series of negations; the first line, which finishes the title's sentence, begins: "[you] are neither *hispana india negra española* / *ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata*, half-breed."[92] The reasoning behind the poem, and behind *Borderlands/La Frontera*, juxtaposes different cultures in neither, both, and in-between relations in order to construct an embattled yet sublimated identity. But, as the poem shows, the construction process is inverted in that the point of departure has already reconciled all these contradictory relations through signification: the

[92] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 216.

borderlands, as the site of contradiction, already means something and, in that process, it already makes available a subject of enunciation.

Part of the disruptive potential I am summoning here through the historical implications of nepantla requires refusing a conciliatory posture. The "trauma of nepantlism," as León-Portilla calls it, is intimately bound with an experience of oppression. In order to relay a second instance of this trauma, León-Portilla refers to another sixteenth-century report by the Franciscan friar Bernardo de Sahagún concerning the response of Nahuatl priests to hearing a condemnation of their beliefs:

> We cannot be tranquil, and certainly we still do not believe, we do not accept as true that which you say, even though this might offend you…. It is enough already that we have lost, that it has been taken from us, that our ancient way of life has been impeded. If we remain in this place, we will only be made prisoners.[93]

Nepantla posits a diametrically opposed perspective of the conquest by privileging the experience of the dominated in contrast to mestizaje's emphasis on the dominant. The oscillation that nepantla's perspective affords persists as the mode of interpretation through which the Nahuatl priests perceive the presence of the colonizers. "In interpolating the events of the conquest into something that is thus meaningful within the Nahua cosmos," Edgar Garcia argues, "the priests conquer conquest to an extent, becoming not its victims but its superintendents. They affirm a dyadic world in motion, where power has shifted back and forth between Aztec and Spaniard, yet that is a world for which they are the privileged interpreters."[94] By retaining nepantla as their interpretative lens, the Nahuatl priests rearticulate colonialism as an Aztec ordinary where transition is the norm.

[93] León-Portilla, *Endangered Cultures*, 10.
[94] Edgar Garcia, *Signs of The Americas* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2020), 53.

Nepantla's critical thrust furnishes a historical orientation consistent with formal subsumption. Both describe specific corporeal and psychological dispositions towards the past. For example, Harootunian describes the conditions required for the perception of formal subsumption by recalling Walter Benjamin's understanding of the past as "'splinters shot through' the present," yielding the idea of a past intruding in the present as flashes.[95] Similarly, Taussig also refers to Benjamin—while echoing Anzaldúa's open wound and León-Portilla's trauma of nepantla—to sketch the historical present as a displacement of the self:

> [taking one outside of oneself] accounts for one of the most curious features of Benjamin's entire philosophy of history, *the flash* wherein "the past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at an instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again." […] This flash marks that leap "in the open air of history" which establishes history as "Marx understood the revolution" as "the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the 'now.'"[96]

Displacement of the self, disembodiment, taking one outside of oneself, are here markers for the moment of perception or recognition of formal subsumption. In a way, it serves to construe a complementary understanding of mimesis where mestizaje's embodiment, in its assertion of an empty time, is counteracted by disembodiment, by a temptation to step out of one's self and into space. Nepantla's spatiotemporal tropology partly captures this temptation by describing *a place that is a different time*—a heterogeneous present. In another passage, Taussig reads Roger Caillois's account of mimesis to describe such disembodiment as "being tempted by space" in "a drama in which the self is but a self-diminishing point amid others, losing its boundedness." Taussig is emphatic about following Caillois's drama to its drastic ends, where the self, "himself becoming space, *dark space where things cannot be put*," becomes "similar, not similar to

[95] Harootunian, *Marx After Marx*, 40.
[96] Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 39.

something, but just *similar*."[97] Taken to an extreme, mimesis complicates the distinction between the perceiver of the place and the place perceived, as the former loses its embodied presence.

In Anzaldúa's "Putting together Coyolxauhqui," a companion piece to "now let us shift," this drama plays out in akin terms. Although the embodied knowledge of mimesis for her is not so much a temptation but rather a feeling of exalted empathy, the sense of being not similar to something but just similar is shared: "A hyperempathic perception fuses you with your surroundings; you become what you observe—a face bulging out of the wall as in a sci-fi film, a woman lurking behind the wallpaper. Shifting and fluid, the boundaries of self-identity blur. You accommodate all identities."[98] There is a considerable shift from the articulation and promulgation of a Chicana identity in its citizen-nation bind, to this nebulously bound self which accommodates all identities without sublimating them into one. Hyperemphatic perception describes the kind of positioning that can perceive the juxtaposition of heterogeneous temporalities without conflating or reifying them. Such a "being not similar to something but just similar" allows to rethink how the self's experience of disembodiment grants access to history in the sense of a structure, as Benjamin would have it, whose site is not homogenous. That is, history beyond the purview of the nation form, as an anational site.

Nepantla coordinates history and politics in order to maintain in sight the wound of conquest from the experience of those who bear it. By asserting the irreducibility of the separation between the Aztec and Spanish realities, the wound configures a contentless space that remains open as a resource of disruption within the nation. Nepantla-as-wound in this sense marks a site wherein colonial violence denotes Balibar's delayed nationalization of people yet

[97] Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 34.
[98] Gloria Anzaldúa, "Putting Coyolxauhqui Together: A Creative Process" in *Counterpoints*, 90 (1999), 250.

this time articulated from and coded by the minorities' perspective. In the heuristics of conceiving the civil rights movement as the imperative revolutionary event of the multicultural US, mestizaje impels the continual renegotiation through which Chicanas/os work out the terms of inclusion to the nation; in this extended civil rights compromise, nepantla locates the excluded, the inherently intransigent that turns away from conciliation by foregrounding the continual founding violence of how the nation continually comes to be.

Nepantla bears the dynamics of a minor literature in that it offers an opening for expression to break the existing forms otherwise shaped into uniformity by the nation state. By emphasizing becoming over being, nepantla problematizes the nation's spatiotemporality and exposes how the emergent and the residual escape a linear conception of time: following Levine's contention against how "the residual and the emergent are always marked as either 'past' or 'future' in relation to the dominant," we can observe how these temporalities actually meet and fuse through the nation form's porosity.[99] Furrowing through the homogeneity of empty time permits thinking formal subsumption as interchangeably residual and emergent: whether the referents are in the past or the future is irrelevant to their determination of an anational process. Or, as Lisa Lowe puts it, "Because residual processes are ongoing, residual elements may be articulated by and within new social practices, in effect, as a 'new' emergent formation."[100] That is, for the purpose of charting anational realms, emergent and residual processes trace the historical limits of the nation form, past and future interchangeably.

There are subtle instances of such historical delimitations in Anzaldúa's writings: "In gatherings where we feel our dreams have been sucked out of us, la nepantlera leads us in celebrating la comunidad soñada, reminding us that spirit connects the irreconcilable warring

[99] Levine, *Form*, 63.
[100] Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 19.

parts para que todo el mundo se haga un país, so that the whole world may become un pueblo."[101] Again employing the notion of "country" yet this time in its standard Spanish spelling, Anzaldúa projects forward a unity emerging from the nepantla trauma, where nepantleras embody the initiative of a future community. Interestingly, "country" as the unity of the whole world is here located in divergence from the nation: its appositional counterpart most closely translates as peoplehood, which enables the possibility of interpreting the referred collectivity as at once more denationalized and less reified—an anational collectivity.

Cenotes and Stitched Bodies

In Anzaldúa's poetics, the meeting point of the residual and the emergent that nepantla makes visible takes the form of a reservoir of collectively shared knowledge that she calls "cenote" after the Mayan word for a specific kind of sinkholes filled with water: "Via nepantla you tap 'el cenote,' the archetypal inner stream of consciousness, dream pool or reservoir of unconscious images and feelings stored as iconic imagery." Similar to Baraka's understanding of the blues tradition as a changing same, Anzaldúa conceives of this reservoir as a transhistorical source of creativity. "El cenote is a mental network of subterranean rivers of information that converge and well up to the surface, like a sinkhole or an opening to the womb of the Earth."[102] At once geological and spiritual, cenotes permit an interconnectedness and exchange of "uncanny signs" that feed the imagination. In this regard, el cenote offers the possibility of thinking a different kind of coalition from nepantleras, one that does not traverse the path from the unconscious to the conscious but remains latent before the production of conocimiento. Through aesthetic and

[101] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 568.
[102] Anzaldúa, *Light in The Dark/Luz en Lo Oscuro*, 98.

political registers, a coalition structured by cenotes can function as a network connecting people beyond official demarcations. In the fifth chapter I will address the function of depth as a decolonial strategy against the omissions of national cartography; similarly, here, with regards to the nation, cenotes give a subterranean depth to the superficial frontiers set up by states. That is, as a geological formation, el cenote precedes the nation's temporal purview; as a subterranean network, it exceeds it spatially.

Jennifer Tamayo embraces and further elaborates the subterranean collectivities that cenotes foster. Her personal relation to the US as a Colombia-born poet who entered the nation illegally as a child and remained undocumented until she turned 18 years-old sheds light on the possibilities that anational coalitions can afford beyond citizenship and identity markers. Her poetic dialogue with Anzaldúa outlines a collectivity conjoined by a feminist and decolonial solidarity that extends beyond the alliances that multiculturalism validates. I therefore read her work as gesturing to a kinship beyond those usually articulated by Latinx scholarship, where the focus resides within the boundaries of a single literary tradition, e.g., explicitly Chicana/o or Nuyorican writers. The intertextuality of Tamayo's exchange with Anzaldúa opens new horizons for the conceptualization not only of Latinx literature and politics, but for the general constellation of decolonial and anational projects of minority literatures within and beyond the US that this dissertation proposes.

For example, Tamayo's *to kill the future in the present* (2018) gestures toward the spatiotemporally unbounded coalitions that cenotes safeguard. Her book begins with the following explanation: "there are two stories i want to tell you that i don't have all the words for."[103] A few pages later she expounds on this lack she confesses to: "i hesitate writing this into

[103] Jennif(f)er Tamayo, *to kill the future in the present* (Chicago: Green Lantern Press, 2018), 1.

text: *my mother and I escaped prison*—" she explains, outlining one of the stories for which she lacked words.

> i type it out. i erase it. i type again. erase again. a thing swirls near my throat. i've never written this down. never strung the words together like this. this phrase has dwelled in a *cenote*. untouched. mulling itself over until it is shiny. sharp. it wasn't until i read Angela Davis's *Are Prisons Obsolete?* that i made the connection between my mother's and my detention in an immigration facility and systems of mass incarceration.[104]

Not quite formless but suggesting an anterior moment to verbalization, the cenote in Tamayo's account preserves repressed thoughts. Relying on Anzaldúa's understanding, for Tamayo, cenotes hold personal and collective content that pertains to an oppressed and repressed position. Like nepantla's perspective of the colonized in opposition to mestizaje's perspective of the colonizer, cenotes shelter oppressed perspectives that allow to make connections such as the one Tamayo makes with Angela Davis. And although Davis's perspective circulates publicly as a book, the connection with Tamayo, at a level of experience, appears dependent on the content that the cenote preserves. This is a coalition demarcated by those who suffer the violence of the nation, through its carceral system and border policing, which is nonetheless a coalition simultaneously unbounded, opening to innumerable experiences of oppression across history. Through cenotes, an anational constellation of oppressed solidarity becomes active.

After the opening sentence of the book, Tamayo proceeds to narrate: "in the beginning of the story i look up images of *cenotes* on the internet at 5 a.m. in a Best Western in Amarillo, Texas. *cenotes*, as Gloria Anzaldúa theorizes them, are about cosmic depth experienced through the natural world. a belly or 'womb' within the land's surface. cavernous and wet."[105] Akin to embarking on a search for cenotes, here coded as political and aesthetic coalitions, Tamayo's narrative begins by situating the reader within official geographies sketched by familiar proper

[104] Tamayo, *to kill the future in the present*, 7.
[105] Tamayo, *to kill the future in the present*, 1.

names and the delimitations they stand for, be it private companies or state and city boundaries. The internet, furthermore, provides a parallel to the cenote's network within this topos of familiarity, even though it is an insufficient network characterized by the superficiality of the screened image.

Yet the adjectives "cavernous and wet" describe and indicate a threshold; they signal an immersion into a cenote that the following lines develop through a change in register: "i want to see how the earth breaks. how it betrays itself. its form. i want to betray the thing that keeps me from writing these stories." The desire for destruction and deformation that Tamayo communicates takes the cenote as an underground to the ground upon which social life is structured; she describes the site as conferring a plasticity that will inform her poetics, her "stories that themselves have everything to do with disobedience and rupture. the stories are about breaking the law. the story is about breaking the geography of how we tell stories. for example, the belly of my story from rupture to rupture is 746 miles long."[106] Inasmuch as they break the law, and that they remain contentless to this point of the book, these stories evoke the extra-official as what Taussig terms the need to break the law so as to uphold it.

As the story unfolds, a coupling of its illegality with its normalcy develops, further pointing to the systemic role of the extra-official: "the story of my and my mother's incarceration is a complicated one. it is also not unusual. it is typical. it is everyday. many mothers have crossed the U.S./Mexico border."[107] However, although Tamayo's personal story of illegal migration from Colombia to the US via Puerto Rico fits within the US symbolic economy by upholding the law through corruption, there is the prospect of disruption, at least with regards to the nation form, in her intention to betray form and break geography. Such a disruption follows

[106] Tamayo, *to kill the future in the present*, 1.
[107] Tamayo, *to kill the future in the present*, 3.

from the transformation of the border as part of an official geography to a corporeal rupture informing her poetics, much like the 746-mile long belly of her story. That is, geography begins to give way to an embodied topography that Tamayo continues to elaborate though the collection: "many mothers holding their children by the arm have tried to cross the border, the ungeographic border. the border at the nape of the neck. the border that starts at the tongue."[108] This ungeographic border underlies Anzaldúa's shape-shifting poetics where any foreign excess to the nation is sutured and incorporated through the individual's body; except, unlike Anzaldúa's management of the nation's symbolic economy, Tamayo's personal displacement exhibits border crossing from the obverse perspective, not one regulating flows but one whose flow is regulated. Whereas Anzaldúa's position, as I argued above, was firmly situated within the US symbolic economy (and jurisdiction as a citizen), Tamayo entered the US as an illegal immigrant. Their different histories within the nation wind up informing their relations to cenotes and their possibilities of disrupting the nation form's sutures.

In Tamayo's poetics, the role of cenotes diverges considerably from Anzaldúa's reparative poetics, in particular with regards to the prospect of healing. Tamayo conveys a wariness about the normalcy that healing suggests, especially as healing becomes intertwined with the demand to produce and reproduce the prevailing situation.

> i worry about healing. every day i worry about the grounds that healing solidifies. who will be the last to heal? who will be forgotten in this healing process? i am not sure how healing is anything but a greater commitment to this very world before us. i want to resist the imperative to heal. and stay in the *cenote*. the space of imaging. the moon in broken phases. the space the crack creates.
>
> i have a feeling i am not getting it. i am not with Anzaldúa right now.

[108] Tamayo, *to kill the future in the present*, 4.

> some of us live in constant and continual rupture. some of us are in the *cenote* as a permanent way.[109]

Tamayo's refusal to heal and embrace rupture in a permanent way belies a skepticism about the reparative possibilities of the world she inhabits. Perhaps what surfaces here, almost two decades into the twenty-first century, is an awareness of multiculturalism's cunning, of the exclusions the nation performs to offer inclusion as a reparative possibility. An echo of Anzaldúa's radical belongingness can be perceived in the solidarity that causes Tamayo to worry about those in perpetual exclusion, those not allowed to heal. But, as she states it, she is not with Anzaldúa; she does not deem cenotes as part of a process toward positive conocimiento, but rather dwells in "the space of imaging" and brokenness.

The theorization of cenotes that emerges from Tamayo's poetics describes them as shelters from the nation's violence. Embracing the fragmentation of cenotes, she works through national incorporation by exercising an alertness over the sutures and ablations imposed on her own body. For example, when she recounts the experience of learning from her mother about her border crossing, she communicates a sense of re-membrance similar to what Anzaldúa and Lorde advocate: "i remember feeling out of my body when the memories came into my body. i remember myself trying hard to remember to map the story onto my body."[110] Tamayo receives her crossing story like an appendage that reintroduces memory into her self-conception; the story tells of the nation's violence, and part of that violence entails the imposition of amnesia. That is, she resists the amnesia as self-ablation that was part of her nationalization process, which in itself is a violence she resists by remembering to remember her crossing and incarceration. And she does so by bearing history on her body as an ungeographic map evocative of Anzaldúa's

[109] Tamayo, *to kill the future in the present*, 17.
[110] Tamayo, *to kill the future in the present*, 4.

sutures. The latter is both an effect and object in Tamayo's poetics as they suture memories to her body, refusing to heal and coalesce into a unified self.

In Tamayo's *Red Missed Aches Read Missed Aches Red Mistakes Read Mistakes* (2011) this poetics develops as textual/textile traces left on the memory and body of the nationalized immigrant. The cover of the book displays an image of a thread of red string stitched onto a white surface, like that of the rest of the cover. Giving the impression of being sewn onto the cover itself, the stitching appears to trace the contour of someone's head and shoulders, as if posing for a passport or ID photo. Yet the stitching is erratic; displaying uneven knots and several threads come undone, it remains elusive about the portrait it insinuates. In its subtlety and pithiness, this image provides a fitting introduction to the collection, a multi-genre autobiographical sequence exploring Tamayo's immigrant status in the US through epistolary poems addressed to her mother. The cover anticipates the mix of visual and textual work that is literally stitched together throughout the book in suggestive yet elliptical ways. As Cathy Park Hong observes, "While Tamayo's poetry deliberately disorients, you can still trace the life stories of a mother and a daughter who struggle for livelihood and legitimate citizenship in a nation swept up in xenophobia;" in other words, Tamayo writes from within the nation, immersed in its racism and misogyny. Yet, as Park Hong notes, "you hear a voice of resistance and resilience from the invisible underclass of the undocumented Latino immigrants. But just as the narrative is about to be fully articulated, Tamayo rends, fragments, and disperses that voice."[111] Like the erratic contour on the cover, Tamayo stitches together a fragmentary narrative of migration that falls apart before it coalesces into an identity—before it lends itself to the kinds of recognition that multiculturalism demands from its citizens.

[111] Cathy Park Hong, "Introduction" in Jennifer Tamayo, *Red Missed Aches Read Missed Aches Red Mistakes Read Mistakes*, (New York: Switchback Books, 2011), iv.

The collection's opening builds on the poetic groundwork that the cover lays by presenting a collage composed of three surfaces stitched together with the same red string: a photo of a child, a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services pamphlet, and a draft of a poem.

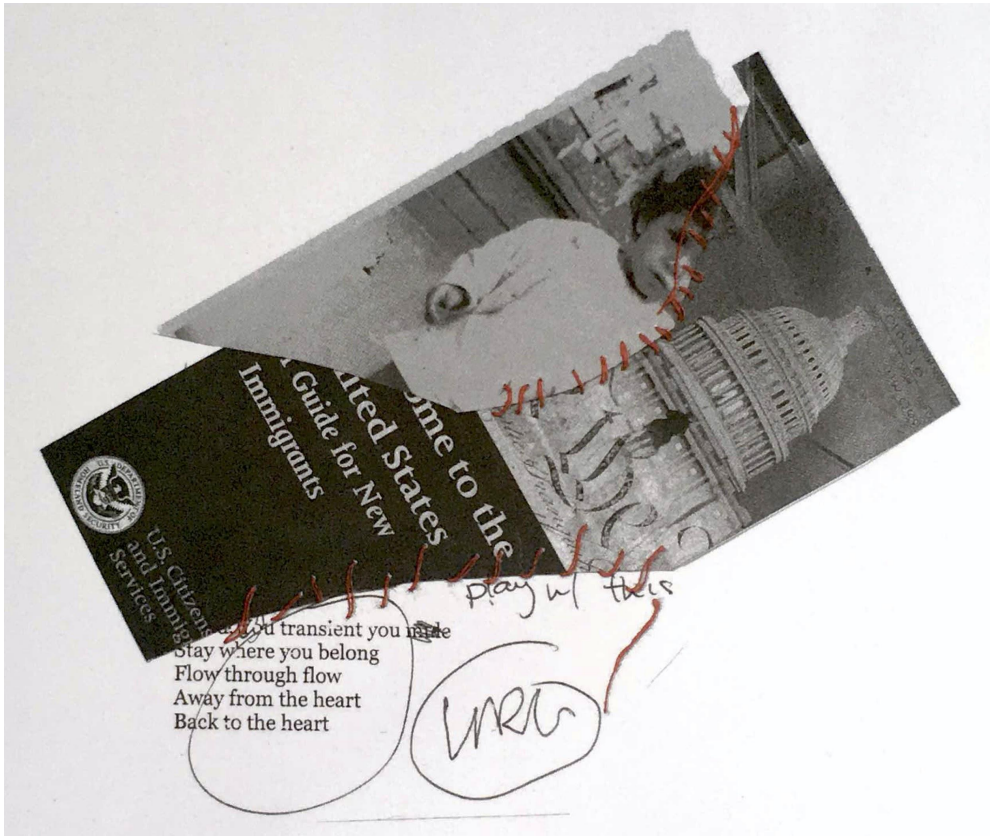

Figure 3: "Opening page," *Red Missed Aches Read Missed Aches Red Mistakes Read Mistakes*. New York: Switchback Books, 2011.

Both separated and united by the pamphlet, the two fragments that index intimacy (the childhood photo and the poem) suggest a narrative, the story of an individual life. In this case this opening collage collapses the migration story that *Red Missed Aches* tells into a single image, where the conceit of the narrative is synchronic, presenting the entirety of the story in a single snapshot. The nation's presence through the pamphlet mediates past and present—setting the photo and the draft apart from each other—and insinuates that such a mediation takes place between past experience and present expression. Moreover, the fact that the poetry is written and annotated in

English turns the acquisition of the nation's language into a marker of transition that suggests a bind to the nation: the adoption of English entails a change in the individual that could be understood as a nationalization process, a national incorporation. Such an incorporation is the central concern of the next chapter when I discuss the poetics of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Myung Mi Kim, but here I anticipate how *Red Missed Aches* displays similarities to Cha's and Kim's poetics in the will to carve out a space of agency within the acquired language and against the nation's constrictions.

As the handwritten note right beneath the stitches requests, "play w/ this," the bind or contiguity with the nation is undermined: although probably a note on the poem, within the collage, "play w/ this" becomes an ambiguous deictic imperative, where "this" could be the poem, the red thread, the contiguity of poem and pamphlet (as expression and nation), or the general collage as narrative. Indeed, *Red Missed Aches* works through the incorporation at the core of the relation between autobiography and nation with a ludic intent, enjoying the errancy of the red stitching even while trying to process the pain of colonial and patriarchal violence. In fact, the pleasure that the poetry takes in erring comes to figure the practice of re-membrance, where error allows discontinuity and gaps in the nation form. The premise of her collection rests on how stitching incorporates partially, exposing the discontinuity of that which is appended—which in turn evokes formal subsumption.

Errancy and playfulness are also intertwined in the ways in which the collection depicts the process of language acquisition, where English is rendered irregularly (thereby inverting the power dynamics that *Borderlands/La Frontera* had set up with its irregular Spanish). The varying spelling of words insinuates different pronunciations that continually open the text to a polysemy. For example, the poem "(Mouth, her)," which displays a tendency throughout the

book to arrange titles in pairs of words that together sound like another word, "mother" in this case, begins with the following line: "On paper, mouther, I am all yours. Yes, mother, I mix my mixings. & trying to."[112] In the interplay of genres that the initial collage elicited, "on paper" echoes in different registers: while it can allude to the epistolary form, figuring the paper through which the message finds its addressee, which furthermore suggests a recurrent trope of property (like the sign-off "yours"), it can also evoke the documents that culminate the process of nationalization.

Considered together, the equivocality in the title and ambiguity in the genre inform the rest of the poem as it continues to balance the bearings of motherhood and nation. "I try to mamorize the population," begins an address to her mother, "the presidents, the articles I've read in newspapers. Even the national him no. That's how I become a peoples but I may be mistaken."[113] This section counterposes different forms of relation to the past; while "mamorize" suggests an embodied sense of re-membrance that stresses a matriarchal and somatic lineage, "him no" (which plays on the Spanish "himno," a translation of "anthem") insinuates a patriarchal apparatus of recollection operating through newspapers, books, anthems, and a general stately remembrance. More importantly for the understanding of anational potentials in Tamayo's poetics, she pries open the question of peoplehood; the sense itself of becoming a peoples, plural, reasserts the equivocality that the second half of the sentence understands as a possible mistake. In the two poles that the poem sets up between embodied re-membrance and national incorporation, peoplehood is pulled toward the embodied re-membrance of plural connotations of the word that convey anational relations to the past.

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[112] Jennifer Tamayo, *Red Missed Aches Read Missed Aches Red Mistakes Read Mistakes* (New York: Switchback Books, 2011), 16.
[113] Tamayo, *Red Missed Aches*, 16.

Within the context of multiculturalism's plasticity and capaciousness, a plurality of peoplehoods, ethnicities, or culture can be contained within a single nation. Yet "how I become a peoples" reverses the process of collectivities coalescing into one nation by pluralizing the individual and spreading its identity over several peoplehoods. Although not entirely reparative, since it does not seek a goal or positive outcome, the phrase channels the singularity of the speaker (through the singular indefinite article of "a peoples") into a plurality of collectivities. Like the networks of cenotes, the peoples contained within the individual evoke unbounded coalitions that extend back in history beyond the purview of the nation. The possibility of being mistaken, furthermore, holds equivocality as a resistance to any positive content that could be incorporated toward reproducing the nation—these pasts anterior to the nation are not held up, identified, or named to be recognized by the nation.

Multiplicity is an intimate as well as a public arrangement throughout *Red Missed Aches*. Just as becoming "a peoples" describes a profusion from the individual to the plural, or how irregular spelling is geared toward equivocality, each surface and each contour on the page insists on the ungeographic borders that Tamayo perceives as organizing the nation. In this regard, in Tamayo's poetics the broad idea of a body aligns human, textual, and territorial bodies as forms demarcated by the violence of the nation, surfaces upon which the nation imprints itself. She reflects upon this in another poem addressed to her mother: "*Mother, bodies are places that were utterly hurt & utterly landscaped. All together now, bodies are places. Utter it:*"[114] Following the colon, Tamayo inserts a small close-up photograph of two indistinguishable surfaces stitched together. Given the small size of the image, and the emphasis placed upon the stitching, as well as the fact that the same image is employed similarly elsewhere in the

[114] Tamayo, *Red Missed Aches*, 56.

collection, I read this as a typographic glyph Tamayo creates to iconically represent her stitching. This reading emphasizes the syntactic function that is given to stitching throughout the collection, but more specifically in this quoted fragment: her remark on the violence that bodies suffer is followed by a call to utter the stitching glyph, as if connoting a phoneme that could represent her remark. The glyph stands in relation to the imperative that summons a totality in the moment ("All together now"), an utterance evocative of the radical belongingness that Anzaldúa sought. These three aspects of the poem conjoin the violence that distinguishes bodies with a togetherness urged to utter the stitching: to acknowledge the pain while acknowledging the possibility of stitching as a possibility without a clear referent, as a clear sound or meaning except for the iconic stitching. The invocation of togetherness participates in the errancy of the stitching as a possibility without a normalized or positive content—an anational possibility beyond the purview of the nation.

Tamayo's practice of re-membrance, in this scene of errancy and multiplicity, paired with her poetics of stitching amount to a continual rehearsal of ungeographic border crossings: throughout the book her red thread crosses from one image or text to another, conjoining them in the process without fully unifying them. Her poetry imagines a form of sociality that dwells in the violence of the nation as it transgresses its delimitations and finds divergent possibilities of expression in the resulting re-membering.

Chapter III: Dictation and Labor in Kim and Cha

In her recently published collection, *Civil Bound* (2019), Myung Mi Kim observes, "if a species cannot find a sonic niche of its own, it will not survive."[1] Standing alone in an otherwise blank page, this remark requires contextualization from the rest of the collection, as well as from her poetic trajectory. Given the directionality implied in her title, where the polysemy of "civil" evokes social and civic responsibilities toward the community and interspecies solidarity, Kim's observation arrives as an assertion of the vital relation between a community's capacities for survival and its means of expression. That she phrases it in ecological terms imprints upon the assertion a generalizable quality, which wrests it from human specificity and lends it an ahistorical and planetary character. I read Kim's dictum as expressing an anational perspective that revises the poetics she has crafted throughout her earlier publications.

Her poetry collections from the last two decades of the century—*Under Flag* (1991), *The Bounty* (1996), *Dura* (1998) and *Commons* (2002)—proceed through keen meditations on language which reflect on her identity as Korean American and explore her diasporic experience of life in a multicultural US. For example, in *Commons*, Kim offers a set of questions to frame her poetry and to probe the link that binds language and nation at this precise moment and place in history:

> What *is* English now, in the face of mass global migrations, ecological degradations, shifts and upheavals in identifications of gender and labor? How can the diction(s), register(s), inflections(s) as well as varying affective stances that have and will continue to filter into "English" be taken into account? What are the implications of writing at this moment, in precisely this "America"? How to practice and make plural the written and spoken—grammars, syntaxes, textures, intonations…[2]

[1] Myung Mi Kim, *Civil Bound* (Richmond: Omnidawn, 2020).
[2] Myung Mi Kim, *Commons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 110.

Kim's questions convey a keen awareness of the complex task of surveying language as it enfolds social life; but they also convey anxiety about the character and capacities of language, and in particular about the aims that English serves. Paired with the observation she offers in *Civil Bound*, a preoccupation over the sonic dimensions of a community's speech takes center stage in her poetics. Parallel to how Xiaojing Zhou describes Kim's poetics as "interested in the ways in which English is 'contaminated' by immigrants," an obverse concern for the ways in which English affects immigrants and minorities can also be registered in her poetics, particularly as it traces the implications of sound.[3] I am interested in assessing the possible answers that Kim offers to the question "What *is* English now?" as a continually shifting interrogation of language within language whose answer involves the subsequent reflection: "What are the implications of writing at this moment, in precisely this 'America'?" Kim's preoccupations not only define her poetry in this and earlier volumes but also outline a general set of circumstances that pertain to and define the nation's situation during multiculturalism.

Through her poetry, Kim surveys the discursive underpinnings of the US from the seemingly constrained position of a minority, while simultaneously positing a strategy and conceptualization of agency that expands the available forms of political intervention within the nation. This expansion I trace through Kim's attention to the "mass global migrations, ecological degradations," and, more emphatically, the "shifts and upheavals in identifications of gender and labor"; by focusing on the interaction between labor and language, I contend that Kim's intervention turns away from the imperative to reproduce the nation and rather redirects labor and language towards the production of alternative communities anticipated by her investment in civil communities and interspecies. Her interstitial position with regards to language learning,

[3] Xiaojing Zhou, *The Ethics and Poetics of Alterity in Asian American Poetry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006), 229.

and her focus on dictation, is inherited from the poetics of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, whose seminal *Dictee* I analyze in the second half of this chapter.

In this section I focus on Kim's first poetry collection *Under Flag*, which attends to these questions from the circumstances of an incipiently official US multiculturalism; in doing so, her poetry addresses the nationalizing capabilities of language. For example, "Into Such Assembly," the third poem in the collection, begins with an account of the verbal conferral of US citizenship onto an unspecified recipient:

> Can you read and write English? Yes____. No____.
> Write down the following sentences in English as I dictate them.
> There is a dog in the road.
> It is raining.
> Do you renounce allegiance to any other country but this?
> Now tell me, who is the president of the United States?
> You will stand now. Raise your right hands.[4]

Departing from a question about reproducibility through dictation, that is, the individual's capacity to reproduce English, speech in the poem seems to flow one-sidedly, omitting the recipient's participation. There is, however, the possibility of reading the two indented lines as transcripts of the dictation, and thus as involving the recipient. Such an interpretation unfolds from and through the ambiguous material provenance of the discourse that comprises the poem, characterized sometimes by written features (namely the blank spaces left for answers) and others by spoken and aural features (such as dictation itself). In this ambiguity, and in anticipation of the conferral of citizenship, the indented lines suggest a moment of ventriloquized integration, where national speech would animate a separate body into and through the writing of its own corpus—but are these lines in fact the recipient's writing or are they uttered by the same speaker? Kim's concern with registering the process by which the nation comes to be embodied

[4] Myung Mi Kim, *Under Flag* (Berkeley: Kelsey St. Press, 1991), 29.

and reproduced pays close attention to the possible reactions to the language of national interpellation. A few lines below she readdresses this reproducibility by asking "Who is mother tongue, who is father country?" and further emphasizes the dynamics of incorporating bodies into the nation by gendering language, as though both language and nation were the biological progenitors of the citizen-to-be.

This example demonstrates how "Into Such Assembly" extends and nuances the terms of the question "What *is* English now?" by tracing the overbearing, almost saturating, presence of English in relation to the conferral of US citizenship while still maintaining a subtle, almost muted, position for equivocality. Kim's poetry reflects on these social conditions wherein the nation is linguistically as well as aesthetically overdetermined (i.e., where the nation's existing conditions are figured as its conditions of existence). In this regard, refining our awareness of "the diction(s), register(s), inflections(s) as well as varying affective stances that have and will continue to filter into 'English'" is imperative to analyze the specific historical context in which Kim addresses language as national and nationalizing, and to trace the specific tropes deployed in the ongoing production or poiesis of the nation. By foregrounding the labor required from citizens to reproduce the nation form—the type of labor upholding the amnesia that sustains the nation and disregards its contradictions—in the following I elaborate on how Kim's portrayal of dictation as labor cannot be assimilated into the nation. Showing how the poetics of nationhood are intrinsic to the nation form, I begin by detailing national poiesis through an analysis of two particular tropes: catachresis (the perversion of a trope) and apostrophe (a life-giving form of ventriloquism). Implicit in this approach is the understanding of poetry as a site of negotiation wherein the nation's limits are demarcated, thereby exhibiting the anational realm that upholds them.

Catachresis and Apostrophe

Kim's interrogation of what it means to write in English in her specific now belongs to a moment nuanced by the multicultural experience of Korean Americans. The pertinent background here is the consolidation of the post-World War II paradigm where, according to John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan, the US assumed the hegemonic role of enforcer of the new nation states in what became known as the Truman Doctrine.[5] In the polarized context of the Cold War, the Truman Doctrine entailed an imposed mode of assistance to develop nascent nation states across the planet. The character of this assistance would be exhibited in 1950 with the Korean War, a conflict which Truman described as a "landmark in mankind's search for a rule of law among nations."[6]

The multifaceted function that the nation played in capitalism's global restructuring as a transition from the postwar period to the multicultural US was a two-sided process: along with the new rationale for US foreign interventions in support of emergent nation states, a parallel rise in immigration gave way to domestic transformations answering to the increasing need for inexpensive labor. In connection with the Korean War, for example, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 put an end to the category of "alien ineligible to citizenship" which previously restricted the entrance of Asian migrants to the country. As Lisa Lowe comments, "The expansion that led to U.S. colonialism and war in the Philippines, Korea, and Vietnam violently displaced immigrants from those nations; the aftermath of the repressed history of U.S.

[5] The most succinct explanation of this doctrine comes from Truman himself: "At the present moment in world history every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one. […] I believe we must assist free peoples to work out their destinies in their own way." Truman's tacit conflation of nations and peoples, part occluding and part naturalizing the transition between the two is intertwined with the assistance to work out "their own destinies in their own way." Quoted in John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan, *Represented Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 19.
[6] Kelly and Kaplan, *Represented Communities*, 20.

imperialism in Asia now materializes in the 'return' of Asian immigrants to the imperial center."[7] The Korean War laid down a nexus between South Korea and the US where the former received the guidelines for the instauration of a modern nation state while the latter received the migratory wave that satisfied the need for inexpensive labor as it fortified the presence and identity of Korean Americans—who came to embody the "return" of the repressed history of US imperialism. In connection to the "shifts and upheavals in identifications of gender and labor" that Kim marks, the assimilation of this wave of immigrants into the US became part of a proliferating "'new' workforce within the global reorganizing of capitalism," in Lowe's words, based on the racialization and gendering of labor.[8] As such, these shifts and upheavals become one of the objects of Kim's poetics as she dwells on the diasporic experience of Korean Americans.

These transitions inform the articulation of US multiculturalism towards the end of the twentieth century as a moment when the idea of the nation reached a catachrestic point in its historical development. By this catachresis I refer to the shift from the historical meaning of the nation prior to its nation state mode as denoting a collectivity bound by race, peoplehood, common descent, or shared language.[9] Howard Winant describes a transnational postwar racial

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[7] Lisa Lowe, "Work, Immigration, Gender: New Subjects of Cultural Politics," in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, (ed.) Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 358.

[8] Furthermore, Lowe understands this new workforce as "linked to an emergent political formation, organizing across race, class, and national boundaries, that includes other racialized and immigrant groups, as well as women working in, and immigrating from, the neocolonized world," a coalition, I would add, unfolding beyond national configurations and hence akin to the anational projections I trace here. Lowe, "Work, Immigration, Gender," 357, 358.

[9] Here I follow John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan's lexicographical analysis of the word nation and their attempts to unveil the imperial argument behind the retrospective formulation of the nation as state (*Cf.* Kelly and Kaplan, *Represented Communities*, 14–5). Howard Winant's european genealogy of national formations similarly distinguishes racially homogeneous entities (22). For a more capacious account of the racial and ethnic homogeneity of the nation's origin see Anthony D. Smith's *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*.

break manifesting most remarkably in the US, where white supremacy's domination was "challenged, wounded, and changed [but] hardly died," yet the historical event I want to emphasize here refers rather to the statist reformation that resulted from this break.[10] Still, the postwar transnational context of decolonial projects and coalitions nonetheless confers a significant background, as it encompasses opposition to imperialist white supremacy in the US and explains how "the nation-building project […] was insufficient" for the conception of decolonization as revolution in Adom Getachew's account.[11] Registering the fact that "empire was institutionally flexible," I want to stress how there was a similar flexibility in the nation's adaptation to the insurgent and decolonial forces that emerged within its territory and area of influence.[12] Indeed what I mean by US multiculturalism in this chapter comes closer to the national reconfiguration that resulted, in Winant's description, from the transition from domination to a Gramscian hegemony organized around "the capacity to *incorporate opposition*."[13]

The catachresis I point to entails a certain semantic and figural malleability already hinted at by the multicultural nation inasmuch as it bespeaks the transformations that the nation underwent in order to self-identify as containing several cultures, peoples, and languages. As catachrestic, I not only argue that the multicultural nation is an "improper use of words" or an "application of a term to a thing which it does not properly denote"—to use two of the definitions the *OED* lists. I also argue that the idea of the multicultural nation entails an "abuse or perversion of a trope or metaphor" in the sense that it abuses the idea of the nation as the

[10] Howard Winant, *The World is a Ghetto*, 33.
[11] Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2019), 17.
[12] Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 22.
[13] Winant, *The World is a Ghetto*, 174.

figuration of a relationship between territory, culture, race, history, etc., which is perverted to accommodate the assimilative drive of the nation state.

Multiculturalism as catachresis conjures the effects of the repertoire of linguistic figures on which the nation depends for its ongoing production and for updating its self-understanding; it reveals how the nation has the capacity to transfigure itself (from monolithic to plural) while maintaining the essence that allows it to persist as the US: the continuity Winant finds in the survival of white supremacist domination in spite of the racial break instilled by minorities.

On a parallel theoretical account, catachresis refers to the nation's deconstruction as the attempt to nationalize tried to claim what exceeds it. In Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's analysis, catachreses act as master words describing the absence of referents within a discourse of dominance—which in this case describes the absence of referent for the constituents of US multiculturalism. In this context, catachresis points to the homogenizing function of the nation form where every singular experience, individual or collective, needs to be given a proper name in the register of US belongingness. In a different context, Timothy Yu notes the constructedness of the linguistically proper when he describes the panethnic term Asian American as a similarly constructed label to the avant-garde; likewise the identity marker Korean American attempts to fixate such a referent without possessing a literal referent.[14] Aware of said transfigurations, multiculturalism describes the setting that prompts Kim to ask "What are the implications of writing at this moment, in precisely this 'America'?"

One way to track the multicultural nation's semantic malleability is through the proliferation of meanings and functions that the idea of the nation fulfills throughout the entire political spectrum. The latter relates to the nation's conceptual ubiquity and hypervisibility

[14] Timothy Yu, *Race and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 5.

towards the end of the twentieth century, i.e., nationalism not only as decolonialism, but as nativism, as patriotism, as racism, as culture, as fascism, as tradition, etc. Additionally, in the US, the intertwined mobilization of nationalism and decolonization can also be perceived in the self-understanding and self-definition of the collectivities whose claims laid the foundations for multiculturalism, e.g., the construction of Chicano/a nationalism, black nationalism, or Native American nationalism.

In a more relevant account for Kim's context, Sau-Ling Wong in "Denationalization Reconsidered" observed how the formulation of an Asian American identity lacked a "territorial sovereignty/integrity to underwrite it," which would suggest "a yearning for the kind of containing boundaries and contained site enjoyed by the dominant society, a nation-state."[15] Wong's remark outlines a political strategy seeking to enfranchise an ethnic minority as it simultaneously reveals the ubiquity of the nation as the one viable political mode of meaningful action in her present: "Not only are one's time and energy for action finite, but whatever claiming one does must be enacted from a political location—one referenced to a political structure, a nation."[16]

Wong's perspective on the political panorama indicates how the terms of agency available to the individual and the collective appear destined to give in to the nation's terms; we could rephrase the latter by stating that the political panorama is saturated by the nation's terms. With each collectivity claiming a singular nationalism to uphold their political agency, the multicultural nation requires a catachrestic plasticity that can accommodate and assimilate their different histories. As considered in the cases of Baraka and Anzaldúa, the state of affairs resulting from this process suggests that manifestations of decolonial opposition to the (specific)

[15] Sau-Ling Wong, "Denationalization Reconsidered," in *Amerasia Journal*, 21:1 & 2 (1995), 4.
[16] Wong, "Denationalization Reconsidered," 19.

nation are already anticipated by the (general) nation form inasmuch as they are induced into a binary relation where the nation is the essential supplement to colonialism, e.g., Asian American resistance to the US assumes the form of nationalism.[17] Which is why counternationalism—in its different guises as globalism, transnationalism, colonialism, imperialism—seems to follow and subtend the nation's logic and permanence. To borrow from Althusser and Gibson-Graham, the panorama reveals how the existing conditions of the nation are figured as its conditions of existence.[18]

Anticipating my analysis of *Under Flag*, Myung Mi Kim's "Lamenta," from *Commons*, offers a rebuttal to the acceptance of such existing conditions: "All that we see could also be otherwise | All that we can describe could also be otherwise | The thing seen is the thing seen together with the whole space."[19] The kind of perspectival tilt insinuated by these lines provides the general theme through which Kim poetically engages with the multicultural nation; mainly, this perspectival tilt reveals a panorama enveloping the nation's hypervisibility and allowing her to maneuver through its catachresis. By attending to how "The thing seen is the thing seen

[17] By referring to nationalism as an essential supplement, I mean, that decolonization was constructed as the binary opposite of colonization, i.e., as a supplement that not only reasserted its primordial position but saturated the conceptual plane of political agency as it overturned the planetary hegemony of colonialism. The overdetermination of the nation can thereby be phrased in terms of the logic of supplementarity. According to Jacques Derrida, the logic of supplementarity dictates how a primary term (here colonialism) already presupposes its secondary opposite (decolonization) in such a way that the latter turns out to be of a substitute primacy: "The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence. […] It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*." The point would be, then, to note how this supplemental logic of saturation and substitution also informs the modus operandi of the nation in that the Trojan horse of decolonization instituted the nation state and nationalism in correlation to colonialism: the nation as paired with and eventual surrogate for decolonization fills the political spectrum of agency, persisting once decolonization was deemed finalized. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 149, 163.
[18] *Cf.* footnote 5.
[19] Kim, *Commons*, 15.

together with the whole space," we can chart the nation as a demarcated thing along with the anational space surrounding it.

Born in Seoul in 1957, Kim migrated to the US with her family when she was nine years old. Her poetry in *Under Flag* reflects on this experience, as in the final line of the opening poem "And Sing We," which rings as a leitmotif throughout the collection: "Mostly, we cross bridges we did not see being built." Kim references the experience of migration from Korea to the US by conveying its ongoingness as an action with a diffused agency. Charles Altieri writes about these bridges as transitioning and stabilizing aids for the subjects of diaspora:

> In part these bridges are simple permissions for memory; in part they refer to the need to adapt to what one can neither control nor psychologize. The bridges do not depend on our witnessing their being built; they simply make possible the range of transitions enabling us to live with loss—at least as long as the speaker keeps the wariness of the "mostly" introducing this statement.[20]

Although Altieri discerns a constraining force in these bridges, inasmuch as they demarcate that which lies beyond the control of Korean immigrants, the way he describes their preexistence prioritizes how bridges enable this "range of transitions" over how they limit it. His narrative focalizes the virtues of multiculturalism. Without eschewing their structural function as edifices for crossing, my interpretation of these bridges centers on how their destination is hinted as unknown for those crossing inasmuch as they did not witness their construction, did not participate in their design, and do not express an active agency in the present act of using them. The preexistence of the bridges means they take precedence over the forms of transition and arrival that the US both enables and demands. In my reading, bridges represent the structural and metaphorical presence of a nationalizing function with regards to both the imposition of the nation state in Korea and Korean migration to the US.

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[20] Charles Altieri, "Images of Form Vs. Images of Content in Contemporary Asian-American Poetry" in *Qui Parle*, Vol. 9, No. 1, The Dissimulation of History (Fall/Winter 1995), 89.

In *Under Flag*, the range of transitions enabled and limited by bridges is instantiated by the nation's interpellation, where the arriving subject is addressed and compelled to react to the constraints of this address. However, in the same way that crossing the bridge is an ongoing action, this moment of arrival does not have a culminating moment but defines the relationship of subject to nation throughout. Dorothy J. Wang, for example, has commented on "Asian Americans' unique form of racial interpellation [as] inextricably linked to the view of them as culturally and linguistically unassimilable."[21] Ongoingness, in this sense, characterizes a tension inherent to an incessant mode of address aiming to gather within the national body while simultaneously othering Asian Americans.[22] Interpellation exhibits the same temporality as the bridges in that it precedes the addressee; as such, anterior and ongoing, it participates in the also-ongoing production of the nation, in particular as it informs how multiculturalism manages the plurality of racialized minorities that comprise the nation.

The experience of interpellation is illustrated in a later passage from "Into Such Assembly":

> No, "th", "th", put your tongue against the roof of your mouth, lean slightly against the back of the top teeth, then bring your bottom teeth up to barely touch your tongue and breathe out, and you should feel the tongue vibrating, "th", "th", look in the mirror, that's better [23]

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[21] Similarly, Wang notes how there is a corpus of assumptions and preconceptions that undergird—and limit, I would add—the range of transitions for the immigrant. For Wang, this form of interpellation furnishes a perspective to analyze "the relationship between a poet's interpellation (including racialization) in American society and her relationship to the English language," but also, recalling Kim's poetic project, to analyze "the assumptions and preconceptions undergirding our notions of poetry, English-language poetry, American literature, 'Americanness,' the English language, and questions of literary value, among others." Dorothy J. Wang, *Thinking Its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 24.

[22] Considering gender, Lowe similarly argues that "Asian 'American' women, even as citizens, continue to be located at the cultural, racial, and political boundaries of the nation," a claim she relates to her use of quotation marks "to signal the ambivalent identification that both U.S.-born Asian and Asian immigrant women have to the nationalist construction 'American.'"

[23] Kim, *Under Flag*, 8.

Related to the previous instance of ventriloquism in the scene of citizenship conferral, this passage shifts to a more intimate mode of address, where the mouth figures as the locus of sound production that needs to be disciplined. The interpellation is specifically racialized in that the requirement demanded from the alien body entails the production of a sound which is nonexistent in Korean: the "th" phoneme is a difficult phoneme to produce by Korean learners. Despite its intimacy, the passage relies on a set of anatomical instructions already available which facilitate the education of the mouth in the production of the proper sound. Along with this more intimate mode of address, what stands out from this description is how improvement is attained by a moment of recognition of a self in the mirror—an acoustic and visual recognition of a national self.

Putting together both scenes of nationalization, Kim's description of the conferral of citizenship portrays dictation as a coerced ritual of embodiment, as a transformation of the sound producer and speaker-to-be:

> Can you read and write English? Yes____. No____.
> Write down the following sentences in English as I dictate them.
> There is a dog in the road.
> It is raining.
> Do you renounce allegiance to any other country but this?
> Now tell me, who is the president of the United States?
> You will stand now. Raise your right hands.

Close reading the conferral of citizenship, we can observe how the nationalizing ritual induces writing through dictation as an initial stage of belongingness: the sequence of demands in this passage traces an increasingly corporeal assimilation from the test of reproducibility. The materiality of rain leads to a performative commitment to the nation and the recognition of a head of state. Bringing to mind the role of war in the nation's interpellation of its minorities, the last quoted line insinuates a translation of the biographical body to the militarized national body.

By noting this last discursive gesture where the speaker turns from the individual to plural addressees, I want to evoke the rhetorical effects of apostrophe, mainly through its etymological root as describing a turning away. Partly, I am interpreting this section in the sense proposed by Barbara Johnson, where apostrophe "manipulates the I/Thou structure of *direct* address in an indirect, fictionalized way." For Johnson this means that "the absent, dead, or inanimate entity addressed is thereby made present, animate, and anthropomorphic," which makes apostrophe "a form of ventriloquism through which the speaker throws voice, life, and human form into the addressee, turning its silence into mute responsiveness."[24] Because interpellation proceeds inductively, incorporating the subject into the nation by naming them, an apostrophic logic drives this turning from the individual to the collective—and we could term this interpellation a national apostrophe by which ventriloquism animates the political body, giving life to the nation.[25] Both quoted sections from Kim's poetry turn to the nation from the individual as, on one instance, acknowledging the militarized collective and, on the other, recognizing the reflected nationalized self in the mirror.

Parsing Kim's portrayal of interpellation as it overlaps with apostrophe allows us to foreground and reflect on the dual mobilization of catachresis and apostrophe. They show how poetics confers a helpful framework to analyze the ongoing constitution of the nation, illuminating the nationalizing process that starts with misnaming—if not producing—migrants and progresses to ventriloquize them as citizens in response to the injunction to recognize the nation. We can conceptualize this process as part of the discursive practices of a poetics of nationhood; but, just as crucial, scrutinizing this process also allows us to trace the rhetorical and

[24] Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 185.
[25] This account evokes Michael Taussig's description of national and stately being as a constant rhetorical and tropological circulation wherein the living body animates the nation's dead and its history. Michael Taussig, *The Magic of the State* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 39-40.

linguistic movements aimed at resisting such nationalizing rituals. By this I refer to the sensibility needed to detect the effects and operations of this poetics of nationhood as well as the corresponding strategizing required to subvert them—the practice of an anational poetics, which is instantiated by the poetry contained in *Under Flag*.

Kim's discernment of a transition from interpellation to militarization reflects on the kind of labor that dictation demands from individuals and the processes by which the nation is embodied—processes which can be gleaned by expanding our understanding of labor to correspond to the reconfigurations of global capitalism during this historical period. Returning to Harootunian's isomorphism of the commodity form and the nation form—the conceptual kinship of sorts that can be identified by recognizing the two phenomena's shared histories as well as their obfuscating purposes—we can recall how commodity and nation present mystifying forms in that their appearances occlude not only their operations but also the processes by which they come to be, that is, their histories and paths of development.[26] Building on Harootunian's observation, I would add that this isomorphism can be interpreted as yielding another corollary referring to Marx's understanding of commodities as congealed labor in that the nation form's continuity can also be ascribed to the congealed labor of the individuals that reproduce it.[27]

To conceive of this congealed national labor we need to think labor as an ampler set of activities and practices—such as the production of sound in a particular language or the emotional links that the individual develops for the nation. Maurizio Lazzarato, for example, elaborates "the concept of *immaterial labor*, which is defined as the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity," in ways that could meaningfully inform

[26] Harry Harootunian, *Marx After Marx* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 35-6.
[27] "all commodities are merely definite quantities of congealed labour-time." Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1990), 130.

the theorization of the nation form; that is, as a set of cultural contents produced by labor.[28] Building on Lazzarato's work, Michael Hardt further subdivides immaterial labor in order to arrive to the concept of affective labor as an activity producing the kind of attachments that are imperative for national constructions: "What affective labor produces are social networks, forms of community, biopower."[29] Noting that the social networks and forms of community produced by affective labor are not a fortiori national serves as a prefatory acknowledgement for the conceptualization of anational communities. Simply put, there is affective labor that isn't appropriated by and for the nation form—the kind of labor Kim's poetics induce.

Both immaterial labor and affective labor specify the kinds of processes staked out by dictation in "Into Such Assembly," offering a glimpse of the labor congealed in the nation form. Belongingness can be readdressed from the perspective of labor as registering the energy necessary to move bodies and generate affective links. Attending to the rhetoric of national interpellation or what I've termed the national apostrophe allows us to observe how Kim figures dictation as the pivotal element that sets in motion the body and enables the receptivity required not only to recognize the nation (in the mirrored self and the collective self), but to turn the speaker susceptible to its affective links of belongingness—which in the end sanction the bellicose willingness to sacrifice in the name of the nation. Marking the poetic character of this process helps to parse the nation's mystifying and enduring appearance: apostrophe animates the otherwise inert nation, it "throws voice, life, and human form," as Johnson observed, in a process of aesthetic assimilation whereby the nation form acquires its human quality—a quality imperative for the production of affective links and labor. In Kim's rendering, the pivotal

[28] Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor" in *Radical Thought in Italy*, edited by Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 132.
[29] Michael Hardt, "Affective Labor" in *boundary 2*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Summer, 1999), 96.

function of dictation can be more precisely understood as a metonymic relation between interpellation and illocution, where dictation is figured as the performative that materializes the nation through language ("Write down the following sentences in English as I dictate them"). But, even though the national apostrophe has an illocutionary potential to ventriloquize, its felicitous fruition still depends on the interpellated individual.[30]

Disinterpellation

With regards to the nation form and its animating capacities, it is crucial to register the passivity of the addressee in Kim's poem as a gesture of uncompromising ambiguity.[31] Foregrounding this gesture in the conferral of citizenship opens a subverting potential in the recipient's agency which resists the official imperative to reproduce the nation. The careful attention that these lines bring to the ways in which the nation reproduces itself through writing and embodiment suggests the possibility of reading manifold divergent responses to the official interpellation. By juxtaposing the demand for an illocutionary commitment to the nation with an ambiguous response, Kim renders the terms of national belongingness inconclusive, locating the certainty of compliance beyond the official purview of both state recognition and self-recognition as citizen. Anticipating her exhortation in *Commons* to "counter the potential totalizing power of language that serves the prevailing systems and demands of coherence," "Into Such Assembly" scrutinizes the sequence of performative interpellations that constitute the ritual of nationalization, yet in lieu of the unequivocal consent that would prove the ritual felicitous, Kim reveals a field of

[30] I borrow here the terminology of J. L. Austin, who in his seminal *How to Do Things with Words*, assessed the intended success of a performative or illocutionary utterance as either felicitous or infelicitous.

[31] A gesture aligned with the adverb "mostly" in "Mostly, we cross bridges we did not see being built."

possible responses to the national injunction, constellating what I will describe below as what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls periperformative labor.[32]

In her *The Ethics and Poetics of Alterity in Asian American Poetry*, Zhou reads "Into Such Assembly" precisely as a thorough engagement with what it means to write in English.[33] Although I am generally in agreement with Zhou's approach and interpretations, I am also interested in further specifying Kim's strategizing both by reorienting the focus from an ethical standpoint to a national one and by considering how the national apostrophe is made vulnerable in Kim's poetics through an ambiguous response to the official interpellation. Zhou notes that the specific use of sound in *Under Flag* produces "'a purely intensive usage' of English, which resists unified symbolic meanings"; such a resistance grants the capacity "to oppose the 'oppressive quality' of an official national language and to arrive at the kind of 'perfect and unformed expression, a material intense expression' which Deleuze and Guattari refer to when speaking of the deterritorialization of Yiddish and German in Kafka's writings."[34] My approach is similarly invested in Deleuze and Guattari's description of minor literature as the condition that allows marginal writers "to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility."[35] And I agree that tracing expression in Kim's poetry is paramount to read the blueprint of an alternative community; mainly because close reading expression here helps to understand the rationale behind the ambiguous response to the

[32] Kim, *Commons,* 110.
[33] Referencing Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's work, Zhou observes how English is rendered "all the more vulnerable to the subterranean workings of languages and dialects which undermine it from all sides and impose on it a play of vast corruptions and variations," which allows her to observe how "to corrupt the hegemonic language from within is precisely Kim's strategy." Zhou, *The Ethics and Poetics of Alterity in Asian American Poetry*, 231.
[34] Zhou, *The Ethics and Poetics of Alterity in Asian American Poetry*, 232.
[35] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 18.

national apostrophe, but also the kinds of affective links and labor that Kim's poetics seek. However, I would contend that in poems like "Into Such Assembly" an altogether different objective from the one described by Zhou is sought: it is not quite an antagonistic drive to oppose the nation, but rather a disengaging drive that *turns away* from the nation—thereby subverting the national apostrophe.

Faced with the ambiguity of the recipient's response to the conferral of citizenship, it is fruitful to read Kim's poem through the linguistic differentiation of a subject of the statement (*énunciation*) and a subject of enunciation (*énoncé*). I want to evoke this distinction as it was first developed by Emile Benveniste to address linguistic shifters and deixis through a concern with the referentiality of the first and second person pronouns *I* and *you*; this allows us to follow the interrogation of language within language by conceiving of an index of divergence that charts a singular expressive speaker in the subject of enunciation who, although manifested in an overlap in pronouns, is always different from the referential subject of the statement required within the linguistic system—which here would represent the full weight of language as a nationalizing instrument.[36] The point then, is to trace Kim's interrogation of language within language by noting her subversion of the nation's catachresis and her manipulation of the I/Thou structure of direct address, as Johnson would have it, executed by the national apostrophe.

[36] Emile Benveniste, "The Nature of Pronouns" in *Problems in General Linguistics* (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971). As an appendix to Benveniste, this distinction, also marks my consideration of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of minor texts by provisionally understanding the subject of enunciation in relation to the form of expression of an utterance, while relating the subject of the statement to the form of the content: "[F]or the moment, let us distinguish a subject of enunciation as the form of expression that writes the letter, and a subject of the statement that is the form of content that the letter is speaking about (even if *I* speak about *me*)." By stressing the provisional character of this initial pairing ("for the moment") I want to echo their departing point for their study of Kafka as my departing point for the study of Kim. Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 30.

We can imagine an *absolute* national incorporation as the coalescing of the subject of enunciation and the subject of the statement into one, providing an instance of national ventriloquism wherein individual expression is completely subsumed under the content of a language—a felicitous national performative where catachresis produces a referent. The conceptual value of such a thought experiment is that an absolute national incorporation registers one of the poles of the indexical range of linguistic positions in relation to the nation. For example, a tendency towards the coalescing of the subject of enunciation and of the statement can be evoked by Gloria Anzaldúa's claim "I am my language," were we to nuance the claim through her complex affinity with the multicultural nation as in the previous chapter.

"Into Such Assembly," on the other hand, articulates a second-person subject of the statement as a syntactical and grammatical anchor that is seemingly devoid of the expression that marks a subject of enunciation: "Can *you* read and write English?" While the first person's speech remains unequivocal with regards to the status of its aligned subjects of statement and enunciation, conveying volition through imperatives ("Write down the following sentences in English as I dictate them.") and materializing the national voice in speech and writing, the interpellated second person never speaks or writes unambiguously. In contrast to the instances where Zhou notes "material intense expression," here a different linguistic effect develops through an expressionless subject.

As a poetic strategy, the subtlety of this absence of expression is imperative for its aims. By this I suggest that the nature of this evacuation of the second person's subject of enunciation needs be evasive because, given the linguistic overdetermination of the nation, the strategic decision is to hide within this national ubiquity. Although interpreting an absence of expression or an "intense expression" in this passage may seemingly yield the same resistance to the nation,

it is central for my argument to note that opposition and turning away are two diverging strategies with different results in the context of multiculturalism and overdetermination: resisting with "intense expression" produces a direct response to interpellation and thereby lends itself to counternationalism as a supplement to the nation. Contrastingly, in denying a direct response to interpellation through ambiguity, absence of expression does not readily lend itself to be assimilated.

As Benveniste comments, "a language without the expression of [a] person cannot be imagined," a premise that aligns with the conceptual underpinnings of the nation as an imagined community and as overdetermined; these axioms surmise the inevitable correspondence of expression, language, and nation, and assume a different state of affairs unimaginable.[37] Against this limitation, where reading habitually imagines and imputes individual expression on behalf of the imagined and coerced community, Kim invites us to conceive of an expressionless utterance through a subject of enunciation that remains evasive, if not absent.

Since the referential nature of language, through its deixis and tenses, always articulates spatiotemporal referents, and since *Under Flag* registers an investment in spatial positionality through its recurrent prepositional orientation (e.g., the referenced "*Under*," "into," in poem titles, along with "From The Sea On To The Land") we could conceive this expressive evasion as an alternate space with regards to the nation, a heterotopia.[38] The different space occupied by this expressionless subject, a space constitutive of the poem, charts the territory of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick termed periperformativity: the set of oblique performatives constructed as

[37] Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, 225.
[38] "No matter what the type of language, there is everywhere to be observed a certain linguistic organization of the notion of time." (Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, 226–7).

non-binary reactions to normative performatives.[39] Different from instances of opposition (as in how Zhou registers pure expression and how counternationalism can be assimilated into the nation), the essential operation in periperformatives is to disengage from interpellation. In this regard, periperformatives produce a different outlook of the current state of affairs by affording an expansive perspective in that, as Kim's poetics show, they break away from the constraints of address that a performative envisions and multiply the possibilities of reaction. For example, the lines that follow the initially quoted fragment from "Into Such Assembly" further map this heterotopia through a periperformative:

> Cable car rides over swan flecked ponds
> Red lacquer chests in our slateblue house
> Chrysanthemums trailing bloom after bloom
> Ivory, russet, pale yellow petals crushed
> Between fingers, that green smell, if jade would smell
> So-Sah's thatched roofs shading miso hung to dry—
> Sweet potatoes grow on the rock choked side of the mountain
> The other, the pine wet green side of the mountain
> Hides a lush clearing, where we picnic and sing:
> *Sung-Bul-Sah, geep eun bahm ae*
>
> Neither, neither

Exhibiting what Sedgwick calls disinterpellation, and in specific disjunction with the previous question of national allegiance ("Do you renounce allegiance to any other country but this?"), a contrastingly expressive and perceptive speaker constructs an alternative Korean space characterized by intimate details and vivid imagery. Through the juxtaposition of US and Korean spaces, and with the prominence of the speaker's sensitivity through visual, haptic, olfactory, and aural stimuli, a distinct subject of enunciation emerges, fully manifesting in sound with the transcribed Korean song and its lack of syntactical or referential content in English. As

[39] "To disinterpellate from a performative scene will usually require, not another explicit performative nor simply the negative of one, but the nonce, referential act of a periperformative." Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 70.

experience is culturally demarcated by the semantic inaccessibility of the song in Korean, Kim dwells on the affective links that sustain this other form of attachment to the nation, which emerges not from multicultural coercion but from diasporic nostalgia. To a reader unfamiliar with Korean, "*Sung-Bul-Sah, geep eun bahm ae*" in fact entails the "intense expression" that Zhou registers.

However, the critical gesture that consolidates the poem's disengaging drive and charts the space beyond the nation actually comes in the last line's double negation: "Neither, neither" relinquishes attachment to both nations, be it expressively or inexpressively. In a syntactically nuanced manner that simultaneously avoids the prominence of both expression and absence of expression as pertaining to each national space, "Neither, neither" enacts a dual disinterpellation. Recalling Altieri's reading of the metaphorical bridges, we could rephrase this disinterpellation as a refusal "to adapt to what one can neither control nor psychologize," a refusal that points towards the prospect of seeing things otherwise by redirecting affective labor away from the nation form.

Upsetting the expectations of nostalgia in a diasporic subject, the speaker persists in evasion, without embracing either national space or content or expression. The beginning of "Into Such Assembly" conveys a calculated use of expression and form, not unlike the use Deleuze and Guattari noted in the itinerant subject of statement in Kafka's letters—to provide one example and point of comparison. Yet instead of privileging intense material expression, Kim's poetics insist on an evasive position, one which subverts the nationalizing apostrophe by turning away from both content and expression. "Into Such Assembly" surveys the limits of the nation form, and in so doing makes evident a disinterpellating latency that it employs as a resource—the already available potential to disengage from the national apostrophe. While the

poetics of nationhood saturate the realm of possible agency by policing what is imaginable, Kim's disinterpellating poetics turn away, as if pointing toward another as yet unacknowledged direction or space of action, which expands the perceivable and imaginable political landscape.

As a refusal of both national spaces, "Neither, neither" invites us to read the poem's alternative space as an anational aperture, a projected realm beyond the space of the nation. In this context it is crucial to note how Kim's disinterpellation strategically unfolds in tandem: along with the refusal to unequivocally consent to the official demands of the US she also turns away from the intimate and sentimental appeal of Korea. In so doing, Kim turns away from the affective labor demanded by the nation form. There is affective labor involved in the speaker's disinterpellation (in swerving away from the promise of citizenship and from the links binding to the nostalgic past), hence affective labor not geared towards the nation form and rather aimed at disengaging from the nation.

"The thing seen together with the whole space"

Continuing to elaborate a spatiotemporal framework that can demarcate the limits of the nation, the remaining sections of "Into Such Assembly" rework the factuality of the dictated sentence "It is raining" into a metaphor for the persistence of spaces and times beyond the nation.

> And with distance traveled, as part of it
> How often when it rains here does it rain there?
> One gives over to a language and then
> What was given, given over?

Despite the distance traveled, rain is formulated as a possible common ground between the two lands, not in the factuality that it does rain, but as a question of frequency that insinuates a simultaneity beyond national delimitations. In connection with this question, we're left to ponder

on the process of learning a language as giving *over* something; according to the line of reasoning I have developed here, this *giving over* could be understood as the labor expenditure that the nation form requires. Although the question lacks an immediate answer and, in its openness, invites us to dwell on its possibilities, I interpret Kim here as more thoroughly probing the particular constitution of the kind of *giving over* she is considering: entangled with the other prominent phrasal verb in the poem, the disinterpellating *turning away* and its nexus with animation and giving life to inert things, Kim sketches language acquisition as an almost natural process (as in rainfall) that likens labor with a general conception of energy and being. This in connection with and anticipation of the transformations that "giving over" will undergo in the rest of the poem, which read as follows:

> This rain eats into most anything
>
> > And when we had been scattered over the face of the earth
> > We could not speak to one another
>
> The creek rises, the rain-fed current rises
>
> > Color given up, sap given up
> > Weeds branches groves what they make as one
>
> This rain gouging already gouged valleys
> And they fill, fill, flow over
>
> > What gives way losing gulch, mesa, peak, state, nation

In these first three lines, the pairing of rain falling down with scattered people over the face of the earth both traces the destruction of the tower of Babel as the linguistic loss of oneness (the primal instance of "giving over" to language), while also offering the commonality of rain droplets as a contrasting yet complementing image. The following description dwells on the impervious effects of rain as it erodes the land, "eat[ing] into most anything," but also offering a geological register of change which becomes historical with the appearance of "state, nation." In

this temporal rescaling where the geological accommodates and envelops the historical, the previous "give over" transforms into different accounts of loss-as-change: to a transient "give up" in the temporary loss of color and sap of branches that nonetheless remain as one; and to "give way" as in make space by losing. In the long durée of geological time, loss is transfigured into epiphenomena of change, unmooring the affective labor required by the nation through the pliability of the phrasal verb and its shifting directionalities: "giving over/up/away" is rendered quotidian in an almost atmospheric and organic way.

Kim's transitioning in this second half of "Into Such Assembly" develops in tandem at the level of the panorama and of the action taking place there: the salience of land pertaining to the conceptualization of the national demarcation of Korean and US spaces gives way to the ampler salience of the landscape as registering geological and atmospheric events. Parallel to this transition, Kim reframes the focus on the affective labor demanded by the nation in the scene of citizen conferral with a free-flowing depiction of labor as detached from both nation and capital and conceived as energy in flux through natural processes of change devoid of social or human volition.

While revealing the contingency of nation and state in the vastness of geological scales, "Into Such Assembly" is emphatic about the permanence of rain as a collectivity that remains singular in the presence of each of its individuals but also together as an assembly. The last line of the poem reasserts this interpretation: "Each drop strewn into such assembly" registers a multitude of drops bound together by their final scattering into this collectivity. Through its geological referents the poem's closure culminates this temporal rescaling: the evocation of a strewn field appends tektites to rain, and meteorites to clouds, in a general physical dynamism that scatters or disintegrates an object into a still correlated multiplicity of fragments, into an

assembly.[40] This temporal rescaling invites us to think the ephemerality of a nation and its national language by transforming the act of inscription: the poem's attention to how the nation disciplines the immigrant body through the inculcation of language is recontextualized by sketching the permanence of the human body-as-rain as it precedes and succeeds the contingency of the nation. The harm inflicted upon the disciplined body only registers a short moment in the geological duration of humans on earth—such a geological duration recalls the depiction of humanity as species in the line from *Civil Bound* as an ahistorical reference to humanity. By demarcating the temporal limits of the nation, "Into Such Assembly" gestures towards an anational spatiotemporality in an effort to turn away from or no longer give over to the nation. In pondering the act of giving over, this gesture charts the anational while remaining entangled in the position of the nation: "Into Such Assembly" essays or rehearses an anational perspective from the nation's position.

Although lacking the space to close read the two poems that follow "Into Such Assembly," I want to briefly note how, from their titles, an anational projection remains manifest. First "Arrival Which Is Not Arrival" alludes to the trajectory of the mostly-crossed bridge while troubling the nationalization of the migrant by denying not displacement, but the arrival that would consummate an incorporation into the US. From the perspective of failed arrival, the speaker questions the specificity of the two different lands as two different nations, simultaneously reflecting on the commonality that could articulate an anational assembly and wondering "What, all over, is the same?" Similarly, "Body As One As History" recalls the way in which "Into Such Assembly" registers the passing of time as an inscription both on the disciplined body and on earth's surface by developing the inscriptions into a history read on the

[40] A strewn field is a geological term that describes the area where tektites are found on the ground which accordingly are understood as meteorites that disintegrated as they entered the earth's atmosphere.

body: “Polyps, cysts, hemorrhages, dribbly discharges, fish stink | Skin, registering bruise or touch | But the body streaked black across a red brick wall | The body large as I, larger.” Both as bearer of inscriptions on its surface and as an inscription across a wall, the body exhibits the register of history as a site of colonial violence and sensual experience.

As nationalizing structures, bridges and interpellation bespeak the nation form in its multicultural mode, and in the ongoing arrival of citizens-to-be. Yet, as the opening adverb in “Mostly, we cross bridges we did not see being built" suggests, sometimes those bridges aren’t crossed; we can conceive of those instances as correlated with the ambiguity of the expressionless citizen-to-be: it is not only disinterpellation from the two national spaces that is at stake, but the sense of loss that the nation’s attachments provoke. Considering Kim’s reframing of loss through geological scales, what I’m arguing here is that the articulation of an anational space entails the articulation of an anational speaker with a distinct set of emotional investments that set them apart from the national citizen; this entails an altogether different category of affective labor producing a different community form.

Dictation as Process

The kinds of alertness and sensibility that Kim puts to practice in *Under Flag* are an inheritance from Cha’s careful assessment of dictation in her earlier multigenre book *Dictee*, first published in 1982. Born in South Korea in 1951, during the Korean War, Cha relocated to the US with her family in 1963. Her migration to the US parallels Kim’s as taking place in the aftermath of US imperialism’s arrival to Korea. In *Dictee*, Cha reflects on her experience of migration as it relates to Korea’s history of colonialism.

Dictee welcomes the reader to its internal dynamics by sketching three possible beginnings to the text. The first could be the photograph of a graffiti with an uncertain provenance that stands as the only instance of Korean and Hangul in this multilingual collection; the graffiti roughly translates to "I miss you mother. | I am hungry. | I want to go home." The second beginning could be the apocryphal fragment attributed to Sappho, which is used as an epigraph and has been reinterpreted as actually authored by Cha: "May I write words more naked than flesh, stronger than bone, more resilient than sinew, sensitive than nerve." In these fragments, the untranslated and the apocryphal anticipate the book's focus on dictation by estranging the terms of textual relay and exposing them to other forms of aberrant transference and inheritance. Prior to the third beginning, the one arguably inaugurating the body of writing without a paratextual disguise, I want to note how the juxtaposition of these texts frames and orients *Dictee* towards the heterogeneity of past voices, incorporating both historical record and fictive speculation to coordinate a site and perception attuned to the polyvocality of the past. As a provisional dramatis personae of sorts, these fragments express a concern over memory as it relates to the fidelity of the written word to address and retain the past.

In a more nuanced and indirect way, the third possible beginning reasserts this orientation towards the past by exploring the formal outcomes of dictation as a method of linguistic learning:

> Aller à la ligne C'était le premier jour point Elle venait de loin point ce soir au dîner virgule les familles demanderaient virgule ouvre les guillemets Ça c'est bien passé le premier jour point d'interrogation ferme les guillemets au moins virgule dire le moins possible virgule la réponse serait virgule ouvre les guillemets Il n'y a q'une chose point ferme les guillemets ouvre les guillemets Il y a quelqu'une point loin point ferme les guillemets
>
> Open paragraph It was the first day period She had come from a far period tonight at dinner comma the families would ask comma open quotation marks How was the first day interrogation mark close quotation marks at least to say the

> least of it possible comma the answer would be open quotation marks there is but one thing period There is someone period From a far period close quotation marks [41]

Cha's transcriptions register an unclear distinction between aural and written language through their conflation of punctuation marks and words. In this conflation, her writing forces us to engage in what Juliana Spahr calls "an act of resistant reading" whereby our conventional reading practices are forced to incorporate punctuation as words so that instead of coordinating the flow of sentences, punctuation constantly intrudes in our reading as semantic content instead of its regular syntactic function.[42]

As exemplified by the title of the 1994 collection of critical essays by Elaine Kim, Lisa Lowe, Laura Hyun-yi Kang, and Shelly Sunn Wong, *Writing Self, Writing Nation*—which is responsible for the wider readership that *Dictee* attained in the nineties—there is a prevailing tendency to read Cha's writings as scrutinizing the reproduction of the nation. From the standpoint of its composition in the US, *Dictee*'s orientation illuminates not only Cha's individual experience as a minority, but also its receptiveness to the myriad histories that precede, parallel, and intersperse Cha's. In the dictated section, the two paragraphs evoke the memory of foreign and western languages in Korea; more specifically, the initial paragraph alludes to the influence of French imperialism in Asia through its educational systems and to the presence of its missionaries in the Korean peninsula since the nineteenth century. The following paragraph in English, which may be an imprecise translation from the French, suggests a correspondence with the later presence of US imperialism in Korea and Cha's own writing situated in the US. In other words, through the juxtaposition of these two paragraphs, *Dictee*

[41] Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 1.
[42] Juliana M. Spahr, "Postmodernism, Readers, and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's 'Dictee'" in *College Literature*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Oct., 1996), 25.

constructs what Lisa Lowe describes as "a fictionalized amalgam that allegorizes the historical influence of both American imperialism and an earlier French missionary colonialism."[43] However, in order to attend to the specific historical engagement that Cha performs through poetic form, the notion of allegory should be understood as a specific hermeneutic endeavor that disregards rigid equivalences and instead, as Fredric Jameson argues, "is profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysemia of the dream rather than the homogeneous representation of the symbol."[44] That is, allegorization in *Dictee* tends toward a mode of historicizing that attends to the multiplicity of voices and meanings that intersect the nation.

With this specific instance of dictation, *Dictee* begins a formal engagement with history, where poetic form provides the medium to interrogate and experience the past. Spahr observes how "an act of resistant reading" "aims to keep the telling of history alive,"[45] and in doing so, I would add, Cha prioritizes the processual quality of writing and history as they unfold in time instead of their reification into conventional periods and objects.

As an act of resistant reading that keeps history open, dictation designates a specific nationalizing process which echoes Kim's description of the conferral of citizenship and of the periperformative labor she performs through disinterpellation. This perspective pays attention to the mobilization of individuals and the didactic role assigned to dictation in such a way that the resistant reading's specific focus on (the nationalization) process yields an emphasis on the nation's becoming over its being. From the outset, *Dictee* is concerned with writing's forms of

[43] Lisa Lowe, "Unfaithful to the Original: The Subject of *Dictée*," in *Writing Self, Writing Nation*, ed. Elaine Kim and Norma Alarcón (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1994), 40.
[44] Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" in *Social Text*, No. 15 (Autumn, 1986), 73.
[45] Spahr, "Postmodernism, Readers, and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's 'Dictee,'" 34

becoming and how these are oriented toward the writing of the nation and its reproduction, toward the nation form.

Lowe notes how in the "the choice of English as the translating language further registers the increased suppression of the Korean language with the imposition of each western colonial language."[46] But it would be more in keeping with *Dictee*'s own terms and constitution to trace the increased suppression of the colonized not only through the translation process, but in the body as the site of inscription to the extent that the Korean language itself would be anteceded by this corporeality. *Dictee* registers each singular attempt at nationalizing the foreign body as it simultaneously registers each attempt's shortcomings.

With the prioritization of its processual properties, the act of dictating is stressed over the content dictated; by foregrounding this diachrony, *Dictee* renders visible the organizational structure of these specific languages. That is, by estranging the syntactical marks that regulate the production of sounds in a language, Cha historicizes the labor coerced by the nation from the speaker, i.e., how the nation disciplines the body toward the reproduction of language. The latter is instantiated by the chapter "Urania Astronomy," which is bookended by an initial diagram in Chinese, apparently an acupuncture chart of the body, and a closing anatomical diagram in English of the organs involved in the reproduction of sound. A similar evocation to that of the juxtaposed dictations is sketched here, with the transition from a Chinese schematics of the body to one in English, thereby suggesting another allegory that ranges from the domination of Korea by China through military and cultural incursions to the presence of the US beginning with the Korean War. The similarity between the two allegories is further developed in terms of the setting of writing through and on the body as continually readdressing the apocryphal epigraph

[46] Lowe, "Unfaithful to the Original," 41.

attributed to Sappho, "May I write words more naked than flesh, stronger than bone, more resilient than sinew, sensitive than nerve." Placed in-between these two diagrams, "Urania Astronomy" contains the following passage:

> One by one.
> The sounds. The sounds that move at a time
> stops. Starts again. Exceptions
> stops and starts again
> all but exceptions.
> Stop. Start. Starts.
> Contractions. Noise. Semblance of noise.
> Broken speech. One to one. At a time.
> Cracked tongue. Broken tongue.
> Pidgeon. Semblance of speech.
> Swallows. Inhales. Stutter. Starts. Stops before
> starts. […]
> Where proper pauses were expected.
> But no more. [47]

Cha describes the body as it produces sound and she stresses as the most striking quality of this production its fragmentariness. Through its troubled soundings, the body labors as alien or foreign: with broken speech and broken tongue the body mouths "pidgeon" as if unable to reproduce language as intended, for example, by dictation. This is to say that, connecting this passage to the opening paragraphs in French and English, Cha documents a historical record of languages as they malfunction, as they are uttered by a colonized body which, in its shortcomings, subverts its nationalizing use.

These allegories thereby render visible a diachronic structure of language as it is imposed on the colonized body in a nationalizing process. By summoning the idea of a diachronic structure, i.e., a structure unfolding in time, I want to return to Malabou's understanding of the term as describing "the result of the destruction and deconstruction of the paradigm, model, or

[47] Cha, *Dictee*, 75

invariable in general."[48] For example, the destruction and deconstruction of language as uttered by each new and foreign body; or the translation of sentences like "au moins dire le moins possible" to "at least to say the least of it possible" as registering an erratic word-by-word equivalence from one language to the other.

The kind of labor registered by these historical allegories can be characterized as periperformative and evincing formal subsumption: despite the repeated attempts at assimilating the body into a national belongingness, a corporeal remnant persists as the site of inscription of these repeated attempts as failed attempts. Much like Kim's geologic rescaling, in Cha's *Dictee* the body exhibits the alternating attempts at nationalizing—all through differently named nation forms—yet persists as an expressive capacity, an expression of colonial pain; that is, an expressive capacity that underlies all these nationalizing attempts as the proof of their failure and as an anational presence.

For example, a later passage from "Elitere Lyric Poetry" describes the process of voicing language in terms of opposing uniformity: "You read you mouth the transformed object across from you in its new state, other than what it had been."[49] In this sense, language acquisition is rendered erratic in a similar fashion to Jennifer Tamayo's poetry, as it disengages from the expected results and produces something new. As Spahr observes: "In these forms, receivers manipulate the received object as they resist the role of passive consumer and retransmits the old information in a new form. […] Dictation turns here from a passive act that mimics brainwashing into an active one with its own, often political, agenda."[50] From the perspective of the nation form, this process considers how, through the destruction and deconstruction of the paradigmatic

[48] Catherine Malabou, *Plasticity at the dusk of writing: dialectic, destruction, deconstruction*, trans. Carolyn Shread (New York: Columbia University, 2010), 51.
[49] Cha, *Dictee*, 131.
[50] Spahr, "Postmodernism, Readers, and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's 'Dictee,'" 32–3.

act of dictation, the immaterial labor required by the nation is estranged, yielding singular products which seemingly fail to reproduce a uniform nation and exhibit an anational undercurrent.

Diseuse and Overdetermination

In the end, the nation form as manifested by the act of dictation is made visible as a diachronic structure at the moment it interacts with the body as another seemingly diachronic structure: the voicing and uttering body as receptive to history and colonial violence. Yet, corresponding to the capacity for the production of novelty, each body is always singular. The heterogeneity of *Dictee*'s dramatis personae provides the contrasting cases that describe how the nation form changes over time along with and through changing bodies. Which is why, with regards to the history of *Dictee*'s critical reception and the impact that the essays in *Writing Self, Writing Nation* have had, it is important to reassert this heterogeneity. Against this reification of otherness, Mayumo Inoue has claimed that "these critics' hypostatization of the single 'native' subject in *Dictée* as one who now approximates such irreparable history willfully sidelines the presence of multiple speaking women ('diseuses') who differently and differentially narrate plural histories of oppression and displacement, including ones that took place in Korea."[51] Paying heed to Inoue's observation, in the following I argue that registering the shifting voices in *Dictee* allows us to distinguish those that remain within the national paradigm and those that exhibit themselves as anational—whether historically or formally.

[51] Mayumo Inoue, "Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's 'Phantomnation': Cinematic Specters and Spectral Collectivity in *Dictée* and *Apparatus*" in *Criticism*, Winter 2014, Vol. 56, No. 1, 66.

With her threefold opening Cha anticipates the introduction of *Dictee*'s most prominent figure, which coordinates the book's modes of attention to the past's polyvocality: the diseuse. Borrowing from its connotation in French, where the term "diseuse" refers to "she who says," that is, a female sayer, Cha's use of the word also incorporates the meaning of *diseuse de bonne aventure*, a fortune teller or soothsayer whose reinterpretation of the past and of imperceptible signs allow her to divine the future. The introductory section that includes the dictated French and English also includes a subsection that is titled "DISEUSE," where Cha begins to describe this female figure: "She mimicks the speaking. That might resemble speech. (Anything at all.) Bared noise, groan, bits torn from words." Still displaying traits of a resistant reading through a prosodic flow set against an unconventional punctuation, the diseuse is portrayed as *Dictee*'s receptive stance towards the past, mimicking voices or letting them speak through her and expressing their pain: "*It murmurs inside. It murmurs. Inside is the pain of speech the pain to say*." Recalling the last chapter's analysis of Anzaldúa's mimetic shape-shifting in the border, where she would mimic both sameness and alterity in such a way that, as Taussig would have it, she stitches the real to the really made up, Cha's diseuse performs a similar role. Most importantly, the diseuse evokes Benjamin's philosophy of history, led by the perception of flashes from the past and, as such, represents Marx's understanding of revolution as "the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the 'now.'"[52] It is in this regard that the diseuse embodies a specific temporal construction, whereby bodily possession renders the past present and thus articulates time in a processual ongoingness: "She allows others. In place of her."[53]

[52] Walter Benjamin quoted in Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 39.
[53] Cha, *Dictee*, 3.

For example, the first chapter titled "Clio History," which addresses the story of Yu Guan Soon, the young Korean revolutionary and martyr that led part of the decolonization efforts against Japanese colonial rule during the early twentieth century, begins: "She makes complete her duration. As others have made complete theirs: rendered incessant, obsessive myth, rendered immortal their acts without the leisure to examine whether the parts false the parts real according to History's revision."[54] The perspective articulated here, which although ambiguous could be attributed to the diseuse's clairvoyance, offers a paradoxical definition of completion as hinging on a constant incompletion, on an incessant ongoingness that reiterates, obsessively, a myth. Beyond the purview of scrutiny, the myth performs the suture of the real to the really made up, namely through the possible verbalization of the adjective "false" which in turn renders the "real parts" fictional, enlarging the myth. The following indented section further specifies this falsifying: "*Truth embraces with it all other abstentions other than itself. Outside Time. Outside Space. Parallels other durations, oblivious to the deliberate brilliance of its own time, mortaI, deliberate marking. Oblivious to itself. But to sing. To sing to. Very softly.*"[55] Despite its disorienting syntax and prosody, the construction of truth described here summons several spatiotemporal attributes that suggest a national presence, at least in the sense of a false truth embracing all its others and existing outside time and space as an eternal entity, i.e., in empty time.

These national echoes acquire a heavier specificity as the section progresses after the indented paragraph; pitting the diseuse's narrating voice against Soon's, the scene is layered and saturated by the past as she begins to summon dead figures: "She calIs the name Jeanne d'Arc

[54] Cha, *Dictee*, 28.
[55] Cha, *Dictee*, 28.

three times. She calls the name Ahn Joong Kun five times."[56] The invocation of these two characters instills the scene with a particular insurrectionary and sacrificial character: Joan of Arc's death at the hands of the English-allied Burgundian faction during the Hundred Years' War resonates through An Jung-geun's death at the hands of the Japanese empire ruling over Korea after he assassinated the Japanese prime minister Itō Hirobumi. A persistent martyrdom that informs the present, Soon's present, is weaved through these two figures as it invokes a sacrificial will connected to her final statement: "There is no people without a nation, no people without ancestry. There are other nations no matter how small their land, who have their independence. But our country, even with 5,000 years of history, has lost it to the Japanese."[57] We can thereby label Yu Guan Soon's voice as a nationalist one, mobilizing martyrdom as an almost necessary sacrifice to constitute and reclaim the nation through the ancestry of its peoplehood. A state of affairs defined by the overdetermined nation can be gleaned here: truth and myth oscillate in the modernist truism of the impossibility of people without a nation, a deformation adopted and justified by Soon's ulterior purpose, the decolonization of Korea. Martyrdom is a solution for colonial rule, but the decolonial effort is intrinsically coupled with the nationalist struggle, one can't happen without the other. In the content of Soon's speech the decolonial drive follows an overdetermined account of the nation as it saturates the spectrum of political action.

Yet the context and form of Soon's speech follows a different logic. A significant temporal *mise en abîme* of sorts develops as Soon, mimicked by the diseuse, summons Joan of Arc and An Jung-geun; it produces a scene of temporal heterogeneity without a stable frame to orient one's position. Similarly, the spatiotemporal descriptions are infused with seeming

[56] Cha, *Dictee*, 28.
[57] Cha, *Dictee*, 28.

paradoxes, where truth's existence outside time and outside space still "*Parallels other durations,*" that is, it is still temporary. Soon's truths, her nationalist devotion to decolonize Korea, remain "*oblivious to the deliberate brilliance of its own time, mortaI, deliberate marking*." Although her perspective remains essentially nationalist, the context deems it contingently so, with the diseuse's mimicry reasserting voice as an ongoing parallel duration: "*But to sing. To sing to. Very softly.*" In the seeming incongruity of this context, Soon's sacrifice for the nation exhibits the considerable amount of immaterial labor necessary for her to make sense of the nation and, in doing so, sustain the ubiquity and hypervisibility of the nation form.

At the end of this chapter, Cha rehearses her processual emphasis by displaying facsimiles of her manuscripts which refer to a printed section earlier in the chapter. "Their countenance evokes not the hallowed beauty, beauty from seasonal decay, evokes not the inevitable, not death, but the dy-ing."[58] reads the facsimile of the draft, shown surrounded by crossed out sentences and multiple edits. Exposing thus her manuscripts, Cha aligns textual form with the semantic content of the quoted passage, where death as finalized and concluded are displaced by a continuing process elongated by a hyphen: "not death, but the dy-ing." With her own handwriting Cha gestures towards the inclusion of her own voice to the polyphonic mix, but also to her own body as it participates in the same processes she portrays—that is, participating herself as a draft.

The extensive dramatis personae of female voices that are summoned in *Dictee*, now including Cha's, stresses the heterogeneous spatiotemporality of the text. Attending to this auratic atmosphere, the chapter "Melpomene Tragedy" summons Melpomene, the muse of the chorus and later muse of tragedy, in order to address the conflicting polyphony of these voices:

[58] Cha, *Dictee*, 37.

"Mere names only names without the image not *hers* | *hers* alone not the whole of *her* and even the image | would not be the entire." As the profusion of italicized *her*s continues, Cha sketches a matriarchal lineage tying together all these fragmentary voices: "Suffice Melpomene. Nation against nation multiplied nations against nations against themselves. Own. Repels *her* rejects *her* expels *her* from *her* own. Her own is, in, of, through, all others, *hers*. Her own who is offspring and mother, Demeter and Sibyl."[59] The profusion of *her*s alludes to an uncontainable reproduction, evoked both by the mothering offspring and by Demeter as the goddess of agriculture and fertility paired with the clairvoyant Sybil. Yet parallel to this female reproduction, the nation also reproduces itself through the bellicose backdrop of colonial violence and imperial ambitions. As the diseuse calls for an end to this cycle, colonialism and decolonization are figured through the nation's promise of horizontal democracy: "Arrest the machine that purports to employ democracy but rather causes the successive refraction of *her* none other than her own."[60] These conflicts voiced by the diseuse point towards the ubiquity of the nation as overdetermined. That is, the profusion of *her*s is linked to the nation's expansion, to this purportedly democratic "machine" driven by its encounter with other belligerent nations—*her* is tied to rehearsing the colonialism-decolonization logic of the post-World War II global order. Reproduction, profusion, and refraction evince the nation's overdetermination.

Immanence, Blood, and Ink

The spectrality of how the diseuse stages the struggle between coloniality and decolonization is captured in Cha's coinage of the term "phantomnation" as embracing the entirety of this

[59] Cha, *Dictee*, 88.
[60] Cha, *Dictee*, 89.

supplemental dynamics. Cha's neologism construes the nation through a spectral matrix that straddles the realms of the material and immaterial; she reconfigures the nation's ubiquity by stressing its temporality as phantasmal, as bound to what Derrida terms the hauntology of the revenant as an incessant returning and repetition—which recalls the inevitable reproduction of the nation through the profusion of *her*s. Yet beyond the linearity of the nation's temporality, the phantomnation is receptive to the uncanniness of the past returned as future by foregrounding this spectrality effect: "Before knowing whether one can differentiate between the specter of the past and the specter of the future, of the past present and the future present, one must perhaps ask oneself whether the *spectrality effect* does not consist in undoing this opposition."[61] Paying attention to this spectral effect and undoing the binary of future and past likewise spreads to other organizing binaries. Inoue, for example, observes how "Cha's 'phantomnation' is thus at once anticolonial and antagonistic to anticolonial nation form."[62] The passage from "Melpomene Tragedy" portrays the diseuse's awareness of such a hauntology inherent to the phantomnation, evinced by her calls "Suffice" and "Arrest." That is, by addressing the imposed causality of the nation as a spectrality effect, the diseuse further stresses the dialogical nature of the chorus she conjures as a dialogue with the past—a dialogue concerned with the content of what will be inherited, reproduced. Playing with hauntology, the textual threshold that *Dictee* offers in the way of its apocryphal and untranslated epigraphs returns to modulate this inheritance and reproduction; as Derrida observes, "An inheritance is never gathered together, it is never one with itself. Its presumed unity, if there is one, can consist only in the *injunction* to *reaffirm by choosing*."[63] "Suffice" and "Arrest," unearth the demand for a futurity marked by a change in the

[61] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 2006), 48–9.
[62] Inoue, "Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's 'Phantomnation,'" 81.
[63] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 18.

prevailing state of affairs of the phantomnation. They point to how *Dictee* also considers an overarching precedence to the by now spectral ubiquity of the nation—an anational framework.

In the polyphonic chorus produced by *Dictee*'s engagement with the past there is an operative element that subtends the book's dynamics as it constantly points towards the laboring body. The portrayal of the Japanese colonizers allows to pinpoint such a textual element:

> Japan has become the sign. The alphabet. The vocabulary. To this enemy people. The meaning is the instrument, memory that pricks the skin, stabs the flesh, the volume of blood, the physical substance blood as measure, that rests as record, as document. Of *this* enemy people.[64]

In the transition from colonial violence to textuality, blood is a record of pain subtending *Dictee*'s corporeal inscriptions. In other words, blood exhibits a function tantamount to a metaphorical instantiation of ink for the writing of history. The conceptualization of the inscribed body is then further refined through the fluidity of blood. Yet although fluid, blood acquires an indelible quality upon which the necessity of recording history is entrusted:

> No trace of them. Except for the blood. Because. Step among them the blood that will not erase with the rain on the pavement that was walked upon like the stones where they fell had fallen. Because. Remain dark the stains not wash away.[65]

As Spahr argues, "Blood is a common metaphor for the essentialism that accompanies the categories of nation and race. […] But *Dictée* emphasizes a web-like, interconnected notion of cultural exchange that is constantly shaped by and through individual resistance."[66] Shared by colonizer and colonized alike, blood points to a commonality beyond the supplemental logic of the nation. In this regard, Cha draws from a widely shared figuration of blood as commonality beyond boundaries—one that other poets, such as Anzaldúa invoke to reject essentialisms ("We are a blending that proves that all blood is intricately woven together, and that we are spawned

[64] Cha, *Dictee*, 32.
[65] Cha, *Dictee*, 82.
[66] Spahr, "Postmodernism, Readers, and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's 'Dictee,'" 26.

out of similar souls."[67]) Anzaldúa and Cha figure a commonality of radical belonging through the liquid properties of blood, fluid beyond any attempts at containment.

Further elaborating Cha's conceptualization of blood, the chapter "Urania Astronomy" begins with a scene where the speaker donates blood. However, after the blood is drawn the flow does not cease:

> Something of the ink that resembles the stain from the interior emptied onto emptied into emptied upon this boundary this surface. More. Others. When possible ever possible to puncture to scratch to imprint. Expel. Ne te cache pas. Révèle toi. Sang. Encre. Of its body's extention of its containment.[68]

Anticipating Kim's giving up/over/way, Cha unleashes an analogous set of prepositional verbs through the act of emptying onto/into/upon "this boundary this surface." The force of this emptying drive is marked by the sudden shift into French—which by now connotes a different temporal register and thus temporal heterogeneity—where the emphasis on blood and ink persists as a shared concern. I interpret such a gesture as already hinting towards a different dynamic to that of the supplement, whose surplus and cumulative properties—or in Derrida's words its filling up "of *itself*"—run against blood's own profusive emptying. Spahr compellingly reads this emptying as the collapsing of boundaries containing stable identities: "As a result, blood, and all that it signifies about nation and race, becomes a metaphor for the continual transcendence of boundaries."[69] Although I agree with Spahr about the metaphorical possibilities of blood, I would suggest putting some pressure on her qualification of blood as transcendental by returning to the radical belongingness that its commonality subtends.

Later on, in a subsection of the aforementioned chapter "Elitere Lyric Poetry" titled "RETOUR," this blood stain reappears as a memory, as a record of history: "The memory stain

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[67] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lutte, 1987), 85.
[68] Cha, *Dictee*, 65.
[69] Spahr, "Postmodernism, Readers, and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's 'Dictee,'" 26.

attaches itself and darkens on the pale formless sheet, a hole increasing its size larger and larger until it assimilates the boundaries and becomes itself formless. All memory. Occupies the entire."[70] Rather than transcendental, blood's relation to the boundaries set by nationalism is one of immanence: as suggested by the formlessness with which the blood stain interacts and enlarges, boundaries are assimilated in a sense not so much of transcendental overcoming, but rather of a dissolving into this dark totality. Connecting blood's emptying drive with this episode yields an evacuated scene where formless memory, seemingly detached from its past temporality and stressed as ongoing, occupies everything and provides "the certitude of absence."[71] Blood's expanding stain creates a release from the supplemental saturation of the phantomnation, which this episode relates to the provision of a pivotal and crucial potential—already mentioned above—for embodying language as something new: "You read you mouth the transformed object across from you in its new state, other than what it had been."

Briefly put, the diseuse's staging of the phantomnation as partaking of both (colonial) nationalism and (decolonial) counternationalism follows the logic of the supplement—yet *Dictee*, through the negotiation of its inheritance, also articulates the anational immanence of blood, an immanence that underlies the nation. As a pivotal potential, blood readdresses the labor that is coerced from the foreign body through dictation. To elucidate such a potential, I turn to A. Kiarina Kordela's own foregrounding of blood as immanent and her discussion of Paolo Virno's understanding of labor-power as "the generic ability to work"—which allows him to assert labor-power's importance as the contemporary manifestation of the category of potentiality. Immanence follows this category inasmuch as "the potentiality of self-actualization—which is both our blood and labor-power" allows the embodiment, the incarnation of immanence as "a

[70] Cha, *Dictee*, 131.
[71] Cha, *Dictee*, 131.

cause that is itself the effect of its own effects."[72] That is, blood and labor-power enable the possibility of agency independent from other causes; here independent from the ubiquity of the nation.

The category of formal subsumption comes to the fore again as it aligns with Cha's and Kordela's mobilization of blood: beyond the essentializing that blood lends to nation and race, blood still enables an altogether different set of possibilities aligned with the fact that labor is not fully assimilated and transformed by capitalism as it would were it real subsumption. I conclude, then, by stressing how in *Dictee* blood as ink, as legible, suggests a futurity independent from the saturated political spectrum of the nation, a futurity marked by a divergence from the current state of affairs; as Kordela argues with regards to the temporality of blood, "what matters henceforth is no longer *the past actualized creative power of blood* (ancestry) *but its future potential of its self-actualization* (in its progeny).[73] Through blood, an immanent commonality is revealed, which summons the anational voices of the past, those alien to the nation's spatiotemporality, as well as a futurity equally independent from the nation.

Blood allows a reassessment of the past in order to construct an alternative future and in so doing it reasserts a processual emphasis. It is as ongoingness that poetic form is organized in *Dictee*; the labor of dictation materializes this potential as manifesting the general purpose for engaging with the past:

> Why resurrect it all now. From the Past. History, the old wound. The past emotions all over again. To confess to relive the same folly. To name it now so as not to repeat history

[72] A. Kiarina Kordela, "Biopolitics: From Supplement to Immanence: In Dialogue with Roberto Esposito's Trilogy: Communitas, Immunitas, Bíos" in *Cultural Critique*, Number 85, Fall 2013, 185. Conceptualizing the presence of blood as immanent follows A. Kiarina Kordela's commentary on Roberto Esposito's work as reformulating biopolitics through the logic of supplementarity. It is Kordela's contention that blood must be understood as the immanence that underlies this supplementarity, an observation I find fitting when discussing *Dictee*'s phantomnation as the incorporation of nationalism and counternationalism within its framework.

[73] Kordela, "Biopolitics: From Supplement to Immanence," 183.

> in oblivion. To extract each fragment by each fragment from the word from the image another word another image the reply that will not repeat history in oblivion.[74]

A rescaling similar to Kim's allows us to visualize the affective labor that *Dictee* invests in its historical engagements beyond the nation. Both poetics, Cha's and Kim's, construct shifts in perspective that demarcate the historical spatiotemporality of the nation, and in so doing engage poetically with the anational realm that lies beyond its limits as an alternative to the overdetermined nation.

[74] Cha, *Dictee*, 33.

Chapter IV: Undoing National Space, Ortiz's Acoma Poetics

"How to deal with history. That was the question on my mind when I began to write *from Sand Creek*." explains Acoma Puebloan poet Simon J. Ortiz in a 1999 preface to his poetry collection, first published in 1981. Reflecting on the conditions of collective remembrance and self-determination available to Native Americans, Ortiz stresses an inconsistency: "As far as our Native cultural philosophy was concerned, we were a part of human culture and society no matter what anyone said or thought. But there was a problem with that when the human culture and society we were part of was the United States." Against what would be an otherwise unquestionable certainty, Ortiz observes how Native American presence is undermined by the terms of belongingness that the US demands: "Because it was the United States that was guilty of mass destruction and oppression […] of countless instances of thievery and genocidal killing, including the massacres of Cheyennes and Arapahoes at Sand Creek in 1864." Although what's at stake is a general conflict in perspectives, one that Ortiz elaborates in his poetry, the crux of the conflict here describes the encounter of different temporal orientations; the memory of settler violence informing a Native American self-understanding is set against the temporality of national historiography where, Ortiz argues, "the United States insulates itself within an amnesia that doesn't acknowledge that kind of history. The victors (discoverers, settlers, real estate developers, government leaders, etc.) can afford that, it seems, as long as they maintain control and feel that they don't have to face the truth. But Indians? What choice do we have?"[1]

[1] Simon J. Ortiz, *from Sand Creek* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000), 6–7.

This chapter reads Ortiz's poetry as articulating a range of answers to the latter question. By writing from his own Acoma (or Acqumeh) Pueblo culture, and by attending to indigenous practices more broadly, Ortiz expresses a different perspective from the one imposed by the nation, one more suitable for sustained remembrance—not only of past and ongoing colonial violence, but of a general Native American continuance beyond it. By weaving a meshwork of solidarity with other Native American communities, such as the Cheyenne and Arapaho peoples memorialized in *from Sand Creek*, Ortiz relies on and mobilizes Acoma Pueblo conceptualizations of time and space in order to lay the groundwork upon which divergent forms of perception rest. Most notably, he rearticulates the perception of proximity, occasioning an alternative set of criteria for what constitutes contiguity, particularly in relation to sociality. Resting on this set of criteria, I interpret Ortiz's poetics as enacting anational forms of attachment and intimacy, which in turn entail alternative forms of kinship from those upon which the nation is predicated. However, as in the cases of Amiri Baraka and Gloria Anzaldúa, Ortiz's embrace of a Native American literary nationalism complicates the interpretation of his poetics as anational. As a preamble to analyzing the forms of anational kinship his poetry develops, I address Ortiz's relationship with nationalism, in particular through concepts such as recognition, authenticity, and endonymic and exonymic traditions. In the process of assessing Ortiz's attachments to nationalism, I consider the pertinence of the anational in the context of indigenous decolonization projects, in particular as it relates to forms of attachment to nationalism as a decolonial strategy in the wake of the civil rights movements.

Turning Away from Recognition

In his preface to *from Sand Creek*, Ortiz's reflections on the place assigned to Native American history within the US describe spatiotemporal frameworks that appear incompatible with national historiography. The amnesia that is inherent to the nation's form, whereby the nation's founding violence is occluded by a narrative of progress, clashes with Native American remembrance and experience of settler colonialism; two distinct perceptions of space and time overlap. Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd, in *Transit of Empire*, offers a similar account of these incompatible experiences when she embraces indigenous phenomenologies in order to "reconceptualize space and history to make visible what imperialism and its resultant settler colonialism and diasporas have sought to obscure." Byrd writes, "Within the continental United States, it means imagining *an entirely different map and understanding of territory and space*: a map constituted by over 565 sovereign indigenous nations, with their own borders and boundaries, that transgress what has always been naturalized as contiguous territory divided into 48 states."[2] Although I share the aim of Byrd's cartographic clarification, I would modify it to convey what is at stake in Ortiz's questioning. He does not propose feats of the imagination but rather the factual presence of Native American continuance. A factual presence that, furthermore, as an anational manifestation, appears to also be incompatible with the 565 sovereign indigenous nations that comprise this imagined map, inasmuch as their official status requires, as Byrd points out in an endnote, US federal recognition.

The kinds of sovereignty and nationhood granted through the nation state's recognition exemplify the terms of belonging that the US has offered Native American communities since the civil rights movements. Aligned with multiculturalism, this conception of recognition rests

[2] Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), xxx.

on the assumption that the settler-state can reconcile indigenous claims to self-determination through legal and political incorporation. Recognition, in this regard, bifurcates the path toward Native American self-determination between those projects which remain attached to the settler-state and those which have turned away from it. Although turning away from the settler-state is a strategy more likely oriented toward anational potentials, this chapter also considers decolonial strategies committed to recognition with the aim of analyzing the forms of attachment to the nation that such strategies entail. As I elaborate below, because of his early embrace of nationalism, Ortiz's politics could be understood as located at some undetermined point of the spectrum that stretches between the dismissal of recognition and its embrace. The bulk of this chapter focuses on strategies that ignore recognition with the intention of marking the similarities that Ortiz's poetry, regardless of his stated politics, bear with these.

Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard, for example, argues that "the logic informing [an attachment to the settler state]—where 'recognition' is conceived as something that is ultimately 'granted' or 'accorded' a subaltern group or entity by a dominant group or entity—prefigures its failure to significantly modify, let alone transcend, the breadth of power at play in colonial relationships."[3] In line with the previous chapter's assessment of Myung Mi Kim's disinterpellating poetics as a turning away from the nation, Coulthard claims "that those struggling against colonialism must 'turn away' from the colonial state and society and instead find in their own *decolonial praxis* the source of their liberation."[4] Intrinsic to the process of finding one's own decolonial praxis, Coulthard explains, is a critical self-recognition that distinguishes the singularity of a community's collective practices and how the continuance of said practices amounts to exercising self-determination. Decolonial praxis can serve as a

[3] Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 30–1.
[4] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 48.

hermeneutics for anational forms of sociality that predate or develop away from the nation and European arrival.

The path described by Coulthard invites Native American communities to turn away from the settler-state and instead face their own collective cultural singularity. In the words of Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred, whom Coulthard describes as an exemplary practitioner of decolonial praxis, "It is the path of struggle laid out by those who have come before us; now it is our turn, we choose to turn away from the legacies of colonialism and take on the challenge of creating a new reality for ourselves and for our people."[5] In Alfred's and Coulthard's understanding of decolonial praxis, a spatiotemporal perspective aligns the collective practices of a past before the arrival of the colonizers with a future through the continuation of such practices. In other words, they aim to conserve forms of sociality that predate the nation in order to project a path of action to survive it. Such a perspective helps to conceptualize decolonial praxis in relation to anational forms through a specifically historical lens: preserving and fostering social practices that predate the arrival of the nation can serve to survive it and imagine a future after it.

In the spatiotemporal orientation it provides, Coulthard's decolonial praxis is akin to Byrd's cartographic clarification as an embrace of indigenous phenomenologies in a process of self-recognition. For Byrd, the cartographic aspect of self-recognition is of a piece with linguistic practices. Discussing Spivak's critique of a long standing colonial tradition of imposing names on native practices, what Spivak refers to as "a multiple errant history in […] naming," which yields "products of hegemonic false cartography,"[6] Byrd analyzes how these misnomers

[5] Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2005), 19.
[6] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 154, 305n.

"become the space for coerced complicity within colonialist occupations."[7] Along with the use of "Indians" to refer to populations and cultures predating European colonialism, Byrd extends the list of misnomers by noting how "America" and "Native American" are equally erratic taxonomies sustained by Western impositions.[8] For Spivak and Byrd's argumentative lines, misnomers are not isolated errors but colonial strategies that impose linguistic forms as part of more capacious forms of perception; Byrd seeks to refute this in order to attend to the indigenous phenomenologies that comprise the continent's linguistic heterogeneity, connecting the "over five hundred and sixty indigenous nations and/or communities" with "hundreds of language stocks within the lands that constitute the United States alone that would fall under the category 'Indian.'"[9] Byrd's assessment of these overlapped spatiotemporalities implies a similar assessment of the nation form's catachreses to the one offered in the previous chapter, where catachresis subsumes heterogeneity within the referential frame of US belongingness. Noting the systematic function of catachresis through colonial misnomers, Byrd quotes Gerald Vizenor's description of the word "Indian" as "an occidental invention that became a bankable simulation; the word has no referent in tribal languages or cultures."[10] Although it is an equally long-standing convention, this chapter appends to Byrd's observation the term "nation," in its already strained relation to "community," as another bankable misnomer that facilitates homogeneity and coerced complicity with colonial occupations.

Ever since he published his essay "Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism" in 1981, Ortiz has been considered a proponent of Native American

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[7] Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, 71.
[8] Because the former entails the adaptation of an Italian cartographer's name, Amerigo Vespucci, and the latter is too ambiguous.
[9] Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, 73.
[10] Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 4.

nationalism—and championed as such by some of the most outspoken nationalist/separatist Native American scholars (such as Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, Robert Warrior, and Chadwick Allen). In "Towards a National Indian Literature," Ortiz recounts his memories of his uncle's participation in their Acqumeh ritual celebrations to argue that, despite the fact that their celebrations bear clear Catholic influences, these traditions are "Acqumeh and Indian (or Native American or American Indian if one prefers those terms) in the truest and most authentic sense."[11] As the central claim of his essay, Ortiz puts forth a corrective that takes aim at the imposition of ideas of authenticity that would dictate what defines true nativeness.

Similarly, against the formulation of such colonial fantasies of native authenticity, Chadwick Allen coins the notion of a blood/land/memory complex to describe "acts of indigenous minority recuperation that attempt to seize control of the symbolic and metaphorical meanings of indigenous 'blood,' 'land,' and 'memory'"; these acts of recuperation "seek to liberate indigenous minority identities from definitions of authenticity imposed by dominant settler cultures, including those definitions imposed by well-meaning academics."[12] Ortiz's and Allen's critiques of coercive authenticity point to the normalization of colonial projections over Native American cultures, where authenticity is the pivotal concept that mediates the nation's relation to colonized populations, particularly in multicultural nations. In other words, the nation's recognition of subjects and collectivities as indigenous relies on the set of expectations and perceptions that the concept of authenticity organizes—which recalls what Elizabeth Povinelli terms multiculturalism's cunning. "What is the nation recognizing, capital commodifying, and the court trying to save from the breach of history when difference is

[11] Simon Ortiz, "Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism," *MELUS*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Ethnic Literature and Cultural Nationalism (Summer, 1981), 8.
[12] Chadwick Allen, *Blood Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 16.

recognized?"[13] Povinelli asks, pointing to the entities—nation, capitalism, and state—that stand to benefit from a coercive construction of authenticity.

In the context of indigenous struggles, then, the question of the anational needs to foreground these mediations and expectations of authenticity—particularly as they relate to the use of endonyms and exonyms and how they mark the imposition of linguistic conventions and colonial assumptions. Imposed authenticity enables the nation form's operations, limiting the expression and profusion of heterogeneity as political resistance to colonialism; it homogenizes difference by demanding the fulfillment of imposed expectations. In contrast, the anational provides an open category of political forms—of all that which is not national—that allows for an unlimited reception of political expressions attending to particular histories informing indigenous perspectives and their different decolonial praxes.

Against the conception of an idea of authenticity that would impose a colonial version of nativeness, in "Towards a National Indian Literature," Ortiz foregrounds Native American continuance through a collective capacity to interpret the world after, and despite, the fact of colonization: "Throughout the difficult experience of colonization to the present, Indian women and men have struggled to create meaning of their lives in very definite and systematic ways. The ways or methods have been important, but they are important only because of the reason for the struggle. And it is that reason—the struggle against colonialism—which has given substance to what is authentic."[14] Ortiz's reframing of decolonial struggles as the substance of authentic Native American experience suggests a questioning of the logic of belongingness proposed by the settler-state. This is the point of departure that his preface to *from Sand Creek* describes, but

[13] Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham: Duke University, 2002), 17.
[14] Ortiz, "Towards a National Indian Literature," 9.

what is notable about the way in which Ortiz describes authenticity here is his emphasis on substance as evoking content in relation to form: beyond the external appearance of inauthenticity in the influence of Catholic practices, the substance of these traditions remains authentic as a constant interpretative endeavor poised against the imposition of a colonial perspective. Echoing the second chapter and its gloss on the Aztec priest's preservation of nepantla as the prioritized form of interpretation, Ortiz locates in hermeneutic agency the authenticity of Native American experience. The struggle to create meaning through the experience of colonialism points precisely to the through line of Native American continuance that precedes the nation.

In light of this struggle, Ortiz notes that beyond the self-recognition of cultural practices that Coulthard and Alfred figure as a turning away, Native American decolonial praxis resides in opposing the nation's colonial violence:

> because of the acknowledgement by Indian writers of a responsibility to advocate for their people's self-government, sovereignty, and control of land and natural resources; and to look also at racism, political and economic oppression, sexism, supremacism, and the needless and wasteful exploitation of land and people, especially in the U.S., that Indian literature is developing a character of nationalism which indeed it should have. It is this character which will prove to be the heart and fibre and story of an America which has heretofore too often feared its deepest and most honest emotions of love and compassion. It is this story, wealthy in being without an illusion of dominant power and capitalistic abundance, that is the most authentic. […] The voice given these themes is the most culturally authentic as these are fundamental to human dignity, creativity, and integrity. […] Indeed, like that ceremony at Acqu, depicting Santiago, the conquistador-saint, and Chapiyuh, the inquisitor-missionary, the voice is not a mere dramatic expression of a sociohistorical experience, but it is a persistent call by a people determined to be free; it is an authentic voice for liberation. And finally, it is the voice of countless other non-literary Indian women and men of this nation who live a daily life of struggle to achieve and maintain meaning which gives the most authentic character to a national Indian literature.[15]

[15] Ortiz, "Towards a National Indian Literature," 12.

This passage exhibits an underlying distinction organizing Ortiz's interpretation of the situation: against the oppression exercised by the US, Ortiz aims to foster the story of "an America" that finds its wealth beyond colonial oppression and capitalist exploitation. In the juxtaposition of these two realities, evocative of the preface to *from Sand Creek*, different attributes distinguish the US from America; as I will argue below, Ortiz's poetry in *from Sand Creek* does in fact distinguish America as a precolonial and continental landscape from the capitalist and nationalist drive of the US; more importantly *from Sand Creek* does encourage a turning away from the US settler-state and toward the continental landscape.

In "Towards a National Indian Literature," however, the rationale behind the decolonial character of Native American literature posits resistance to the nation through nationalism. This rationale is seemingly influenced by the interpretative drive that Ortiz foregrounds as the true source of authenticity: the struggle to create meaning, to retain a perspective that can antagonize the colonial systems of interpretation, entails the adoption and adaptation of certain practices borrowed from the colonizers—such as the Catholic celebrations that have become authentically Acqumeh. The nationalist character that Native American literature displays is likewise embraced as a form of resistance both borrowed from and used against the settler-state.

In this regard it is striking that Ortiz's deixis borrows from a national apostrophe—much in the terms of the previous chapter—when he summons "the voice of countless other non-literary Indian women and men" in order to muster "this nation." Although seemingly present in its deictic immediacy, "this nation" evades a referent that could clarify its specificity: we could consider either an Acqumeh nation, despite the fact that this adjective and noun never appear together throughout the essay (Ortiz rather refers to "Acqumeh people" or "Acqumeh

community"[16]) or assume that "Indian" is the adjective granting specificity to this nation. But the problem with the latter interpretation is that while *this Indian nation* does indeed muster a vast counternationalist force to resist US settler colonialism, it also subsumes the heterogeneity and multiplicity of indigenous forms of sociality and culture under a single entity. This lack of specificity denotes an unstable relation between the nation form and the substantial authenticity that Ortiz attributes to resistance. Unlike Coulthard and Alfred, Ortiz's decolonial rhetoric in "Towards a National Indian Literature" does not turn away from the nation but rather aims to resist the settler-state by replicating its nationalism.

In the subsumptive interplay by which certain rituals become authentically Acqumeh while Ortiz's politics become nationalist, the distinction between exonyms and endonyms is blurred. And I point to such a blurring not to suggest that there is a risk in losing track of what is authentically indigenous. Rather, I point to this blurring as giving cause to weigh the influence of form in politics and poetics particularly as they strive for a decolonial praxis. As in the second chapter's assessment of migratory forms, where Anzaldúa's adoption of mestizaje reveals the trajectory of a concept with an exclusionary form, in this chapter I trace the implications of forms adopted and adapted. What is at stake in Ortiz's adoption of a literary nationalism and how does it affect his decolonial aims?

Ortiz's use of the nation form's terminology (nation, national, nationalism) occurs in the aftermath of the civil rights movements; it emerges in the same decolonial context that posited no alternative to self-determination other than the nation form. His nationalism is circumstantially similar to Baraka's. For example, Ortiz's dissatisfaction with the US occurs after spending time in the army. Likewise, the emphasis he places on the substance of

[16] Ortiz, "Towards a National Indian Literature," 7, 8, 9.

authenticity appears to disregard the form in which resistance is articulated, thereby inviting opposition to the colonial nation through counternationalism—also in similar ways to how Baraka assumed a counternationalist stance. Such similarities recall Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar's claim that the Black Power movement "had some of the most visible influences on the radical activist struggles of Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans, giving rise to a visible movement of radical ethnic nationalism."[17] The causal register in which Ortiz introduces the nationalist character of Native American literature—where nationalism suddenly occurs *because* there is resistance to the settler-state—suggests an affinity with the demands raised by the Black Power movement in the sense that nationalism is employed as a marker for the cultural and social singularity that the US has failed to recognize and/or attempts to assimilate.

The term "sovereignty," another word with a long history of Western currency, provides a counterpoint to the nation in the ways it has been redefined by Native American communities as a divergence from settler colonialism. Sovereignty tends to be mobilized as self-determination, most notably during this period of minority nationalisms in the aftermath of the civil rights movements. One of the most incisive commentators of these events, Vine Deloria Jr., understood the question of sovereignty in relation precisely to the expectations of authenticity that non-Natives held over Natives. "The responsibility which sovereignty creates is oriented primarily toward the existence and continuance of the group," Deloria argues, "it naturally creates a sense of freedom not possible in any other context."[18] Essentially intertwined, freedom and sovereignty grant self-determination to the community: the freedom to conduct, rule, and organize as they choose. And this is the point where the question of sovereignty turns towards

[17] Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, "The Formation of Asian American Nationalism in the Age of Black Power, 1966-75" in *The New Black History*, ed. Manning Marable and Elizabeth Kai Hinton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 123.
[18] Vine Deloria Jr., *We Talk You Listen* (New York: Delta, 1970), 123.

the distinction between endonyms and exonyms as markers of colonial rule: "To impose restrictions from outside and define freedom in that manner would undercut the values of the group."[19] In other words, Deloria identifies exonymic practices, the imposition of restrictions from outside, as forms of coercing the community.

Noting Deloria's commitment to a "discussion of sovereignty as an open-ended process," that is, a process without the constrictions of external impositions or a fixed telos, Robert Warrior comments how Deloria's "straightforward warning against making the rhetoric of sovereignty and tradition a final rather than a beginning step remains an important reminder to those who engage in community, federal, and other American Indian work."[20] That is, sovereignty is not the telos of decolonial projects of self-determination, but the exercise of self-determination toward decolonization. Taking this understanding of sovereignty to shed light upon the question of nationalism and the anational in a Native American context, I consider this definition of open-ended sovereignty a maxim for experimental politics aimed at the exercise of self-determination. Which requires, like Alfred and Coulthard suggest, attending to how these decolonial projects turn away from the imposition of exonyms to characterize their own singular forms and practices.

In *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (2006), Robert Warrior, Jace Weaver, and Craig S. Womack offer a collection of essays in the way of a thorough engagement with Ortiz's essay. Ortiz's writings bookend the collection with a foreword titled "Speaking-Writing Indigenous Literary Sovereignty" and a republished version of "Towards a National Indian Literature" as an appendix. His foreword expands on the central claims that "Towards a National Indian Literature" made more than two decades earlier by rejecting the impositions of

[19] Deloria, *We Talk You Listen*, 126.
[20] Robert Warrior, *Tribal Secrets* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 97.

authenticity; this time, he does so by refusing the idea that true indigeneity cannot be expressed in English, the language of the colonizer. "Although we have to make sure we do not compromise ourselves by inadvertently speaking-writing what we don't want to mean (because English carries a lot of Western social-cultural baggage)," Ortiz observes, "English language writing can work to our advantage when we write with a sense of Indigenous consciousness."[21] The attention given to this "social-cultural baggage" when speaking English perhaps exhibits a more aware and active concern over form in relation to politics; likewise, such attention and concern may relate to how, amid the similarities between the two essays' claims, there is one notable difference: the absence of any reference to the nation or nationalism in "Speaking-Writing Indigenous Literary Sovereignty." Although Warrior, Weaver, and Womack clearly remain committed to the term, preserving it as part of the book's title, Ortiz's political rhetoric has turned away from summoning a nation.

For their part, Warrior, Weaver, and Womack are explicit about how their understanding of nationalism encompasses "a phenomenon that has given rise, on the one hand, to modern democracy and the thirst for liberation of oppressed people around the world, and, on the other hand, some of the worst forms of political repression and xenophobia in human history." Their book, accordingly, aims "to enliven discussions of what nationalism can and should mean within contemporary scholarship on Native literature."[22] In a section titled "Let a Thousand Separatisms Bloom," they intercalate nationalism and separatism as synonymous because the stakes of nationalism are understood as stressing the specificity of Native American cultures and society

[21] Simon Ortiz, "Speaking-Writing Indigenous Literary Sovereignty," in Robert Warrior, Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), xiv.
[22] Robert Warrior, Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), xv.

and the character of their literature "as separate and distinct from other national literatures"—which are paired with the kinds of literary criticism that "serve the interests of indigenes and their communities."[23] In light of this gloss of literary nationalism, and of Ortiz's dismissal of the term, I read Ortiz against the grain of his earlier nationalism in order to interpret how his poetry works toward separatist aims, and at times exhibit anational potentials—particularly as it articulates or assumes singular forms of community and politics that manifest a distinct and separate organization.

Although Warrior, Weaver, and Womack argue that "to continue to wrangle over the utility of the term 'sovereign' is to become unnecessarily stuck" because Native American societies practice their own specific forms of sovereignty regardless of the term, I would contend that terminology plays an important role in the forms that collectives employ for self-expression.[24] Vizenor, for example, attempts to bypass the colonial tendencies of dictionaries and lexicographers by using "several new and connotative words"; among these, Vizenor defines "transmotion, that sense of native motion and an active presence, [as] *sui generis* sovereignty."[25] In the act of singularizing by coining anew an imposed term, transmotion practices sovereignty-as-freedom or as open-ended by producing a concept which is not exactly an instance of sovereignty per se, but a singularity that attends to a Native American past in active presence and thereby acts as an endonym.

Attending to the decolonial praxis that Alfred and Coulthard describe, the open-endedness that Deloria and Warrior advocate for, and the poiesis of singular forms that Vizenor practices, I conceive of the anational as a potential descriptor for certain Native American

[23] Warrior, Weaver, Womack, *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, 15.
[24] Warrior, Weaver, Womack, *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, 45.
[25] Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 15.

poetics as they relate to the freedom of self-determination and decolonization. Paying heed to Warrior's notion of intellectual sovereignty, my aim with this description is not to replicate the imposition of an exonym over Native American forms, but to suggest that this descriptor may prove a more efficient path towards the conceptualization of singular forms of communing which in turn can lead to the use of more adept endonyms. In the following I aim to show the suitability of the anational as opening to endonymic understandings through Ortiz's poetry.

Haitsee

In *Song, Poetry, and Language—Expression and Perception* (1978), a brief 12-page chapbook published by the Navajo Community College Press and one of Ortiz's earliest publications, he describes his father's habit of carving dancers in wood. When immersed in this activity, Ortiz notes how, emerging from the same carving motion, his father begins to sing a corresponding Buffalo Dance Song: "*Stah wah maiyanih, Muukai-tra Shahyaika, duuwahsteh duumahshtee Dyahnie guuhyoutseh mah-ah. Wahyuuhuunah wahyuuhuu huu nai ah*.[26] The episode is illustrative of Acoma Pueblo poetics as immersive and synesthetic processes where aesthetic experience is oriented in a ritual-like process toward poiesis. At once the rhythm through which the dancer is carved instantiates the singing of the dance; motion produces the ritual, with the dancer not a representation, but rather coming to be as part of the immersive process in the contiguity of music and rhythmic carving.

In the creation of rhythm through the singular perception of space and time that produces the dancer, Ortiz's father participates in a long tradition of Acoma Pueblo rituals. For Pueblo

[26] Simon J. Ortiz, *Song, Poetry, and Language—Expression and Perception* (Navajo Community College Press, 1978), 2.

peoples, movement is an essential aspect of their becoming, both in the sense of their contemporary existence, and in the sense of their ethnogenesis. In the particular history of the Acoma Pueblo, their story of Emergence narrates how the First People, who were considered still *unripe*, had to migrate to find Haak'u, the homeland that awaited them. Their path toward Haak'u is conceived as an active engagement with the land that surrounded them; as archeologists Damian Garcia and Kurt F. Anschuetz observe, Acoma Pueblo people "were creative agents in *ripening* their Natural World—and *preparing* (i.e., *ripening*) themselves."[27] The agential and creational self-conception of Acoma Puebloans in relation to their land is understood in terms of agricultural tropes that bespeak an idea of collaboration or community with their surroundings: their journey toward their homeland, as well as their settling there, describes their active participation in fostering the growth of the world around them along with their own. I will further consider below, in my readings of *from Sand Creek*, the figuration of peoplehood in agricultural terms along with its spatiotemporal implications, yet here I want to note the relevance of this ethnogenesis in relation to Acoma Pueblo poetics. For example, Ortiz's father participates in the transformation process of wood by singing and joining the ritual through which the dancer comes to be.

Likewise, Ortiz's recreation of the event through storytelling participates in and elicits the same immersive dynamics. Mark Rifkin, in *Beyond Settler Time*, observes that the function of Native American storying "can be thought of less as the act of telling a story than as the immanent dynamism in the ways stories move through the world, the kinds of qualitative relations they generate as part of producing collective experiences of duration." Arguing against imposing settler frames of reference which reduce Native American conceptions of temporal

[27] Damian Garcia and Kurt F. Anschuetz, "Movement as an Acoma Way of Life" in *The Continuous Path*, ed. Samuel Duwe and Robert W. Preucel (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2019), 38.

multiplicity to a forced linear contemporaneity, Rifkin explains that "the process of attending to stories—acknowledging the significance and effects of the forms of temporal relation they both reflect and bear—could be characterized as a mode of temporal sovereignty."[28] In his storytelling, Ortiz reproduces the collective experience of duration, marking the movement that recreates the characteristics of the ritual. This is the case especially when the rhythm of the song takes control over the otherwise conventional prosody of the essay. Without a translation, the song prioritizes its formal (aural, visual) features over semantic ones, occasioning a more immersive experience. This gesture of nontranslation is relevant. It opens the text to alternative temporalities through the aesthetic reorientation demanded from the reader in transitioning from familiar words that stand for a meaning to the unfamiliar arrangement of letters that stand for a sound and an experience of rhythm.

I interpret Ortiz's gesture of nontranslation as concomitant with his literary separatism inasmuch as he induces ways of reading attuned to the singularity of Acoma Pueblo aesthetics. Yet the gesture is separatist and not nationalist because the intention is to assert the particularities that characterize the ritual in relation to the people that practice it. The gesture of nontranslation presents an endonymic practice in the sense of being oriented toward the community that embraces it as its own, as opposed to being oriented toward the settler-state's gaze through a translation tracing an exonymic path. Translation, in this colonial context, amounts to the transformations necessary to present the singularity of a community in terms of the settler state's understanding and elicit a recognition of similarity, not of difference.

Nontranslation is relevant within the text because the song is immediately followed by an interjecting passage that relays the situation of a friend of Ortiz's who has enrolled into a Navajo

[28] Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 36.

language course; unable to speak it with ease, the friend tells Ortiz, "I can't seem to hear the parts of it."[29] To a statement already suggestive of perceptual distribution and compartmentalization, Ortiz replies: "The way that language is spoken at home—Aacqu, the tribal people and community from whom I come—is with a sense of completeness. That is, when a word is spoken, it is spoken as a complete word. There are no separate parts or elements to it."[30] Ortiz's explanation points to an Acoma Pueblo understanding of language which instead of analytically dissecting speech considers the full expressive intention of the utterance; expression is considered to be in a continuum with experience: "Language is perception of experience as well as expression."[31] Unlike the incomplete hearing that his friend experiences, Ortiz describes language as a constant between the perception of experience and its expression—there is no linguistic compartmentalization into phonemes but a correspondence between speech, speaker, and context.

His father's Buffalo Dance Song embodies such an expressive intention as it is reflective of a specific collective experience. His storytelling and his father's carving provide an instance of transmotion as sui generis forms of temporal sovereignty; through their continuance, they instantiate what Vizenor also terms survivance, "an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, *not a mere reaction*, or a survivable name."[32] In other words, through the rhythm that coordinates the event and the text, they practice a sui generis temporal sovereignty that expresses generations of collective experience in communal relation with the landscape. Beyond a claim to authenticity or compliance with an assigned role within the nation, this passage shows how Acoma Pueblo people exercise their own forms of community through song, storytelling,

[29] Ortiz, *Song, Poetry, and Language*, 2.
[30] Ortiz, *Song, Poetry, and Language*, 2.
[31] Ortiz, *Song, Poetry, and Language*, 3.
[32] Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*, vii. My emphasis.

and poetry. The semantic unavailability of the Buffalo Dance Song, in this account, becomes only the first step towards the acknowledgment of the aesthetic incompatibility that a Puebloan perspective entails with regards to the general spatiotemporal assumptions, per the preface to *from Sand Creek*, upon which the US rests.

The sense of aesthetics I am evoking here is indebted to Jacques Rancière's definition of the distribution of the sensible as "the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it."[33] The distribution of the sensible allows us to foreground the connection between aesthetic practices with forms of sociality; that is, we can note how politics emerges as a social order resulting from a perceptual distribution. With regards to Acoma Pueblo aesthetics, such a perceptual distribution links to their ethnogenesis and to how, during their migration, they had to learn to recognize Haak'u. This entailed developing a specific form of spatiotemporal orientation, wherein cardinal directions figure prominently along with the remembrance of specific locations identified during their migration, which in turn acquired spiritual importance. As Garcia and Anschuetz comment, "Through the association of cardinal directions with particular natural and cultural phenomena that they experienced in their landscape, the First Acoma People built mental orders" which resemble "maps in the mind" in that they seem "less to control the environment than the world within."[34] Such a mental cartography grounds the premise that "Language is perception of experience as well as expression" in a precise space and time through the interaction and correspondence of Acoma Pueblo people with their history and landscape. It likewise provides a concrete referent for Byrd's imagined cartography of "*an entirely different map and understanding of territory and*

[33] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2011), 12.
[34] Garcia and Anschuetz, "Movement as an Acoma Way of Life," 41–2.

space." Put differently, the Acoma Pueblo understanding of cartography informs the singularity of their literary practices as an expression of their relationship with the land that surrounds them.

Later in his essay, Ortiz continues narrating the episode of his father's singing: "And at his worktable, he shows me: '*This is a* Haitsee*—a Shield if you want to call it that—and it is used as a Guide.' It is a thin, splinted strip of* hahpaani *made into a circle, which will fit into the palm of your hand*."[35] As both shield and guide, a Haitsee is endowed with crucial functions: it materializes the spatiotemporal understanding that Acoma people have, while also materializing the decolonial purpose that the survival of such an understanding entails. In 1994, more than a decade after he published *from Sand Creek*, in the collection *After and Before the Lightning*, Ortiz included a poem titled "Across the Prairie Hills" where another Haitsee appears:

> Distance, destiny, memory
> across the landscape.
> Across time and galaxy.
> My father described the haitsee.
> It is a thin oak limb,
> bent and tied into a circle.
> Intersected by cotton string,
> the string making four points
> on the circle and at the center.
> North, West, South, East, Center.
> Sacred places and directions.
> The four sections of the circle
> painted yellow, blue, red, white.
> It's a map of the sky-universe,
> my father said. You make one
> when you prepare to travel.
> So you will always know
> where you are, to where to return.
> Haitsee, a map of the universe.
> Knowing the distance
> is always vast, realizing
> destiny is somewhere beyond,
> we need memory to know our way.
> Here across the snowy prairie hills,

[35] Ortiz, *Song, Poetry, and Language*, 10.

we need this, the truest road.[36]

In both Ortiz's father's and Ortiz's own account, there is something elusive about the function of the Haitsee as "a map of the universe." Despite the initial detailed description of its construction process and its material qualities, the orienting purpose that a Haitsee would afford appears to be undermined by its unmoored condition, with the cardinal colors unfixed from their spatial referents. Such an elusiveness channels some of Ortiz's gesture of nontranslation when relaying his father's Buffalo Dance Song inasmuch as it likewise demarcates the reach of its signifying capacity for a non-Acoma Pueblo readership. The Haitsee is embedded in the same spatiotemporal matrix of inheritance as his father's, where "Distance, destiny, memory | across the landscape" induces a similar experience to the conceptual bind in Allen's blood/land/memory complex. Through its unfixed spatial referents, which remain referents nonetheless, the Haitsee situates the traveler temporally: acting as a reminder through the indexical knowledge of the always-vast distances that surround it, the Haitsee orders time accordingly. With the past that the object itself materializes as a reminder and a traditional object, its deictic centers the location where the traveler stands, and the future that lies beyond the horizon. The Haitsee offers a compelling counterpoint to Ortiz's earlier national deictic through the specificity and concreteness of the collectivity that this actual and immediate object indexes.

In this regard, the Haitsee, as both object and poem, as "map of the universe," instantiates the mental cartography through which Acoma Pueblo people practice a relationship of correspondence with the land. Laguna Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko shares an insightful account of such a relationship by commenting that the term "landscape" as denoting that which the eye can perceive is inaccurate for a Pueblo understanding inasmuch as it assumes that "the

[36] Simon J. Ortiz, *After and Before the Lightning* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994), 21–2.

viewer is somehow *outside* or *separate from* the territory he or she surveys. Viewers are as much a part of the landscape as the boulders they stand on."[37] Silko's immersion of the viewer in the landscape is akin to Ortiz's description of the Haitsee in the sense that they provide orientation that is nonetheless contingent upon the viewer's location—as opposed to the abstracted representation that a map provides in conventional Western cartography. Indeed, such contingency indexes the interdependence of land and viewer in order to inform a capacity for survival, as Silko elaborates:

> The land, the sky, and all that is within them—the landscape—includes human beings. Interrelationships in the Pueblo landscape are complex and fragile. The unpredictability of the weather, the aridity and harshness of much of the terrain in the high plateau country explain in large part the relentless attention the ancient Pueblo people gave to the sky and the earth around them. Survival depended upon harmony and cooperation not only among human beings, but also among all things—the animate and the less animate.[38]

Through Silko's description we arrive at a more precise connection between Ortiz's Haitsee and the idea of survivance. In this context, the Haitsee can provide a reformulation of the authenticity of Pueblo literature grounded on the singular case of the Acoma Pueblo's experience and struggle to persist and foster their interrelatedness with the land while holding on to the spatiotemporal orientation that such a relationship established.

In his evasive though detailed description of the Haitsee's function, Ortiz plays with the expectations of those readers alien to Puebloan aesthetics by describing a form of orientation different from those that would assuage disorientation. It is not exactly translation that the poem provides, but an encounter with different forms of relation. In Ortiz's ekphrastic description of a

[37] Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 27.
[38] Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, 29.

Haitsee, his poem embraces the guiding function of the object, describing the aspects of it necessary to reproduce the perspectival orientation it invites.

Ortiz's Haitsee allows us to see how questions of endonyms and exonyms center on possibilities of self-determination by focalizing the forms in which a community, and the individuals within that community, relate to the world. More than registering claims to authenticity, exonyms and endonyms in this regard attend to the specific cultural practices that sustain a community, such as the Catholic-influenced celebrations of the Acoma Pueblo, while demarcating external impositions not only in terms of ideas of authenticity, but also in terms of the exploitative and extractive practices of the settler-state. Endonyms and exonyms can offer a metric to attend to the singularities of the distinct Native American struggles for self-determination and to the specificity of how they exercise their own cultural survivance. For example, Haudenosaunee scholar Patricia Monture-Angus, speaks about a Haudenosaunee view of self-determination that similarly prioritizes interrelatedness. She explains that the Haudenosaunee understanding of "Self-determination is principally, that is first and foremost, about relationships. Communities cannot be self-governing unless members of those communities are well and living in a responsible way."[39] In other words, self-determination is turned toward the mutual exercise of endonymic responsibilities to other members of the community. Such kinds of relations resemble how Potawatomi scholar Kyle Whyte describes Anishinaabe kinship relationships, which connect, "via reciprocal responsibilities, humans with other humans, humans with nonhumans, whether spirits, plants, animals, or elements (e.g., water) and humans with particular places."[40] The stressed reciprocity of these kinship relations

[39] Patricia Monture-Angus, *Journeying Forward: Dreaming First Nations Independence* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1999), 8.
[40] Kyle Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice" in *Environment and Society* Volume 9 (2018): Issue 1, 131.

speaks to their situated interrelatedness with the landscape, in Silko's terms, as a singular form of survivance.

On the other hand, the practice and circulation of exonyms may not necessarily entail an exploitative and extractive relationship, as the history of exchanges and diplomacy among different indigenous communities extends beyond and through the appearance of colonialism. The aim of the critique I develop here and trace in Ortiz's poetry is to mark the effect of the exonyms upon which the settler-state rests at its colonial and capitalist foundation. I pay heed to Coulthard, who proposes the formulation of critiques of the settler-state through an ongoing discussion between Marxism and decolonial strategies. Such a discussion relies on a reassessment of the specific conditions of the colonized: paying heed to Marx's description of primitive accumulation as the colonial process upon which capital depends historically, Coulthard argues in favor of a contextual shift that "takes as its analytical frame the subject position of the colonized vis-à-vis the *effects of colonial dispossession*, rather than from the primary position of 'the waged male proletariat [in] the process of commodity production,' to borrow Silvia Federici's useful formulation."[41] Coulthard's contextual shift bears similar interpretative aims to Rosa Luxemburg's reading of Marx inasmuch as both take his analysis as descriptive, not prescriptive, and adapt it to their specific site of struggle. Coulthard's adoption and adaptation of Marx's diagnoses bespeak a translation from the exonymic perspective of the British industrial proletariat to that of the contemporary decolonial efforts of Native Americans. Furthermore, such a contextual shift to the perspective of indigenous decolonial efforts of survivance allows Coulthard to focalize the main object of primitive accumulation for the settler-state, which is the acquisition of land. He borrows from Patrick Wolfe in order to assert that

[41] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 11.

"Whatever settlers may say—and they generally have a lot to say—the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element."[42] From a planetary perspective, colonial exonyms then denote settler practices which ignore the situated interrelatedness that communities like the Acoma Pueblo have sustained with their landscapes in order to impose the same extractive mechanisms. At stake are varying conceptualizations of land, landscape, and territory—along with their own forms of representation, cartographic or otherwise—informing different political and aesthetic dispositions toward colonialism.

The analysis I offer in the following sections also foregrounds primitive accumulation in relation to the land as it simultaneously stresses the mediation of the nation form in the demarcation of the endonyms and exonyms at play. Returning to Vizenor's observation, I insist on reading the nation form as a Western and, most importantly, bankable imposition—in the sense that it enables and naturalizes the exploitative and extractive practices that compose the essential nexus between capitalism and colonialism. Although I will return to said nexus later on in this chapter, the following section addresses the ways in which the nation persistently creates conceptual and emotional attachments—that is, affective labor which lends itself to the adaptation and reproduction of the nation form—through exonyms, and how these attachments function toward homogenizing the perception of time and space.

[42] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native" in *Journal of Genocide Research* (2006), 8 (4), 388.

Treaties and Homogeneity

In *X-Marks*, Ojibwe/Dakota scholar Scott Richard Lyons reexamines the moment of encounter between Native American and European populations by emphasizing, as its title suggests, the x-marks that Native Americans would inscribe in lieu of their signature to officialize treaties with the colonizers. Lyons describes the colonial implications of x-marks as they signal coercion and contamination in that they are entirely European notions and habits that are forced upon Native Americans. Resembling the official interpellation of the state by which a subject is constituted as such, one of Lyons's central examples of coercion and contamination concerns how the signing of a treaty occasions the moment when native communities are nationalized: official documents "addressed the parties who signed treaties in a new way, too—as 'nations'—thus bringing to bear a platonic character that wasn't necessarily there before."[43] The x-marks in these treaties indicate a first moment of acquiescence in a process aimed at assimilating the treaty-signers, a homogenizing process that is evocative of the colonizing history that Byrd describes.

Lyons continues describing the effect of x-marks: "Smaller groups became larger, more nominative, and more abstractly defined as political entities, assuming a 'soul' or 'spiritual principle' that in all likelihood did not exist—at least not in the way we think of such things now—prior to the arrival of the whites and their strange ways of doing things."[44] Per his own understanding of the nation as Platonic and nominative, the nation which treaty-signers accept to become bears the generalizing and idealizing tendency of exonyms as they delimit the singularity that endonyms preserve. Moreover, this tendency toward abstraction can also be understood in terms of the nation form's plasticity and how it aims to transform the interpellated communities.

[43] Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 2.
[44] Lyons, *X-Marks*, 2.

That is, by naming in its own terms, the nation begins a process of conceptual annexation through catachresis.

For example, the Treaty of Canandaigua, signed in 1794, sought peace between the US Federal government and the Haudenosaunee tribes, known by then through the exonyms Iroquois or Six Nations. The document, still preserved and pictured below, stipulates the limits of the Haudenosaunee lands and the resolutions that followed the diplomatic negotiations between the two parties. Because Timothy Pickering, George Washington's representative, had to be instructed on Haudenosaunee diplomatic customs, which had a long history of intertribal traditions where ceremonial rhetoric and rites are emphasized (an instance of exonyms oriented toward survivance), the negotiations expanded over

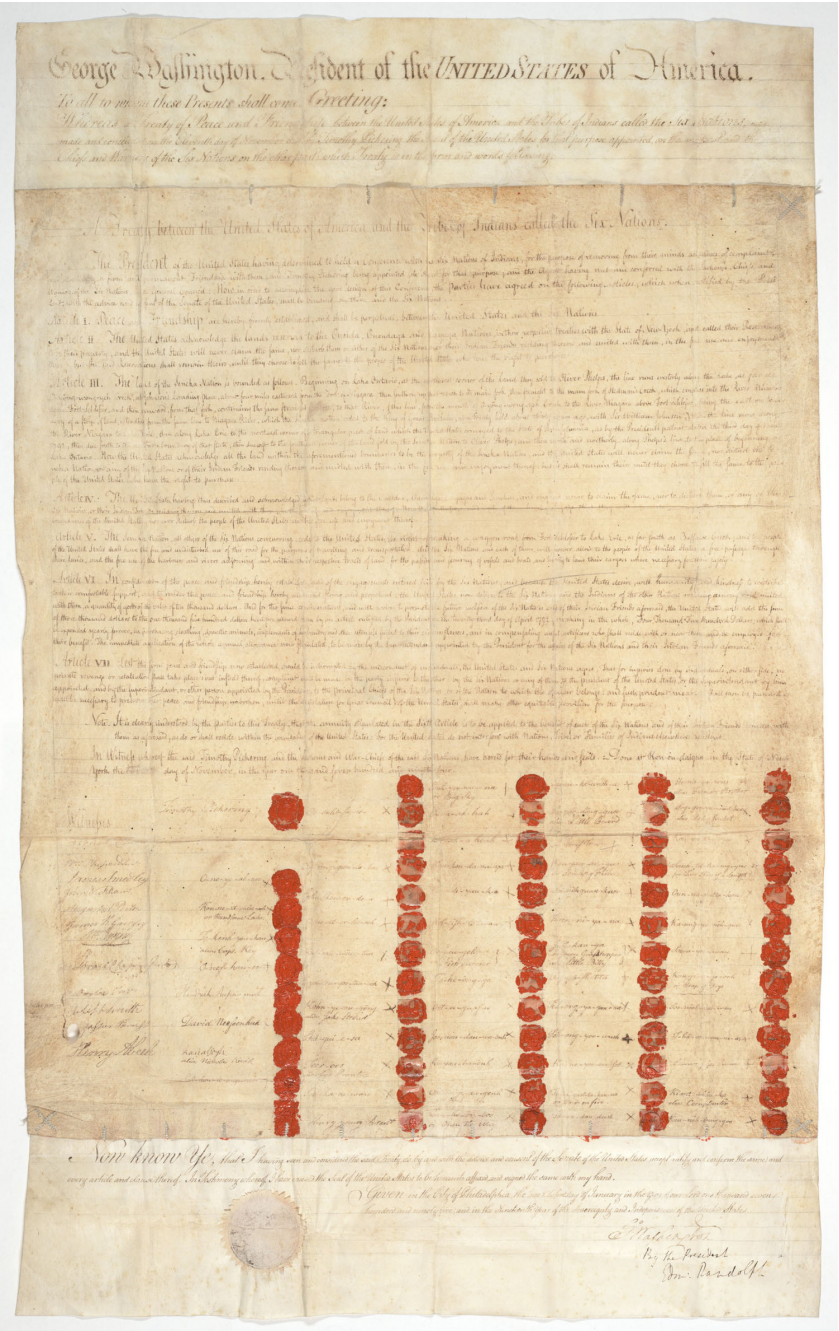

Figure 4: "Treaty of Canandaigua," National Archives and Records Administration, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/12013254

six months. In an effort to trace specifically Haudenosaunee literary and hermeneutic practices, Granville Ganter notes the singular importance that certain phrases hold in the general understanding of their diplomacy, such as the rhetorical statement "*this is the way of our forefathers*." Granter observes how meaningful it is that the records of these debates "are filled with sentences reiterating these sorts of phrases: 'now you hear,' 'now you see,' 'now we are renewing the chain,'" which conveys how the Haudenosaunee "wanted to make sure that their unique rituals were understood by the outsiders with whom they were counseling. […] Unlike their Anglo counterparts, the Haudenosaunee saw treaty agreements as requiring constant renewal and upkeep."[45] Treaty renewal pertains to temporal conceptions of cyclicality which I consider below, yet at this point I note how such phenomenological divergences with regards to the experience of time affect the politics of the encounter.

The outcome of the negotiations accommodates none of the singular diplomatic practices that characterize Haudenosaunee politics and forms of community. Erased by the Western language of statecraft, the Treaty of Canandaigua evades the cultural specificity of one of its parts, while securing the formal ratification of US colonial practices; it does so by homogenizing everything but the x-marks that each individual tribe member inscribed in the document. In the aesthetic and formal constitution of the Treaty itself, the fifty x-marks confer a fitting image for the conditions of political constraint imposed over Haudenosaunee community forms. The Treaty documents a moment in the colonial transition from encounter to incorporation through the more capacious nation form.

The x-marks on the document provide a different instance of the politics of translation in the scene of colonial encounters. Unlike Ortiz's gesture of nontranslation as demarcating the

[45] Granville Ganter, "'Make Your Minds Perfectly Easy': Sagoyewatha and the Great Law of the Haudenosaunee," in *Early American Literature*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2009), 127–8.

realm of Acoma Pueblo aesthetics, the Treaty of Canandaigua bears the mark of a refused translation: in spite of the Haudenosaunee willingness to translate their diplomatic practices, emerging from their intertribal history of reciprocal exchanges and translations, the x-marks register the unidirectionality of the colonial encounter and reassert the extractive and exploitative intentions behind the treaty. The reduction of the colonial complexity and singularity of the Haudenosaunee to a series of x-marks amounts to the erasure of that culture's reciprocal bind with the landscape in favor of the extractive logic the settler-state instituted.

Despite the contaminating and coercive function that they signal, Lyons's interest lies in the promise that x-marks hold. "It is a decision one makes when something has already been decided for you," he argues, "but it is still a decision. […] I use the x-mark to symbolize Native assent to things (concepts, policies, technologies, ideas) that, while not necessarily traditional in origin, can sometimes turn out all right and occasionally even good."[46] Lyons's position emphasizes assent to treaties as agency despite the constrained conditions colonialism entails; I interpret him as accepting the narrow political possibilities that the colonizers dictate in the hopes of improvement—regardless of the experience of colonialism that the treaty-signers had in their time and the experience we have in ours. The position Lyons espouses, in other words, relies on the settler-state's recognition.

Perhaps the clearest articulation of Lyons's position comes in a response to Taiaiake Alfred's claim that "Native communities must reject the claimed authority of the state, assert their right to self-govern their own territories and people, and act on that right as much as their capacity to do so allows," to which Lyons replies:

> Therein lies a conundrum. How can nations make specific claims to anything at all without using the universal language, terminology, and conceptual apparatus of nations in general? The idea of the nation is universal and modern; there are not radically different

[46] Lyons, *X-Marks*, 3.

> kinds of nations in the world, only nations that do things differently or have different degrees of sovereignty. And speaking of sovereignty, that too is a modern and universal political concept indissolubly associated with the idea of the nation. To reject this conceptual language out of hand risks getting out of the national game altogether and ending up with something that might be "ethnic," or "racial," or even a "community," but it won't be a "nation" unless it is willing to speak the language of nations. That language is by definition a modern, universal lingua franca.[47]

Pairing universality and modernity, Lyons warns that disavowing an identification with a nation risks producing something too particular or specific—an irregularity in the global congress of nations. For Lyons, participation in the order of international law means relinquishing any claims to an ontological difference that could distance a collectivity from the form of the nation; yet he still allows deviations within the form itself as "nations that do things differently."[48]

Lyons presupposes an idea of international law that conceives of nations as equals; it likewise interprets treaties between European and Native American communities as anomalous because unbalanced—or as precisely in need of the balance that the treaties enforce. For example, echoing Lyons's assumptions, jurist Francis Paul Prucha begins his seminal and revealingly titled *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly* by describing how treaties between settlers and natives "exhibited irregular, incongruous, or even contradictory elements and did not follow the general rule of international treaties."[49] Against Prucha's view and Lyons's assumptions, we can also read the history of treaties as one not exhibiting anomalies but rather as creating them. Antony Anghie interprets the goal of equality among nations as

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[47] Lyons, *X-Marks*, 135–6.

[48] I use "ontological" here without any metaphysical connotations, but to distinguish different forms of being. With regards to the concession of difference Lyons makes about nations, I think the following worth considering: he claims nations are not radically distinct from each other, they just vary in terms of what they do and how far they stray from exercising sovereignty. One would assume that, implicitly, the same range of qualities that make all nations not that different from each other also makes for a limited range of possible things that all nations do—which again limits the claims they may have on and the exercise of sovereignty. Which is to say that Lyons also has an idea of nation form in mind as a necessary constraint.

[49] Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 2.

continually undermined by the asymmetrical interactions of colonialism. To describe this colonial obstruction, he coins the term "dynamic of difference" which denotes "the endless process of creating a gap between two cultures, demarcating one as 'universal' and civilized and the other as 'particular' and uncivilized, and seeking to bridge the gap by developing techniques to normalize the aberrant society."[50] The crucial aspect that Anghie observes in this dynamic of difference is that it does not constitute a byproduct of international law, but its actual basis: "The dynamic precedes, indeed generates, the concepts and dichotomies—for example, between private and public, between sovereign and non-sovereign—which are traditionally seen as the foundations of the international legal order."[51] For Anghie, the history of colonial encounters that are considered anomalies within the framework of international law actually enforce the tenets upon which international law is articulated.

One of Anghie's case studies is the writing of Francisco de Vitoria, a sixteenth-century Spanish jurist who established the first legal status of indigenous peoples within international law. In Anghie's reading, Vitoria portrays Natives through two overlapping conceptions: they are both equal in that they possess the qualities attributed to all people, and hence should receive the same protections, and they are different because their practices differ from Spanish ones. The outcome of such an understanding of indigenous people justifies colonial rule: "The discrepancy between the ontologically 'universal' Indian and the socially, historically, 'particular' Indian must be remedied by the imposition of sanctions which effect the necessary transformation. Indian will regarding the desirability of such a transformation is irrelevant."[52] Incorporating a formal analysis, we can reformulate these overlapping conceptions by noting how the

[50] Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4.
[51] Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*, 9.
[52] Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*, 9.

homogenizing work the colonizers project always differs from the reality they encounter. The Platonic character of the nation as a colonizing endeavor resurfaces in its homogenizing nature—indeed its sought uniform universality, finds only particular instances, particular people and tribes, who never fulfill the paragon of the nation. In this regard, the dynamic of difference serves to focalize the process of incorporation in an analogous way to formal subsumption: by marking the impossibility of sameness, the anomalous nations procure the difference necessary for the unevenness of international law as subtending capitalism's global flows.

Anghie's analysis provides a fitting framework for Lyons's understanding of treaties as coercive and contaminating; not only is Native American assent to the treaties interpreted as irrelevant, but the Native American collective identification as a nation is nullified because they continually fail to wholly embody the universal nation that the colonizer's expect them to become. As Adom Getachew observes, "International society was thus governed by a 'logic of exclusion-inclusion,' in which non-European nations were excluded from the full rights of membership but remained subject to the obligations of inclusion. Partial recognition of this kind granted legal personality to non-European peoples, but it was a recognition that afforded native subjects the right only to dispossess of themselves."[53] Even more crucial for Lyons's argument, Anghie describes the dynamic of difference as never closing its dichotomies, but rather perpetually widening their distance and their qualities: "the very mechanisms by which the civilizing mission is furthered prevent its fulfilment, and that, further, the process of incorporation that is conventionally understood to be empowering and liberating for the Third World is, in significant ways, debilitating and excluding."[54] In other words, and again returning to a formal analysis that locates the dynamic of difference at the core of the nationalizing

[53] Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 20.
[54] Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*, 6.

projects of colonialism, the content of the nation is always different from the nation form—an insight partly gleaned through Ortiz's deictic nation without a specific referent.

In this regard, to profess and practice an uncompromising attachment to the nation as a universal describes a perpetual labor expenditure, one that seeks to shape the content of the nation into fulfilling its universal form—no matter the impossibility of the endeavor. Lyons's optimism toward treaties, in this light, evinces the conceptual labor that the nation form demands as he assumes the nation's framework to be the only viable mode of agency.

There is a specific temporality implicit in Lyons's attachment to what he terms the national game and which I understand as an attachment to the nation form. In his own words, he is "interested in the promise of the x-mark insofar as it still stands, or more precisely as the promise moves through *time*, *space*, and *discourse*."[55] The promise the nation holds is its authority as proxy to universality and modernity; it guarantees a place from where access to political dialogue is a right. On one account, as paired with universality, modernity describes the empty time of the nation. But on another, as a promise, modernity entails a temporal constraint. Fredric Jameson has observed how modernity belies "a temporal structure, distantly related to emotions like joy or eager anticipation: it seems to concentrate a promise within a present of time and to offer a way of possessing the future more immediately within that present itself." Jameson recognizes the similarities between modernity's promise and Utopia, yet considers the former's promise a distortion of the latter's, as it "constitutes something of a spurious promise intended in the long run to displace and replace the Utopian one." For Jameson, what is important is that the promise of modernity always generates "a kind of electrical charge" as its effect is "always to awaken a feeling of intensity and energy that is greatly in excess of the attention we generally

[55] Lyons, *X-Marks*, 9.

bring to interesting events or monuments in the past."[56] Similarly, Lyons's perspective espouses an agential possibility that requires a complete disregard for the historical conditions of such a possibility; that is, how he holds on to this prospect of universality despite history, i.e., all x-marks and deprivations of agency.

The emotional attachment to the nation form in this situation conveys a certain vicious recursivity along the lines of what Lauren Berlant has described as cruel optimism. "What's cruel about these attachments, and not merely inconvenient or tragic, is that the subjects who have *x* in their lives might not well endure the loss of their object or scene of desire, even though its presence threatens their well-being, because whatever the *content* of the attachment is, the continuity of the form of it provides something of the continuity of the subject's sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world."[57] In the guise of its universality, the nation form produces its conditions of existence as imperative for the very existence of the interpellated subjects—for the continuity of the content that the form attempts to envelop. Attachment to the promises of the nation form entails a continual exertion of labor aimed at adapting the specific content of the nation to its universal form; but, as Anghie's dynamics of difference describe, this is a sisyphean enterprise that concentrates the energy of labor in projecting and reaching for a future that turns all attention away from history, from acknowledgement of the continual failure that is constitutive of the colonialism and the nation form.

The prominence of universality for Lyons's attachment to the nation form, along with the corresponding rejection of the particular as "ethnic" or "racial," describes a rarefied relation to the world. I will return to such a form of attachment below by noting the imperative function that

[56] Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity* (London: Verso, 2002), 34–5.
[57] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 24.

abstractions from perception play within these worldviews—particularly as they provide a point of contrast to the decolonization that Ortiz envisions through his poetry. But before doing so I turn to Ortiz's poetics to elaborate on the forms of attachment that his poetry aims to induce, forms of attachment which summon different Native American conceptualizations about time, space, and nonhumans.

Communities of Contiguity

In Ortiz's *from Sand Creek* there is but one allusion to the treaties that Native Americans were coerced into signing: "Conquest reached Nevada: a warrior chief was assassinated by the cavalry, cut into stewing pieces, fed to other chiefs, and a Treaty was signed. That'll show'em. Ask the Paiutes."[58] I refer to Ortiz's brief portrayal of a treaty because it provides a contrasting perspective to Lyons's. Devoid of any optimism, Ortiz sarcastically depicts acquiescence to treaties not as a promise, but as a consequence of the experience of conquest. Violence and cruelty are not conceived as alternatives to treaties, but as coextensive to them through the fundamental role of coercion. The chain of events that Ortiz lists to gloss the conquest's arrival to Nevada refers to this sense of coextension: each element listed is intrinsic to the conquest as a whole process that finds in treaties its culmination. Perhaps one of the more striking manifestations of cruelty in Ortiz's account is the reported speech by the colonizers that he renders in the last two sentences quoted. These sentences display a normativity to the exercise of violence in the ways it organizes the past (through the Paiutes' experience) and the future (through the act that *will* show them) of conquest as intrinsic to the nation. More relevant to Lyons's position, in Ortiz's perspective, to project agency and optimism onto the treaty-signers

[58] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 28.

is itself a cruel assumption that normalizes violence. Turning away from treaties as establishing communities and nations, Ortiz turns to the landscape that surrounds him to articulate the possibilities of self-determination he proposes.

Further developing the general conflict of perspectives that he sketches with his preface, *from Sand Creek* begins with a poetic premise of sorts: "This America | has been a burden | of steel and mad | death, | but, look now, | there are flowers | and new grass | and a spring wind | rising | from Sand Creek."[59] At its most basic, the deixis and syntax of this opening statement parse the landscape into two in a similar way to how he had previously distinguished the US from America in "Towards a National Indian Literature." What was identified as the US then, here remains understood on negative terms (as a "burden of steel and mad death") yet defined as *this* America. That is, a deictic America readily available to the reader here and now that lies in prepositional disjunction with something else marked by novelty and organic growth that is equally available to perception: an *other* America which Ortiz will shape throughout his collection as a reference to what I term a *continental America* that predates the nation and, his poetics suggest, will outlive it. In so doing, the emerging space of Sand Creek becomes entangled with a futurity that is announced in the last lines of the collection in the guise of a dream which "will rise | in this heart | which is our America."[60] The transformation from a deictic America to a collectively shared America is central to the movements that unfold through Ortiz's collection.

Ortiz began writing *from Sand Creek* while receiving treatment at the Fort Lyons Veterans' Administration Hospital, an episode he acknowledges in his poetry: "Passing through, one gets caught into things; this time it was the Veterans Administration Hospital, Ft. Lyons,

[59] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 9.
[60] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 95.

Colorado, 1974-75." This location offered Ortiz a setting to address the events that took place in 1864 because it was from Fort Lyons that Colonel Chivington led the Colorado U.S. Volunteer Cavalry that carried out the Sand Creek massacre. Years later, Ortiz would revisit the moment that incited his writing, recounting amhow the hospital's personnel took the patients, himself included, on a visit to Sand Creek: "It's just open grasslands, open prairie by a ranch, a small marked place. Then it occurred to me."[61] I refer to this episode because it illustrates the kinds of attention that Ortiz relies on to engage with Sand Creek, how this "getting caught into things" relates to the open grasslands where "it" occurred to him—"it" being shorthand for "the connection between the past Sand Creek Massacre, the then-current Vietnam War, and all of us at the Veteran's Hospital."[62] In other words, there are certain objects in Ortiz's poetics, new grass in this case, that can potentially disrupt the ordinary sense of time; these objects possess a documental quality in that they are capable of indexing different forms of experience. Most notably, these forms of experience or perception manifest in a reversal of the prevalence of the present over the past.

For example, in the conflicted directionalities traced between Fort Lyons and Sand Creek, where Chivington and the Volunteer Cavalry rode from Fort Lyons to Sand Creek, Ortiz could be said to follow the same trajectory, going to and writing about Sand Creek from Fort Lyons. Yet it is the opposite direction that organizes the book—experience comes *from Sand Creek*, as if the perception of this spring wind, grass, and flowers overrode the normative state of affairs. Reversing the historical direction of colonial violence and of the amnesia constitutive of the

[61] Susan Berry Brill de Ramírez, "The Burden of Images and the Importance of Land, Culture, and Community; An Interview with Simon J. Ortiz" in *Simon J. Ortiz, A Poetic Legacy of Indigenous Continuance*, ed. Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez and Evelina Zuni Lucero (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 122.
[62] Brill de Ramírez, "The Burden of Images and the Importance of Land, Culture, and Community; An Interview with Simon J. Ortiz," 122.

nation, these objects that compose the landscape instigate remembrance. They grant a position from which the colonial effects of imperialism are connected in an ongoing historical present to the *here* of Sand Creek and the *now* of the Vietnam War.

"Grief | memorizes this grass," Ortiz continues in a rather impersonal tone that is not so much concerned with who experiences grief but rather with what grief does, in how the memory it incites materializes in the grass and confers access to an occluded perspective: "Like stone, | like steel, | the hone and sheer gone, | just the brute | and perceptive angle left."[63] The material permanence of grass or stone indexes other temporalities as it reveals the kinds of relations upon which this perception of time rests. Acoma Pueblo experience plays a central role in such a memorialization through the landscape. Garcia and Anschuetz describe an episode in Acoma Pueblo history of becoming, where a covenant is agreed between the First Acoma People and the spiritual beings that spoke of Haak'u as the promised home at the end of their migration. "This covenant helps us understand Acoma's sense of *spiritual ecology*," they explain, which is "the traditional relationship and participation of indigenous people with place that includes not only the land itself, but also the way people perceive the reality of their worlds and themselves"[64] In this regard, the temporal perception that Ortiz describes could be considered as reliant on the landscape, as well as on reciprocity with kinship relations with nonhumans—in particular with grass, stones, and place.

These lines illustrate the function of similes in Ortiz's poetics as they approximate reciprocity with nonhumans: the language that comprises *from Sand Creek* circumvents the evocative capacity of these objects through analogies, refusing to objectify their function or isolate them. Similes exhibit how Ortiz's language strives for a material quality capable of

[63] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 11.
[64] Garcia and Anschuetz, "Movement as an Acoma Way of Life," 42–3.

mediating the different temporalities these documents make available, a language capacious enough to be "like stone" or "steel" yet without reproducing the fetishization of the object that would incorporate it into a colonial relation and force it to circulate through capitalism's networks.[65]

The objects that trigger Ortiz's experience of the event, of the Sand Creek massacre, exhibit a subjective of the object similar to the one proposed by Tomba. A quality that is intertwined with settler violence and the perspective of the oppressed: "Like courage, | believe it, | left still; | the words from then | talk like that. | | Believe it."[66] Alluding to the ways in which many Native American community have subsisted through a tradition of orality, this passage's perception of endurance describes how language lends its expressive faculties to channel the resonances of the event—how words talk through time. The expression of persisting courage, left still, resists the violence that defines the scene.

Ortiz's exhortation to believe recurs throughout the collection as a leitmotif that aims to bind author and readers with the temporality from which these words talk; Ortiz invites the reader to believe, to also get caught into things in order to attend to different criteria of factuality and participate in the kinds of perception that nonhuman kinship permits. These enable the specific mode of attention through which *from Sand Creek* is oriented towards the past. The flowers, new grass, and rising wind he perceives in Sand Creek weave not only a community

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[65] In *Marx's Temporalities*, Massimiliano Tomba describes a similar temporal disposition where attention to the past aims to "release the revolutionary possibilities for the present" not by seeking an objective approach, but rather to highlight "the subjective of the object, the constitutional force of a class-practice within a historical phenomenon." Following Coulthard's call for conversations between Marxist critiques and Native American self-determination strategies, I transpose Tomba's subjective of the object from class to colonial struggles in order to acknowledge how this resulting "history is partisan and takes the side of one of the subjects of the struggle [showing] how things went for the oppressed, and how they tried over and over to redeem themselves."[65] In other words, this is an account running against the amnesia of the nation which in Ortiz's case recognizes colonialism's occlusions in the landscape

[66] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 11.

shared with the flora and fauna, but also distinct rhythms and temporal orders preceding settler arrival.

In a later passage of the book, Ortiz contrasts this community with the land against the nationalist endeavor that colonialism entailed: "It was a national quest, dictated by economic motives. Europe was hungry for raw material, and America was abundant forest, rivers, land."[67] Counter to the US and its European provenance, where quest reminds of *con*quest as described in the context of treaties, this *other* continental America that was introduced at the beginning of the book is an America of natural abundance that persists through a different land relation. "In this hemisphere," Ortiz continues, "corn is ancient and young; it is the seed, food, and symbol of a constantly developing and revolutionary people."[68] As temporally marked as this continental America is by novelty and organic growth, here corn, conceived as ancient and young, embodies a cyclical organization of time antithetical to the nation's linearity. The organic rhythm of agriculture pertains to the seasonal round that organizes kinship relations between humans and nonhumans; it describes the necessary resilience to adapt to the year's cyclical changes. In a parallel account, Whyte notes how such resilience among the Anishinaabe meant that identity was always shifting at an individual and governance level: "Seasonal round governance expanded and contracted throughout the year so that social, cultural, economic, and political institutions were organized to approximate, as best possible, the seasonal dynamics of ecosystems."[69] It is with regards to such social resilience that the seasonal round offers Ortiz a different relationship to revisit the past, but also to locate in it revolutionary potentials for the present.

[67] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 16.
[68] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 32.
[69] Whyte, "Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice," 130.

In this context, agriculture continues to nuance Byrd's "entirely different map and understanding of territory and space" by adding a temporal dimension that further qualifies these phenomenologies. Similar to the relation with the landscape that the Haitsee produced, for Ortiz this agricultural perception encompasses literary practices. "Autumn is beautiful in Colorado, like a golden dusk, rich with smell, the earth settling into a harvest, and one could feel like a deep story."[70] As the earth settles into a harvest—as a communing or exchange between people and the land—the impersonal experience of this scene is described in terms of feeling *like* a story, where aesthetic depth qualifies perception as the experience of duration. As mentioned before, Ortiz's reliance on simile mediates between nonhumans and their temporalities, yet, in passages like this one, similes also contribute to the collection's metonymic investment, as in how similes elicit a mode of attention that perceives things in relation to the presence of a greater community. Ortiz's use of similes, in other words, serves to reassess what constitutes a communal link by assessing belonging not in terms of similarity, as a metaphoric understanding would, but in terms of continuity as a metonymic articulation. In fact, beyond their manifestation in these similes, metonymies are a central aspect of Ortiz's poetics, particularly as they illustrate the possibility of getting "caught into things," of being and becoming with them, as the Acoma Pueblo spiritual ecology would conceive.

This understanding of metaphor and metonymy follows Roman Jakobson's account, wherein each trope exhibits different discursive tendencies: whereas metaphor describes connections grounded on similarities, metonymy relies on contiguity. This distinction is relevant in Ortiz's case because, as Jakobson also noted, the study of literature in the West has historically privileged metaphor, which means that in the endeavor of "constructing a

[70] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 18.

metalanguage to interpret tropes, the researcher possesses more homogeneous means to handle metaphor, whereas metonymy, based on a different principle, easily defies interpretation."[71] Metaphor and the historical study of tropes rely on homogeneity in the sense of prioritizing similarity as the most common discursive tendency and as object of study. In terms of form, this situation echoes Lyons's approach to the nation ("there are not radically different kinds of nations in the world, only nations that do things differently") as attempting to find difference within an already established field of homogeneity. In contrast to such an aesthetics of uniformity, Ortiz's poetics rely on a metonymic perception that sees contiguity as the prime discursive link in the landscape he perceives.

The ways in which Ortiz's perception of the landscape diverges from a Western reliance on similarity reinstate the praxis of a different aesthetics; the latter points to how this aesthetic orientation is enmeshed in an anational community reflective of a sui generis sensus communis. In the paradoxical proposition of a sui generis sensus communis—the latter defined by Kant as "a subjective principle, which determines what pleases or displeases only through feeling and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity"—I aim to describe a community whose binding nexus is not predicated upon universal validity, but upon a common perception: a shared aesthetics producing a singular form of community which recalls the possibility of a sui generis sovereignty that Vizenor suggested with the idea of transmotion.[72]

The notion of a community of sensing that entails its own category foregrounds the prioritization of metonymic contiguity over the predominance of similarity in social formations; it permits the focalization of difference as binding for the community in the sense that Ortiz's

[71] Roman Jakobson, *Fundamentals of Language*, (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1956) 81–2.
[72] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, edited by Paul Guyer, translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 122.

relations with the nonhuman describe. As in the case of the Acoma Pueblo interrelatedness with their landscape, this community is founded on transmotional resilience both with regards to the links that bind to other members and with regards to the individual's own shifting identity.[73] In the importance it assigns to contiguity, the community that Ortiz enunciates extends indefinitely, with the continent, through space and time, as a form of perception unlike the community that only recognizes the similarities of akin species, akin cultures, or akin races.

In *from Sand Creek*, these forms of spatiotemporal relation describe an aesthetics that enjoins the experience of the land with the cyclical permanence of a continental America, as in the possibility of feeling "like a deep story." Amounting to an exercise of temporal sovereignty, Ortiz's poetry participates in the oral tradition of storying; in the process it enacts a form of perception that envelops the phenomena of settler colonialism in a recurring precedent materialized in the cycles of agriculture as demarcating a community unified by temporal continuity and spatial contiguity.

Towards the end of *from Sand Creek*, Ortiz expands on his relation to the land: "I have always loved America; it is something precious in the memory in blood and cells which insists on story, poetry, song, life, life."[74] The repetition of life consolidates an opposition to the death that characterizes the historical event of Sand Creek. It gives a form to the experience of anational provenance that emerges from Sand Creek's landscape, from its new grass and rising wind. In its continual insistence, Ortiz's continental America is experienced as a recurring precedent, an anational moment predating the nation and settler arrival that also recurs cyclically,

[73] Furthermore, prioritizing the formal aspects of a sensus communis makes it resemble Jacques Rancière's definition of the distribution; especially as the distribution of the sensible posits how "aesthetics can be understood in a Kantian sense—re-examined perhaps by Foucault—as the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience." Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics,* 13.
[74] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 92.

as a seasonal round in anticipation of the end of the nation. This continental America is available through modes of attention and forms of kinship occluded by the nation itself yet accessible through Ortiz's Acoma Puebloan aesthetics and literature.

The amnesia of the nation form imposes a different drive towards similarity, which Ortiz likewise traces as part of the historical violence of Sand Creek. Most notably, Ortiz reflects on the aesthetic disposition that such amnesia requires among the colonizers, which, as I argue in the following section, extends the incapacity to perceive the past to the incapacity to perceive space—yielding a national distribution of the sensible attuned to homogeneity alone.

National Sublime

In *American Tropics*, Allan Punzalana Isaac observes how the imperial expansion of the US, driven by the idea of Manifest Destiny, relies on the interplay of a metonymic and a metaphoric understanding of the nation: different from "the United States as a nation-state, the juridico-political entity that delimits borders" as a figure of contiguity, America, describes "the sacred-secular project, the metaphor that imbues the metonym with its mobile moral force." Having distinguished these two figurations, Isaac proposes the concept of the American Tropics to describe the disjuncture between "the U.S. nation-state as metonymic apparatus, and America as metaphoric contract," a disjuncture wherein lies a "contested terrain, a space of articulation and imagination."[75] In this light, Ortiz's articulation of what I term a continental America different from the US complements historically and conceptually Isaac's American Tropics. Ortiz's poetic revision of the past is tied to the westward migration of European settlers across the continent and to the idea of Manifest Destiny. Historically, then, *from Sand Creek* provides a preface to

[75] Allan Punzalana Isaac, *American Tropics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 17.

Isaac's analysis of US imperialism as it spread over the Pacific after the settler's occupation of the mainland was completed. This historical link, moreover, bears conceptual implications upon the idea of the American Tropics in that Ortiz's construction of a primordial Native American community of contiguity entails relocating the discursive disjunctures that Isaac identifies: Ortiz does not contest the terrain that lies in between America's metonymic apparatus and its metaphor-driven expansion beyond the US territory, but rather contests the landscape upon which the metonymic claim to the nation rests. Put differently, Ortiz finds the nation's discursive disjunction in the very claim that it makes for possession of the land: the poetics of *from Sand Creek* dwell on the impossible contiguity of the US over the vastness of the continental landscape.

In this section I argue that, at one level, Ortiz's intervention corrects the cartographical clarification made by Byrd about the inappropriateness of the US map in that the lands which Native Americans inhabited do not constitute the national territory of the US, but its impossibility; at another level, however, Ortiz reveals a deeper engagement with the poetics of cartography in particular as he resists the forms of abstraction they project when deployed towards colonial aims.

Inasmuch as it is portrayed as a "national quest, dictated by economic motives," the colonizers' perception, on Ortiz's account, was predicated on the avoidance of contiguity in the landscape, on compartmentalizing space and time and furnishing the adequate conditions for the production of private property. His portrayal of colonial expansion reflects on the psychological character of the settlers with regards to their relationship to space:

> Many of them
> built their sod houses
> without windows.
> Without madness.

[…]
Consulting axioms and the dream called America.
[…]
The axiom
would be the glory of America
at last,
no wastelands,
no forgiveness.

The child would be sublime.[76]

In these lines, the perceptual incapacity to recognize contiguity becomes part of the infrastructure, physical and conceptual, of the US territory. Recalling the poetic premise that inaugurates the book, Ortiz notes how sod, the very medium for the "flowers | and new grass" that memorize Sand Creek, is repurposed to isolate the settlers behind windowless walls that obstruct the view of the land that surrounds them. However, conveying the irony inherent to their perspective, the isolation that the settlers sought from the madness beyond their walls winds up contributing to the production of "This America" as "a burden | of steel and mad | death": the incapacity to perceive a communal connection with the landscape turns recursive and compulsive in that every raised wall increases the madness it sought to contain.

Ortiz understands this colonizer incapacity to perceive a connection with the landscape as correlated with the incapacity to remember history and track time's continuity. The compartmentalization of time, then, contributes to the amnesia of the nation through the repression of its past, which Ortiz reasserts in his poetry: "Repression works like shadow, clouding memory and sometimes even to blind, and when it's on a national scale, it is just not good."[77] Yet, going beyond this connection, in passages like the previous one which address the constitution of the nation as axiomatic, sublime, and amnestic, *from Sand Creek* articulates a

[76] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 17.
[77] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 14.

more thorough critique of the nation form. This critique builds upon the preface's description of the contrasting perspectives of the land as aesthetically incompatible. Through an indigenous phenomenology, the nation form describes a repressive distribution of the sensible, a segmentalizing drive that responds to the commodification of the material riches that the colonizers sought, to a capitalist drive.

The axiom, for example, that Ortiz identifies as the guiding principle for America already bears specific colonial dynamics, particularly as an exonym: in its etymological trajectory through Middle French, Latin, and Greek, "axiom" describes the perception of value, of "that which is thought worthy or fit, that which commends itself as self-evident."[78] As that which "would be the glory of America," the axiom entails a set of perceptual configurations which relate to aesthetics in very precise ways; Ortiz makes the case that there is a causal or teleological connection between this axiom and America's future sublimity, between the self-evidence of value in the eyes of the colonizers and the contemporary nation form as an instance of the aesthetic category of the sublime.

At this point it is important to note that the European provenance of the settlers is less geographically or spatially relevant for Ortiz than their cultural and spiritual conditioning: "They were simple enough. | Swedes, Germans, | Mennonites, Dutch, | Irish, escaping | Europe. Running. | | They shouldn't have stopped | and listened to Puritans."[79] In stressing the Puritan mindset of the colonizers, Ortiz's portrayal is reminiscent of Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* in its conception of a bind between religious and economic drives which, furthermore, impinge upon their perceptual capacities. According to Weber, "the

[78] "axiom, n." *OED Online*. March 2020. Oxford University Press. https://www-oed-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/Entry/14045?redirectedFrom=axiom (accessed May 27, 2020).
[79] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 51.

absolutely negative attitude of Puritanism toward all sensual and *emotional* elements in culture and subjective religiosity […] formed the basis for a fundamental rejection of every kind of culture of the senses."[80] This rejection of every kind of culture of the senses is important for a reading of Ortiz's poetry because it evokes the compartmentalization of space and time he describes as a specifically European and Puritan practice. More to the point, a historically European conception of time connects the axiom of a sublime America with the self-evidence of value; that is, a conceptualization of value can connect the infinite formlessness of the sublime with the perceptual compartmentalization that obstructs any perceptual contiguity of the landscape.

In *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, Moishe Postone speaks about how European ideas of time transitioned from concrete time, as "referred to, and understood through, natural cycles and the periodicities of human life as well as particular tasks or processes," to abstract time, the "uniform, continuous, homogeneous, 'empty' time [that] is independent of events [and] became increasingly dominant in Western Europe between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries."[81] Noting the importance of clocks for the rise of empty time in Europe (he quotes Lewis Mumford's observation that "The clock dissociated time from human events"), Postone reflects on the social implications of a notion of time that could be "divisible into constant units": "the emergence of such a new form of time was related to the development of the commodity form of social relations."[82] Compartmentalizing time then, Postone tells us, is the first step in the process of its abstraction as an entity removed from sense perception, much in the same way that the physical labor required to produce commodities is abstracted into their objective value.

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[80] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2002), 74.
[81] Moishe Postone, *Time, labor, and social domination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 201-2
[82] Postone, 211.

On a parallel account, Benjamin Franklin's dictum "*time is money*," one of the points of departure for Weber's analysis, outlines the same process from a different perspective: the way in which the experience of time retreats from the senses in its process of abstraction into money as the paradigmatic commodity form.[83] Following this line of thought, a move towards the aesthetic conception of value as an abstraction can be found in Marx's writings; in the first volume of *Capital* he describes the reality or objectivity of the value contained in the commodity as "sublime."[84]

With this brief overview of capitalist value in relation to time I intend to illustrate how Ortiz aligns the settlers' axiom—the self-evidence of compartmentalized worth—with the abstractions at the core of capitalism, namely the production of surplus value. Ortiz privileges the aesthetic conceptualization of this enterprise—which is in part already captured in the axiomatics of the sublime as capital's self-evident and infinitely recursive abstractions, or what Marx described as the animating monstrosity of "value which can perform its own valorization."[85] For Ortiz, the sublime stands as the category which brings the colonizers closest to perceiving the founding violence of the nation in brief yet vivid glimpses that are nonetheless repressed after the fact into a retreat from sense experience—almost in agreement with Kant's claim that "nothing that can be an object of the senses is, considered on this footing, to be called sublime."[86] In this regard, this historical account depicts a retreat of the senses from the settlers' perspective as operating in the name of "The child [that] would be sublime," that is, in the name

[83] In Weber, 9.
[84] Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, (London: Penguin, 1990), 144. In the untranslated version, Marx refers to the commodity's "sublime Wertgegenständlichkeit," a compound of the noun for "value" ("Wert") and the noun for "objectivity" or "concreteness" ("gegenständlichkeit").
[85] Marx, *Capital*, 302.
[86] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 134.

of a national telos, of a futurity where a fully developed nation form occludes the founding violence of the nation as its reaps its benefits.

Although Ortiz grants that "Violence is even | beautiful," his aesthetic attention will turn to the capitalist ambitions that turn violence sublime.[87] That is, displacing the appreciation of form in the individual act of violence that could suggest how "Mastery | of pain | is crucial" in relation, perhaps, to "a feeling of the promotion of life" (in the sense that Kant understood the implications of beauty as an aesthetic category), Ortiz traces the sublime's unquantifiable formlessness as it deprives the settlers of sensorial perception. Since the sublime, in the Kantian sense, describes an intuition propelling a rational detachment from perception "in that the mind is incited to abandon sensibility and to occupy itself with ideas that contain a higher purposiveness," and, in its Burkean sense, is associated with horror, not the least of which caused by "All general privations […] Vacuity, Darkness, Solitude and Silence," Ortiz mobilizes it as the aesthetic category most befitting the settler repression of the violence they inflict.[88]

In *from Sand Creek* there is a general portrayal of the settlers as utterly blind to the gruesome violence they inflict on Native Americans. But there is one section, however, where blood breaks through the settlers' incapacity to repress perception. The fact that the substance which breaks through the sensorial isolation of the settlers reminds of the previous chapter's conceptualization of blood through Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's poetry as an anational immanence underlying any national surface. In this passage, blood acts as a trigger: it is not until after the deed that violence is perceived, when the resulting blood takes over the landscape, giving occasion to the moment that would be memorialized by the grass and perceived by Ortiz decades

[87] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 29.
[88] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 129. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 65.

later: “The blood poured unto the plains, steaming like breath on winter mornings; the breath rose into the clouds and became the rain and replenishment.”[89] As an instance of the blood/land/memory complex, in Ortiz’s depiction of the event, blood becomes one with the landscape, inducing the collective memory of the event. From the opposite perspective, from the colonizers’ incapacity to perceive their surroundings, blood provides a plane of visibility where both the landscape and their violence unite to convey the sublime repercussions of the massacre.

They [the settlers] were amazed
at so much blood.
Spurting,
sparkling,
splashing, bubbling, steady
hot arcing steams.
Red
and bright and vivid
unto the grassed plains.
Steaming.

So brightly and amazing.
They were awed.

It almost seemed magical
that they had so much blood.
It just kept pouring,
like rivers,
like endless floods from the sky,
thunder that had become liquid,
and the thunder surged forever
into their minds.

Indeed,
they must have felt
they should get on their knees
and drink the rare blood,
drink to replenish
their own vivid loss.

Their helpless hands

[89] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 66.

were like sieves.[90]

In its all-encompassing flow, blood materializes as the counterpart to the abstractions of the sublime. The list of gerunds that Ortiz uses to describe these "hot arcing steams" relies on the alliteration of bilabial and sibilant sounds that stress the stimulating quality of blood. Along with layers of tactile, visual, and aural qualities, blood renders the irrationality of the sublime perceivable in the aftermath of violence; seemingly "almost magical" but not quite, blood rather becomes part of the landscape as it evaporates, steaming, and pouring from the sky, feeding into rivers and, more exceptionally for the colonizers, thundering "forever into their minds." The blood that results from the massacre at Sand Creek becomes a temporal marker, periodically recurring in the water cycle that flows through rivers and rains from clouds. As such, it remains perceivable in the landscape through an aesthetics organized around remembrance and nonhuman reciprocity.

As a burst of lightning, from the colonizers' perspective, blood manifesting in "the thunder that surged forever" describes their repressed memory of the event. Such an interpretation can be supported by the first manifestation of perceptual retreat, of the colonizers' repression of the event, as it is evoked in their attempts to drink the blood. In the futility of trying to possess it, with their "helpless hands" like sieves, the settlers are incapable of grasping the blood as part of a blood/land/memory complex and as possessing worth in relation to a community of contiguity; the settlers are unable to perceive something with a value not fixed by abstract commodification.

Unlike such a commodified understanding of objects and the sublime figurations of value that it projects, Ortiz posits a different relationship to the landscape: "The swirl of America has a

[90] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 67.

special mystique that we have been sold, but look north, west, south, east, all around; it is ours to know."[91] Knowledge emerges from a different distribution of the sensible that does not rely on the abstraction of value but on *looking* around—and it is aesthetic in that it recognizes concrete forms, not abstracted ones. Once again, the shared attributes of the commodity form and the nation form come to the fore in that America's swirl has been sold as possessing abstract value, like a commodity's value entails the prioritization of its exchange value over the use value of its physical features. Indeed, it is in the very act of looking that Ortiz imagines the possibility of a different social order: "There is a revolution going on; it is very spiritual and its manifestation is economic, political, and social. Look to the horizon and listen."[92] In the interrelation of time and space that Ortiz's poetics construe, this spatial horizon can be translated to a temporal horizon: while spatially he makes the case that the nation's claim to the land as a territory is impossible, temporally, through such a horizon, he describes a multiplicity of directions beyond the nation's linearity of past, present, and future. At the temporal horizons all around lie anational realms delimiting the nation's situation., Ortiz uncovers revolutionary potentials for the present in the past. These temporal horizons signal the multiplicity of alternatives beyond the US and the nation form more generally.

It is in this sense that *from Sand Creek* participates in the American Tropics as the place "where 'America' meets its aporia, its impasse." Isaacs explains that "The American Tropics, as tropes are wont to do, turns America upon itself."[93] Ortiz's intervention occurs within the US as a rejection of territorial contiguity propelled by the reassertion of a metonymic America—a

[91] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 60.
[92] Ortiz, *from Sand Creek*, 54.
[93] Isaac, *American Tropics*, 19.

continental landscape opposed to the metaphoric America that is perceived through the abstracted sublime of the nation form.

Chapter V: Oceanic Ellipses in Perez's Poetry from Guam

> On some maps, Guam doesn't exist; I point to an empty space in the Pacific and say, "I'm from here." On some maps, Guam is a small, unnamed island; I say, "I'm from this unnamed place." On some maps, Guam is named "Guam, U.S.A." I say, "I'm from a territory of the United States." On some maps, Guam is named, simply, "Guam"; I say, "I am from Guam."[1]

The above epigraph opens Craig Santos Perez's Preface to the first volume of his ongoing series *from Unincorporated Territory*, currently composed of four volumes. Perez addresses Guam's status as annexed by the US and reflects on the implications of this situation for the survival of Chamorros, the indigenous population of the island, and for the island's ecology. Offering another instance of native spatiotemporalities, Perez's writing articulates a decolonial poetics of cartography similar to Simon J. Ortiz's disruption of the national territory. The conflicted provenances to which Perez's Preface refers reveal the colonial configurations that mark Guam's condition: the several cartographic representations imposed over the island are indicative of the abstractions and omissions that uphold the nation's spatiotemporality, where national belongingness mediates the erasure or appropriation of Guam. Like Ortiz, Perez exhibits the incongruity of the nation form and of US colonial configurations, yet he does so by articulating his poetics from the paradigmatic position of Chamorro culture, where spatial understandings are not structured through metonymic contiguity but around an Oceanic aesthetics.

By marshaling the historical specificity of Guam and Chamorro life under imperialism, Perez's poetry arrives at an account of the aporias that constitute the US and, more generally, the nation form—much in the way that Allan Punzalan Isaacs conceives how the American Tropics

[1] Craig Santos Perez, *[hacha] from Unincorporated Territories* (Richmond: Omnidawn, 2017), 7.

rhetorically disrupt the metonymic and metaphoric articulation of the US.[2] But here I turn away from how Perez's poetics undermines the tropological constitution of the US and instead address its schematics; that is, in the following I analyze Perez's use of that other category of figures of speech apart from tropes—namely, schemes, along with the spatiotemporal articulations that schemes enable within his decolonial project. Perez's poetics deploy schemes to chart the realms that the nation fails to recognize; schemes serve to organize the discursive logic of the anational in relation to space and time.

Unlike the change in meaning that tropes signal, discursive schemes refer to the order and configuration of words within a sentence, as in the case of apposition, ellipsis, or alliteration. The etymology of the word locates its origin as a Greek synonym for "form" or "shape," albeit with an emphasis on the outward appearance of a perceptible form. The evolution of the term through rhetorical analysis has tended to "reinforce this distinction between inward meaning and outward form" by associating schemes with an external projection in discourse.[3] Although a subtle shift, the emphasis of schemes over tropes entails focalizing syntax over semantics—an optical and sonic adjustment that helps to foreground spatial organization on the page as it relates to cartographical representations of the land and sea. This approach allows us to think of a national syntax aligned with what I will describe below as a world compartmentalized according to a United Nations order. In *from Unincorporated Territory* Perez rethinks this order by mapping the world through schema that organize spatial accountability and belongingness from the perspective of the labile jurisdiction of water boundaries.

[2] Allan Punzalana Isaac, *American Tropics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 17.
[3] *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, edited by Roland Greene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 1263–4.

Resonating with Ortiz's gesture in the title of *from Sand Creek*, and constellating a genealogy of indigenous poetics organized around decolonial aims, Perez's collection also signals spatiotemporal provenance through the *from* that introduces the title of his collection. For both poetic projects, *from* at once coordinates the sense of belongingness, of being *from* somewhere, as it instills dynamism by moving *from* somewhere. As a specifically decolonial gesture, *from* posits being and becoming in divergence from the nation form's dispositions. Such a coordination is present in how Perez introduces Guam's paradoxical legal status as an unincorporated territory—in the title of his collection as well as in almost every poem's title in the series. "'I' am '*from* unincorporated territory,'" states Perez in the same Preface to the first volume of the series, *[hacha]*:

> *From* indicates a particular time or place as a starting point; *from* refers to a specific location as the first of two limits; *from* imagines a source, a cause, an agent, or an instrument; *from* marks separation, removal, or exclusion; *from* differentiates borders. […] These poems are "*from* unincorporated territory." They have been incorporated from their origins (those "far flung territories") to establish an "excerpted space" via the transient, processional, and migratory allowances of the page. Each poem carries the "from" and carries its weight and resultant incompleteness.[4]

From the outset, the dynamism of *from Unincorporated Territory* displays an aesthetic investment in positionality and the poetic production of space. Leaving aside paratextual information—like how the poetry is listed in a "Map of Contents"—the poems contained in the series are braided in such a way that they continually reappear throughout the books. Thus intercalated, *from Unincorporated Territory* is evocative of the composition of a textile, with recurring threads interwoven to produce a general sense of interrelation without necessarily concluding in a whole. The poems that comprise the series bypass closure by constantly reappearing elsewhere in the book or in the series. As Perez observes, this lends the preposition

[4] Perez, *[hacha]*, 11.

from a trajectory and a quality of incompleteness. The organization of poetry in the books speaks not of the linearity of the Cartesian plane, or the wholeness of the globe, but of the convoluted recurrence of the intertwined and multiple. In continual correspondence with the Chamorro culture from where his poetry departs, Perez articulates forms of sociality that move toward the multitude, constantly pulling away from the exertions of colonialism and the demarcations of a homogeneous and constrained nation form.

Throughout the series, Perez's poetics probes the discursive logic through which the US aims to sustain this incongruous corporation, or territorial embodiment, of the Pacific island that is Guam. Most notably conveyed in Guam's slogan "Where America's Day Begins," the occupation of Guam as an extension of the US asserts the conceptual limits of the contemporary nation state, especially as a bound and uniform spatiotemporal construct. Between the contradicting prefixes that establish a condition of un-in-corporation, a fissure in the national body allows Perez to pry into the colonial situation; beyond troubling the United Nations understanding of equal rule among nations, Perez's poetry also details the dynamics of global capital as it spreads over the world—particularly with regards to the singularity of the excerpted space's provenance. In this light, Perez registers unincorporation as formal subsumption, as an instance of capitalism attempting to assimilate something exterior to it yet not being capable of fully transforming it into its own logic. As such, formal subsumption denotes heterogeneous sites demarcating capitalism's outsides. In the cartographical register of schemes, formal subsumption indicates anomalous depths or protuberances in the otherwise flattened representation of space and time that capitalism projects. Against the deployment of the nation form over Guam, Perez's poetry rearticulates and repositions language to reflect the multiple temporalities that separate Guam from the US and the distinct spatiality through which Chamorros conceive their Oceanic

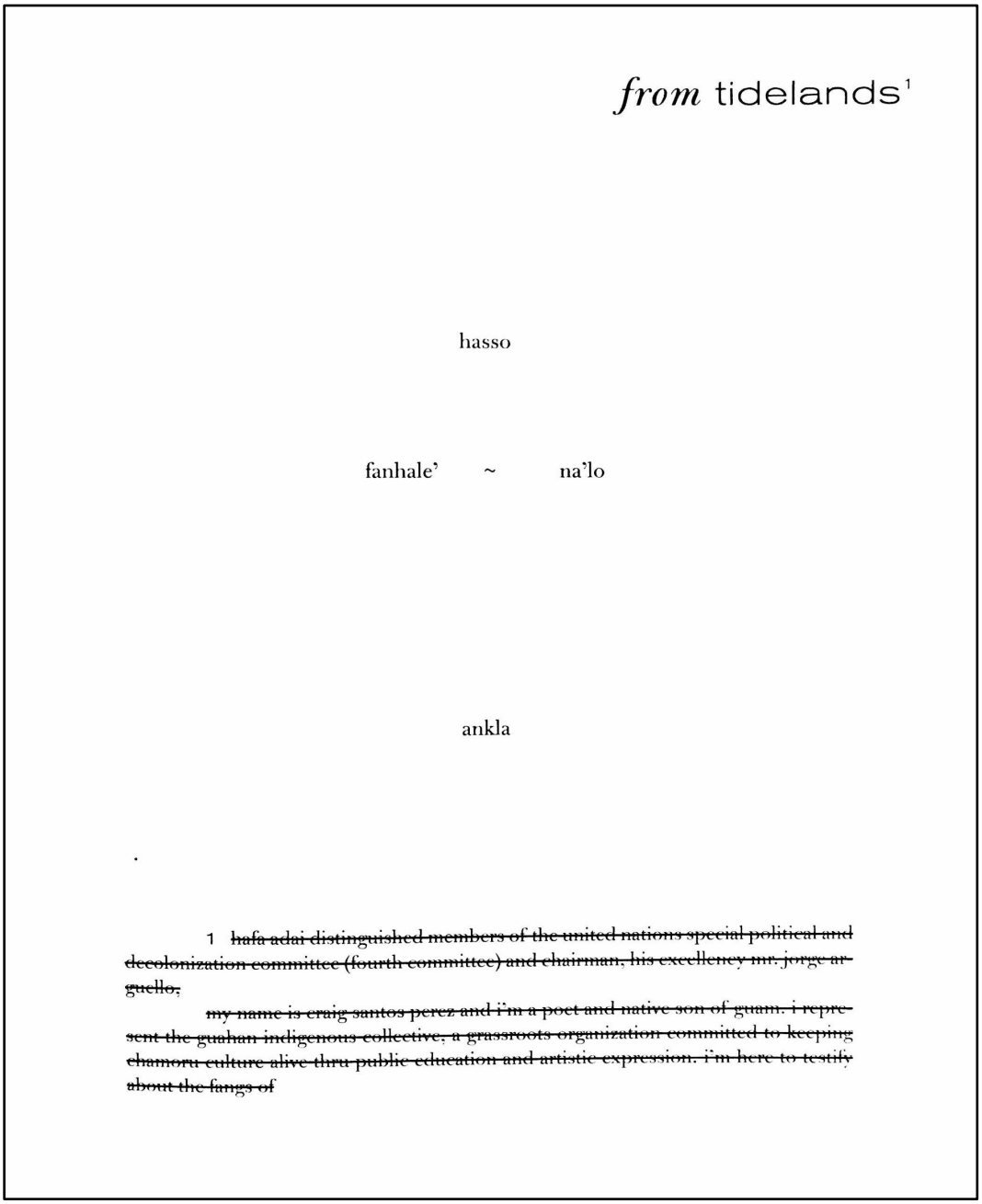
space. These strategies turn the anational from a disengaging gesture as we have seen in the previous chapters, into world-building mode.

As a preamble to the interpretation of his poetry, it is important to note that parallel to his poetic work, Perez has been an active advocate for the decolonization of Guam through institutionalized diplomacy. In 2008, he traveled to New York with a delegation of Chamorros to testify before the United Nations General Assembly Fourth Committee, also known as the Special Political and Decolonization Committee. Perez explains in the acknowledgments to the second volume of *from Unincorporated Territory* that the testimony he gave as part of this delegation "representing i nasion chamoru," is repurposed in the footnotes to the poem "*from* tidelands."[5]

Divided into ten footnotes spread throughout the book, Perez's testimony describes the ecological, social, and psychological devastation that the island and its native inhabitants have suffered because of US occupation. The entirety of his testimony is displayed in strikethrough type: "~~this hyper-militarization poses grave implications for our human right to self-determination~~."[6] As such, the footnoted testimony contrasts with the actual body of texts that form the poem "*from* tidelands," which is predominantly composed of words in Chamorro language. Intercalating these two bodies of text, the first page of the poem appears as follows: Perez does not provide a definition for these Chamorro words (but an online search suggests that "hasso" means "to think"; "fanhale,'" "to take root"; "na'lo," "to return to its original state"; and "ankla," "anchor"). I foreground this contrast upon which rests the form of "*from* tidelands" to illustrate how Perez portrays two different decolonial strategies and how each displays its own separate and partial illegibility. While the language of diplomatic institutions appears crossed-out

[5] Craig Santos Perez, *[saina] from Unincorporated Territories* (Richmond: Omnidawn, 2010), 131.
[6] Perez, *[saina]*, 45.

and marginalized as an appendix, the foreign and culturally specific Chamorro language defines and centers the collection's concern over a poetics invested in space. The page separates two spaces and conjoins the semantic unavailability of Chamorro words with its unusual rendering on the page (a gesture of nontranslation evocative of Ortiz's in the previous chapter), maybe even


from tidelands[1]

hasso

fanhale' ~ na'lo

ankla

.

1 ~~hafa adai distinguished members of the united nations special political and decolonization committee (fourth committee) and chairman, his excellency mr. jorge argüello,~~

~~my name is craig santos perez and i'm a poet and native son of guam. i represent the guahan indigenous collective, a grassroots organization committed to keeping chamoru culture alive thru public education and artistic expression. i'm here to testify about the fangs of~~

Figure 5: "*from* tidelands," Craig Santos Perez, *[saina] from Unincorporated Territories* (Richmond: Omnidawn, 2010), 17.

grounding its partial illegibility on a demand for a different reading of the page. On the other hand, as ancillary and partially redacted, Perez's United Nations testimony subtends the poetry as a partly refused context or explanation (inasmuch as partly legible) for the unavailability of referents for the words and for the arrangement or spatial syntax on the page.

These two strategies signal that the purview and agency of poetry, and especially Perez's own Chamorro poetics, are separate from the discursive framework of the United Nations—particularly in relation to politics and to the production of space. This separation in Perez's poetry, I argue, stems from the recognition of divergent decolonial projects that unfold independently from the United Nations which legitimated a global structure denying ocean sovereignty to islands like Guam. In other words, the global structure proposed by the United Nations is reliant on the nation form as its most basic unit. Perhaps against the grain of Perez's own account of the United Nations, I claim that apart from this representational logic, which demands that Perez speak on behalf of the "nasion chamoru" and that he acquiesce to the cartographic abstractions and omissions of Guam, his poetics explore anational paths of decolonization reliant on an Oceanic aesthetics.

Maritime Empires

Toward the middle of *[guma']*, the third book in *from Unincorporated Territories*, Perez comments, "~ | *what does not change* / *is the will to colonize*."[7] Perez's generalization emerges from Guam's specific situation on at least two accounts. As a reformulation of Heraclitean thought and of perpetual change, these lines trace the historical motion of Western thought as perceived from a minor perspective that foregrounds Guam's experience of colonization.

[7] Craig Santos Perez, *[guma'] from Unincorporated Territories* (Richmond: Omnidawn, 2015), 72.

Holding as a subtext the historical experience of Spanish, Japanese, and US rule over the island, Perez figures the pervasiveness of colonialism as an unavoidable and systemic constant. But at the same time he acknowledges the malleability of this constant by reformulating not the Heraclitean dictum from Greek, but an already reformulated version by Charles Olson. By updating Olson's "What does not change / is the will to change," Perez perceives the continuity of colonialism along with its own possibilities of resistance in the differences exhibited by its iterations. Tying together historical perspective and poetic praxis as the concern of his collection, Perez's revision of Heraclitus and Olson insists on the possibility of poetic agency within the constraints of history. He embraces this agency by fragmenting and altering Olson's reformulation to release from its colonialism: throughout the book, "what does not change /" is variously followed by "last wild seen—" or "is the will | to see," to provide two examples.[8] Before I elaborate on the function of the tilde that precedes Perez's dictum—which provides an instance of such poetic agency—in this section I describe the historical panorama that prompts Perez's poetics, particularly in relation to Olson's.

Around the middle of *[saina]*, the second book of *from Unincorporated Territory*, Perez provides what could be understood as an ars poetica. The poem "*from* sourcings," which opens with a single, centered tilde, explains the use of the préterrain as a concept in ethnographic and anthropological fieldwork. Translating it as "fore-field," Perez borrows from James Clifford's understanding of the préterrain to describe it as "forces that exist within and beyond the ethnographic frame of the 'field,' such as modes of transportation, forms of dwelling, power relations, translations and various discursive practices that constitute the ethnographic experience."[9] Perez charts his writing by recognizing the préterrain as a node where several

[8] Perez, *[guma']*, 24, 62.
[9] Perez, *[saina]*, 63.

operative sources for his poetry encounter each other and interact. In other words, Perez attempts to display, or come to terms with, the préterrain of his own poetics.

After noting how "attenuation to the préterrain opens our eyes and our writing to the complexity, fragmentation, contradictions, and multiplicity of our historical and lived realities," Perez acknowledges one important influence in his work by commenting on how "the préterrain echoes in the work of the usamerican poet charles olson, the self-proclaimed 'archaeologist of the morning.'" Olson's work and especially his essay "Projective Verse" embody for Perez a significant inheritance in the history of experimental poetics during the second half of the twentieth century and a turning point for his own poetics. The principle of writing in the open (or the visual composition of poetry by field as opposed to by line or stanza) which Olson stressed as a preamble for projective verse, gives Perez a shared ground with Olson; yet from there he takes a different direction. After quoting Olson on how field composition "involves a whole series of new recognitions," Perez parts company with him and instead explains: "while i try to be aware of the several forces that surface when writing in the open, the concept of the 'field' doesn't entirely translate into my own cultural experience."[10] The idea of composition by field does not convey the same spatial currency for Perez because his spatial sensibility is shaped by the ocean.

For Perez, the process of spatial recognition that Olson advises, connected as it is with writing in the open, is the kind of perceptual adaptation that the préterrain describes as a fore-field. Perhaps given the emphasis on the préterrain in relation to poetics or as poetically instrumental, we could argue that the term evokes an aesthetics. More specifically, it connotes the kind of aesthetics that Jacques Rancière terms a distribution of the sensible—the a priori forms of sensibility at the core of perception which enable us to see and not see specific

[10] Perez, *[saina]*, 64.

configurations. Perez stresses different forms of sensibility by attempting to situate his poetry in the open, as Olson did, yet he builds or invokes different forms of space and time from Olson's. To grasp the specificity of Perez's divergence from Olson, and the reasons behind it, we need to expound the context through which Olson's poetics developed in order to mark the poetic possibilities and historical perspective he represents.

As one of the seminal poetic manifestos of the second half of the twentieth century in the US, "Projective Verse" grounds its ambitions for poetry in two linked axioms which seek to confer upon field composition the capacity to work on the open, beyond the constraints of conventional poetic form. First, the reformulation of the poem as "a high energy-construct" allowed Olson to posit the primordial relation between text and body that makes poetry an extension of the poet's sensorial corporeality: "verse will only do in which a poet manages to register both the acquisitions of his ear and the pressures of his breath."[11] Or, to put it "badly" as Olson did and acknowledged, but perhaps clearly, "the HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE | the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE."[12] Likewise oriented toward this expansive movement that the poet's body impresses upon the page, Olson's subsequent axiom declares

> that every element in an open poem (the syllable, the line, as well as the image, the sound, the sense) must be taken up as participants in the kinetic of the poem just as solidly as we are accustomed to take what we call the objects of reality; and that these elements are to be seen as creating the tensions of a poem just as totally as do those other objects create what we know as the world.[13]

Projective verse follows the assumption that the productive capacities of poetry, of poiesis, can create objects that occupy space and transform it with the specific logic of their own dynamic.

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[11] Charles Olson, *Collected Prose*, ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 241.
[12] Olson, 242.
[13] Olson, 243.

Daniel Katz observes that what's at stake in "Projective Verse" "is the place of the body and its relation to language, as well as the latter's negotiation of the page, and intersubjective space."[14] Katz aptly notes the significance of the body in Olson's poetics, yet to qualify this space as intersubjective seems to fall short of the aspirations with which Olson infused field composition, especially with regards to producing tensions seen as "what we know as the world."

To expand on this intersubjective space, I follow Henri Lefebvre's assertion that "*(Social) space is a (social) product*," situating Olson's poetics in relation to what I understand as its more capacious conception of space in relation to social praxis.[15] This, in turn, requires us to situate the essay in its historical moment. First published in 1950, "Projective Verse" is part of the writing through which Olson attempted to confront the realities of World War II and its aftermath. In its immediate retrospective orientation toward the war, Olson's writing during this period—"Projective Verse" as well as poems like "The Kingfishers," "The Resistance," and "La Préface"—attempted to register a break with the conditions and inheritances of a European past, particularly with those he understood to have produced the violence of the war. Assessing the entirety of Olson's textual production during this time, David Herd argues that Olson perceived the "present moment [as] distinct unto itself" and sought to produce a post-Buchenwald aesthetics that could both acknowledge and break from the factuality of the concentration camps: "What he wanted to insist on was a new beginning, and he gave a date: 1950 on."[16] Olson's focalization of the body in relation to poetry is one way of instantiating this break with the past, as he argues—with the concentration camps in mind—that "When man is reduced to so much fat

[14] Daniel Katz, "From Olson's breath to Spicer's gait: spacing, pacing, phonemes" in *Contemporary Olson*, ed. David Herd (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2016), 80.
[15] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 26.
[16] David Herd, "The view from Gloucester: Open Field Poetics and the politics of movement" in *Contemporary Olson*, ed. David Herd (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2016), 273.

for soap, superphosphate for soil, filling and shoes for sale, he has, to begin again […]. It is his own physiology he is forced to arrive at."[17] Projective verse in this regard attempts to regain individual agency from its denied value in the concentration camps by renewing perception of and through the body in space.

As too-neat a break as 1950 might offer, I want to suggest that Olson's new beginning and especially "Projective Verse" are symptomatic of the historical transitions taking place at a global scale. Along with the Guam Organic Act of 1950, which Perez notes as coeval with "Projective Verse" in "*from* sourcings," the Korean War (as I argue in the second chapter) offers a parallel example of the effects of these transitions, where a restructured world order begins to adapt to the ascendancy of the US as global hegemon. Following the Truman doctrine, the US reorganized the prevailing international order during this period by seeking the political and institutional legitimation of the United Nations as based on the ideal of equality among nations; the latter required the instauration of the nascent nation states that would come to constitute a new chapter of colonialism and empire.[18] In this shifting panorama, as Herd comments, the post-Buchenwald poetry that Olson envisioned and would create in *The Maximus Poems*, aimed to address "the question of how political belonging should be formulated and re-thought."[19] Inasmuch as it could be understood as symptomatic of the moment, Olson's answer to this question and the renewed individual agency he pursued would be attuned to the rising paradigm of the nation state and empire. The latter constitutes a meaningful presence in the préterrain, as Perez might call it, of projective verse.

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[17] Olson, *Collected Prose*, 174.
[18] The general postwar account I present here, reminiscent of the second chapter, emerges mostly from John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan, *Represented Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
[19] Herd, "The view from Gloucester," 275.

Perhaps the imperial desires that underlie Olson's poetics are more easily discernible in the tradition to which he affiliated. If the concentration camps he referred to mark the most immediate antecedent to "Projective Verse," it is equally important that he considered his poetics as inextricably linked to an English literary tradition where "Westron Wynde" comes to embody the kinetics of the syllable as breath and obedience to the ear. Although Olson's turn to British literature is historically (i.e., linguistically or etymologically) warranted, and Britain is just one stop in the far longer itinerary of his historical revisions, I stress the impetus of this British inheritance as a way to locate Olson and the US around 1950 in relation to Britain and empire in the nineteenth century. The latter allows us to mark what Perez rejects in Olson's poetics and the point of his divergence from him.[20] If Perez turns away from Olson it is because in the process of

[20] Probably the most notable affirmation of this affinity with British literature is interpreted by a close reader, as well as collaborator, of Olson, J. H. Prynne, who not only perceives in *The Maximus Poems* William Wordsworth's and John Milton's lineage of a poetry "not in the condition of the lyric," but also the spatial logic of Newtonian mechanics. Prynne's characterization of *The Maximus Poems*—specifically "Maximus IV, V, VI"—as not lyric but epic reveals and monumentalizes the kind of space articulated therein: embracing the anticipation of a nostos, Prynne detects a "circular […] curving rhythm," which "is the condition of the cosmos," and a general movement of verse in relation to geography and the world:

> the primary structure of this poem is already complete […] in two major movements: the going out, the asking the great questions, the making of the great statements: and the coming back, the coming back across the sea, the coming back through the ocean, coming back to the shore, and then the shore fades into a condition of land, and the condition of land approximates to the condition of the planet.[20]

With the aim of grasping Olson's poetic space as the production of a specific society and praxis, it would serve to point out that the epic trajectory which "Maximus IV, V, VI" covers has less to do with Odysseus, confined as he was to the Mediterranean, than with the British empire's navigation across the globe—hence the curvature. Furthermore, that this space is grasped as such, a recollection of imperial grandiloquence at sea as the condition of land, resonates with the twentieth-century dispersion of US naval fleets across the globe and their continual return to the mainland, which shore up, as it were, colonial fragments against the ruins of empire—to deepen this genealogy of British-US poetic-imperial desires. Prynne's interpretation attempts to read Olson against the grain of Olson by stressing his British inheritances over Olson's own acknowledged debt to the tradition of Pound and Williams. In this sense, Prynne is far from intending an association of "Maximus IV, V, VI" with imperial perceptions, but rather sketching a general trajectory of poetry in English. In turn, I'm reading Prynne against the grain of Prynne to note how imperial perceptions are operative beyond both Olson's and Prynne's acknowledgment—and this might be due to the fact that such perceptions, if shared, remain unchecked, unchallenged. J. H.

inheriting projective verse he senses difference and differently, in that there is a differential in the form of perception and aesthetics producing his Chamorro space. More specifically, by acknowledging an inheritance and departure from projective verse, Perez rewrites Olson to suit decolonizing ends, to trouble his unacknowledged constructions of imperial space.

The observation that projective verse holds an intimate relation with imperial bellicosity is not new. In *Empire of Neomemory*, Heriberto Yépez argued that Olson's "projective has much less to do with a poetics of energy and respiration than with a poetics of military movement and *information gathering* turned poetic sublime."[21] For Yépez, "Projective verse and the projective are an aesthetics of military speed, of the enthusiasm of the soldier and the cameraman of the battlefield. It is the poetics of a triumphalist culture of the post-war period. Projective is *take over*, *enemy seizure*."[22] In this sense, Guam and South Korea are just two entries in the vast catalogue of postwar interventions where triumphalist culture and military speed coalesce into an enemy-cum-alter-citizen seizure, an unincorporation.

At this point we return to Olson's "What does not change / is the will to change" because the great epic of projective verse, where space is an extension of the poet's body, of his own homogeneity, is perhaps best captured by Olson's use, in "The Kingfishers," of that heraclitean dictum. Perez's rebuttal, in turn, reformulates projective verse in relation to the differences it fails to perceive: "~ | *what does not change* / *is the will to colonize*."[23] And here Perez indirectly points to a crucial spatial link between the bellicose drive of colonialism and projective verse, which, for Yépez, relates to how "Olson imagined reality as a pantopia, that is, as a space that

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Prynne, "Jeremy Prynne lectures on *Maximus IV, V, VI*," *Minutes of the Charles Olson Society* #28 (April 1999). Retrieved from http://charlesolson.org/Files/Prynnelecture1.htm.

[21] Heriberto Yépez, *The Empire of Neomemory*, translated by Jen Hofer Christian Nagler & Brian Whitener (Oakland: ChainLinks, 2013), 218.

[22] Yépez, *The Empire of Neomemory*, 216.

[23] Perez, *[guma']*, 72.

swallows everything, a 'projective space' in which the world is eaten." One of Yépez's several neologisms, pantopia describes "the notion of a total space, individuated from every other space, which contains all things, all events, ordered under the same set of laws, under the same empire. This idea, of course, is the cruelest of all of them. The pantopia is absolute control: the pantopia is the inexistence of time."[24] In this context, pantopia marks the flattening tendency to homogenize irregularities in imperial cartography.

Olson's projected space can be understood as cognate with the space that the new global order of nation states required—very much despite his plea, in *Maximus*'s "Letter 3" ("o tansy city, root city | let them not make you | as the nation is"). Yet his quest to reformulate political belonging is consonant with the instauration of a United Nations version of the nation state where the locality of the specific city/culture is incorporated into the absolute space wherein global capitalism thrives.

As a qualification of Yépez's observations, I would emphasize how the logic of this post-World War II space entails a different mode from the preceding iterations of the nation.[25] In an attempt to show this difference, I find insightful the conceptual juxtaposition of pantopia with Marx's description of capital as striving "to destroy space by means of time, i.e., to restrict to a minimum the time required for movement from one place to another."[26] Perhaps as the obverse of the same flattening process, Marx's destruction of space by time describes a dimensional reductionism comparable to the inexistence of time that Yépez's total space posits. Though each model emerges from different circumstances—an account of imperialist aesthetics and a

[24] Yépez, *The Empire of Neomemory*, 87, 246–7.
[25] Such a difference might be approached via Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's description of a transition from the age of imperial powers, lasting until World War II, to our contemporary time of empire. *Cf*. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 168.
[26] Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse*, trans. David Mcllelan (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 119.

description of capitalist circulation—there is a point of contact, and it is in cases like Guam's where the transition from one to the other can be detailed. Such point of contact helps us think of these models' interacting surface, in all its flatness, as a point of mediation.

Attempting to remediate the absence of a theory of imperialism in Marx's writings, David Harvey focuses precisely on this "crucial mediating influence, which most of the writers on imperialism ignore, [capital's] necessary tendency to overcome spatial barriers and to annihilate space with time—tendencies which Marx derives directly from the theory of accumulation."[27] The conceptualizations of total space and total time enable the circulation of capital: in the necessary oscillations that propel capitalist accumulation in its expansion across the globe, the constant alternation between total space and total time binds the bellicose needs of imperialism with the crises of capitalism's self-regulation, thereby pointing to the "the close, constitutive, and ontological relationship between the most deterritorialized form of capital, money, and the most deterritorialized form of sovereignty, war" that Aillez and Lazzarato marked.[28] As Harvey argues, "The emergence of a distinct spatial structure with the rise of capitalism is not a contradiction-free process. In order to overcome spatial barriers and to 'annihilate space with time', spatial structures are created which themselves ultimately act as a barrier to further accumulation."[29] Returning to Lefebvre's premise, we could trace the projection of a colonial space, a terra nullius, as the production of a social space suitable for imperial possession, which in turn performs the dimensional reductionism that would allow the subsequent production of capitalist spaces.

[27] David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 258.
[28] Éric Aillez and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Wars and Capital*, trans. Ames Hodges (Semiotext(e), Pasadena: 2016), 36.
[29] Harvey, *Spaces of Capital*, 247.

The case of Guam during the second half of the twentieth century, I would then argue, allows us to glimpse the exchanges of imperial total space and capitalist total time and, furthermore, to perceive the mediating role of the nation form's plasticity at the center of this exchange. In the poem "*ginen* sourcings," Perez gives a chronological account of this interplay between imperialism and capitalism by registering the island's recent history:

> 1936: pan american builds a 20-room hotel, skyways inn, in village of sumay
> 1943: an airstrip built in the village of tiyan by forced chamorro labor battalions during japanese occupation [see "*from* ta(la)ya"]; military airfield named 'guamu dai ni' [guam no. 2]
> 1944: after u.s. 'liberation' of guam, the airstrip renamed 'agana airfield' and used as a base for air force's 11th bombardment group
> 1947: air force turns over airfield to navy who rename it 'agana naval air station' ['brewer field']
> 1959: cliff hotel in agana heights built[30]

Beyond the recurring act of renaming, which I dwell on below, this sequence presents the point of mediation between military and capitalist enterprises as intercalated events. The touristic drive that routes capitalist flows to the island coupled with the continual military presence belie the colonialist dynamics of the forced labor at the core of both processes; moreover, labor exertion connects the Japanese occupation of the island with the US's contemporary unincorporation, overlapping capitalist with imperial invasion through tourism's colonialism: "1965: 5,000 americans on way to other destinations occupy 70 hotel rooms […] 1969: nearly 58,000 japanese arrive; occupy 1,000 hotel rooms […] on average, tourists spend $1,650 for a three-night four-day stay on guam."[31] Although factual, devoid of any tropological shifts, Perez's intercalation of events parses and juxtaposes the evolution of military and capitalist processes that allow the valorization of time and space that inserts Guam's spatiotemporal singularity in the market of commodity exchange. Noting the importance of coerced labor for such processes, and

[30] Perez, *[saina]*, 87.
[31] Perez, *[saina]*, 88–9.

the colonial occupation that tourism produces, Perez gestures toward the same recognition of poetic agency within historical constraints that he expressed with regards to Olson: intercalation can be read as representing the possibility of interstitial intervention in otherwise continual processes; that is, although subtly muted in this instance, intercalation grants spaces to induce and sustain agency within these constraints. For example, the bracketed interjection "[see '*from* ta(la)ya']" generates an interstice and gives depth to this flatness by directing us toward Perez's exercise of poetic agency in another poem from the collection. Such a strategy of depth can be perceived more clearly as Perez relies more on the perception of an Oceanic spatiotemporality unacknowledged by and incompatible with the nation, which I turn to next.

Oceanic Community

"In the grammar of empire," Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey writes, "*remoteness* and *isolation* function as synonyms for island space and were considered vital to successful colonization."[32] DeLoughrey identifies a crucial aspect of the spatial understanding that guided the colonization of islands, which were conceived as terra nullius, as in need of civilizing—an interpretation which defined Guam's situation. With this in mind, I return to "*from* sourcings" and to Perez's engagement with the work of Tongan anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa. The latter, Perez interprets as "an oceanic préterrain" poised against "the colonial perspective that the pacific islands are small, tiny, remote, isolated, poor, dependent, deficient, or confined—a perspective based on imperial desires to see only extent land surfaces, only the closed insular island."[33]

> hau'ofa draws our attention to an oceania, préoceania, and transoceania surrounding islands, below the waves, and in the sky—a deeper geography and mythology: '[our]

[32] Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots, Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 8.
[33] Perez, *[saina]*, 63.

> universe comprised not only land surfaces but also the surrounding ocean as far as [we] could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars and constellations that [we] could count on to guide [our] way across the seas.'[34]

Perez summons, via Hau'ofa, a general understanding of spatiotemporal depth developed and held by generations of Oceanic islanders—an Oceanic aesthetics. Hau'ofa reminds us that land sovereignty and its jurisdiction are not only concerned with surfaces, but also about this spatiotemporal depth of what lies above and below. This spatiotemporal perception is also summoned as a decolonial form per se. For example, against the imperial imposition of precarity over islands, Hau'ofa argues that "The world of Oceania is neither tiny nor deficient in resources. It was so only as a condition of the colonial confinement that lasted less than a century in a history of millennia."[35] That is, in the incompatible forms of perception that an imperial and an Oceanic view entail, an entirely different and disruptive spatiotemporality is posited through the sheer permanence of an anterior Oceanic aesthetics.

This idea of an Oceanic space is then operative in Guam's decolonial project which, correspondingly, is also entangled with the global transitions of the post-World War II period. As another consequence of the Truman doctrine, the US annexation of Micronesia (proclaimed by Truman in 1947 and validated via the United Nations) "catalyzed" what DeLoughrey describes as "a new territorialism of the oceans, an international struggle over ocean sovereignty that is ongoing today."[36] This ongoing struggle sets up the maritime stage for Olson's spatial poetics in contrast to an Oceanic aesthetics in that Truman's annexation, along with a wider drive to increase the overseas extension of the US, were met with resistance by a growing coalition of decolonizing forces. Consolidating an important initiative during the first United Nations

[34] Perez, *[saina]*, 63–4.
[35] Epeli Hau'ofa, *We are the Ocean* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 35.
[36] DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots*, 32.

Conference of the Law and Sea (UNCLOS) in 1958, these third-world countries aimed to enforce the alleged equality among nations promulgated by the United Nations in order to assert that "the realm of the 'high seas' was the 'common heritage' of all nations, and revenue generated from seabed mining, exploration, and fishing must be evenly distributed across the globe, with particular recognition of the needs of the poorer nations."[37] The continuing occupation of Guam and of several other territories, as well as the ongoing exploitation and pollution of the seas, attest to the eventual failure of this decolonial coalition, at least through United Nations-sanctioned paths. What I want to note as relevant in the context of the anational is that UNCLOS, inasmuch as it attempted to legitimate the "indigenous philosophemes of environmental guardianship, particularly those drawn from the Pacific Islands," already displayed an incommensurability between its goals and its actions as undertaken under the mantle of the United Nations.[38] As instigator and perpetuator of the nation in its postwar guise, the United Nations materializes as an organization anathema to the colonial histories, indigenous cultures, and spatiotemporal configurations that an Oceanic aesthetics foregrounds. Beyond UN configurations, and his own activist work carried on under this institutional infrastructure, Perez's poetics can be read as an extension of Oceanic aesthetics.

An earlier section of "*from* preterrain" in *[saina]* begins, "a map dividing the land covers | my mouth and ears at night | i don't know if i can say *our language* | *will survive here.*"[39] Perez traces the contours of a situation that connects colonial cartography with the suppression of voice, expression, and culture. Because the uncertainty of the survival of Chamorro language is communicated in the language of the colonizer, the opening of the poem posits that if there is a

[37] In DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots*, 32.
[38] DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots*, 33.
[39] Perez, *[saina]*, 36.

story cutting across this colonial map, the voice that narrates it appears partly outside of the page, as an unincorporation. The poem continues:

> yet i've never known another place
> where history isn't
> redressed let our history be seen thru watermarks heard
> thru no one speech
> will further excavations reveal
>
> 'voice'

In the recursive general dynamic of history redressed (i.e., in the prefix), the recurrence of the past is linked to the watermarks that in turn evoke the ocean and its depths. Watermarks unveil a palimpsestic history with a temporal depth marked by tidal cycles. Beyond the deprivations and compartmentalizations of the map, this tidal rhythm grants the possibility of redressing history, because it turns history perceivable. This points not only to a specific form of perception, but to the community of speech (multiplicity as opposed to the rejected "one speech") that holds such a perspective. The community's survival is poised against the future exhumation of a "voice" which would provide the isolated object of archaeology—of a projective seizure. In the possible alignment between Olson's self-fashioned epithet, archaeologist of morning, with Guam's slogan, "Where America's Day Begins," Perez demarcates a limit to the nation's temporal blanket through the dismissal of excavations: in denying an archaeological object upon which the nation can project a finished past, the sheer problematics of actually excavating among the tide serves as a form of inhabiting an Oceanic aesthetics. The rhythms of Oceanic life are incompatible with the land-grounded imperial aesthetics that uphold the nation form's commitment to amnesia. The recurring renaming of land that the US performs on Guam provides an example of such a commitment to amnesia. For instance, the airfield built with forced labor battalions during Japanese rule, which was "renamed 'agana airfield' and used as a | base for air force's 11th bombardment group" after the "u.s. 'liberation' of guam," aims to induce such

amnesia by burying the colonial past with a story of redemption that layers over the land a Chamorro name.

In the gloss I offer here, voice is a manifestation of collective survival and vitality. It leads Perez to state, in "*from* preterrain," a couple lines below, "i can't say *voice doesn't measure what we've lost | but the space that now confines us*." The latter indexes voice and its temporal and acoustic nature as precisely unincorporated to the bidimensional plane shared by cartography and poetry. It poses the question about the suitability of printed poetry for decolonial aims inasmuch as it shares some of the abstractions of colonial cartography that flatten the depth of Oceanic aesthetics.

Further qualifying this shared condition of bidimensionality, and perhaps starting to redress it, in ": *oceania compositions* :" Perez writes, "poetry, too, consists of textual land surfaces and the surrounding deep geographies of silence, space, and meaning—." Perez then provides several instances of such deep geographies as relationships with the specificity of a space and its ecology. For example, he notes how "the aztecs and mayans used bark from banyan trees to make paper for their codices," or how "indigenous peoples in the himalayas have tied together aerial roots from banyan trees on opposite sides of a stream […] to create 'living bridges.'"[40] Along with with these deep geographies, Perez also describes Chamorro sailing culture through the description of a sakman—the traditional navigating vessel that was employed to actualize the communal "sea of islands" that constituted Oceania, in Hau'ofa's view, and that was later eradicated by the Spanish colonizers upon arrival in order to immobilize the islander populations.

[40] Perez, *[saina]*, 65.

Before concluding ": *oceania compositions* :" by reiterating "no page is ever terra nullius—each page infused with myths legends talk story—," Perez juxtaposes one more deep geography in the form of "a story of a village in africa where huts were built on the limbs of a giant banyan to protect people from lions—." The assemblage that comprises the poem's network of deep geographies indicates how the production of (social) space is a result of the interacting specificities of place over time, culture as product of the interrelated singularities of ecosystem and history. The community as Oceanic composition is not confined to islands, Perez posits, but assumes the sea as constitutive of the medium of interaction: in the several uses made of trees, a communicative or expressive purpose allows to traverse and produce space (trees bridging, wood sailing the sea, paper embodying the sea) and time (roots protecting people). From the abstractions of imperial cartography, Perez salvages paper by inserting it within a deep ecology that takes the sea of Oceanic aesthetics as its model of interconnectedness.

In the bidimensional absence of the living voice that attests to the survival of the community, the gathering of space in the page comes to metonymically represent that specific, situated, ongoing, social production. The distinction made between cartography and poetry, in direct relation to colonizers and natives, asserts the legibility of the ocean "infused with myths legends talk story" and the impossibility of a terra nullius; it frames colonialism's perception of empty space, and ours of the page's, as produced and forced upon an already produced space. Redressing the aesthetic regime that renders anational history unperceivable, much like the incapacity to perceive the interrelatedness of the Oceanic sea of islands, Perez employs the geography of the page to distance our usual legibility. In the next section I analyze how much of *from Unincorporated Territory*'s schematic organization is aimed at conveying this alternative Oceanic spatiotemporality as an inflected legibility.

Elliptical Tildes

The first poem of the collection, "*from* lisiensan ga'lago" arranges words on the page in likely evocation of the map of an archipelago or an island:

"goaam" ~

"goam" ~

"islas de las velas latinas" (of lateen sails ~

"guan" "guana" ~

"islas de los ladrones" (of the thieves ~

"guåhan" "guajan" ~

"islas marianas"

(after the spanish queen ~

"bahan" "guhan" ~

"guacan" "isla de san juan" ~

"guaon"

"y guan"

"omiya jima" (great shrine island)

"guam"

"the first province

of the great ocean" ~

Although a reading of "*from* lisiensan ga'lago" does not necessarily need to follow a different path through the page than the conventional one, the specific configuration of words and glyphs does invite a different interaction; particularly as it groups specific words in closer vertical proximity than a line's horizontality. Similarly, the placement of tildes at the right end of several

lines implies a variation from their usual phonetic function. Separated from their normal position over a letter or immediately next to a word, these tildes both expand on their diacritic role—in that they qualify the ensemble on the page, as opposed to the single phoneme—as well as on their own representational capacities beyond their conventional role. For example, in an interview, Perez comments on the use he makes of tildes:

> Besides resembling an ocean current and containing the word "tide" in its body, the tilde has many intriguing uses. In languages, the tilde is used to indicate a change of pronunciation. As you know, I use many different kinds of discourse in my work (historical, political, personal, etc) and the tilde is meant to indicate a shift in the discursive poetic frame.[41]

The poly-referentiality of the tilde clusters different discursive functions which remain latent in our reading of the glyph. Next to its iconicity as standing in for a wave or current and its diacritical use as altering pronunciation, I also want to propose the tilde's indexical and symbolic potential as etymologically evoking an ellipsis. As a metathetic from the Spanish and Latin *título* and *titulus* respectively, the tilde used to be employed to signal the omission of a letter in scribal writing, a function which in turn was adopted to denote the palatalized sound or *mouillé* of the *ñ* in Spanish that was previously written as *nn*. Providing another of the tilde's "intriguing uses," ellipsis bears relevant spatial and temporal connotations. Together with its iconic and phonetic latencies, the elliptic in *from Unincorporated Territory* comes to evoke a tidal, though differently pronounced, omission in the representational syntax of Perez's poetics.

The way in which space and time are construed in "*from* lisiensan ga'lago" is connected to these tildes and to the colonial route that the semantic content of the words in quotations trace. Listing the different names that have been imposed over Guam, Perez's poem references several

[41] Craig Santos Perez, "The Page Transformed: A Conversation with Craig Santos Perez" in *Lantern Review*, 03/12/2010. http://www.lanternreview.com/blog/2010/03/12/the-page-transformed-a-conversation-with-craig-santos-perez/

historical episodes: the first interaction with Spanish colonizers in the sixteenth century, the Japanese invasion during World War II, and their present situation as established by the Guam Organic Act of 1950. The appositive relation between kin terms—like the ramifications of "goaam" or the link between "velas latinas" and "lateen sails"—and the juxtaposition of different languages suggest a spatialization of (different layers of) time. Rendered thus, the tildes convey oceanic omissions which are further developed as the poem proceeds:

geographic absence ~

"the old census records show"

because who can stand on the reef
and name that below water and sky

imagined territory ~

"a spanish baptismal name and"

burnt villages

archipelago of

"chamoru last names drawn from
the lexicon of everyday language"

bone

carved word

~

"it is possible they changed
their last names throughout their lives"

remade : sovereign

These lines display a disjunctive relation between the tildes that separate them, as in the transition from "geographic absence" to the quoted sentence "the old census records show,"

where the tilde appears to account for the transition from absence to recorded presence. The construction of this spatial relation entails a temporal depth evident in the antiquity of the census and the anteriority which the quotations give to the utterance. In contrast to the tildes, the quotation marks that set off certain phrases instill stasis and flatness, as if performing the repeated colonial interventions over Guam by acting as historical layers through which the experience of the colonized pierces. With this scheme, "*from* lisiensan ga'lago" turns into a history of naming that registers colonial violence through the space and time of its recurring episodes, beginning with the "spanish baptismal name."

In the mode of the historical survey, the function of apposition is further nuanced by a colon placed between the words "remade" and "sovereign": equidistant, instead of suggesting a gloss of one term through the other, the colon seems to suggest an equal relation between the two terms; perhaps a relation by extension as that of a limb (like the etymology of the term colon would imply). To remake then, as the capacity to rename, is an extension of sovereignty, or the exercise of sovereignty over that which is remade. Furthermore, the recurrence that the prefix lends to the act of making pluralizes the directionality pertaining to the practice of reading from left to right: "remake" syntactically leads to "sovereignty" as it begins a cyclicality that announces further (re)making along with its corresponding sovereignties.

Because of the positionality that sovereignty enforces through its etymology (from Old French *soverain*—highest, supreme) as a higher position, Perez stresses the geographic absences that conform the colonizers' perspectives, whose maps depict the land flatly from above. Yet an evasive resistance to these abstractions is conveyed through the representational inaccuracy of these governmentality metrics, as in how the census must contemplate the possibility that the colonized "changed their last names throughout their lives." Sovereignty over the island, in this

sense, is part of the cartographic construction where an above is produced as a justification for naming, a situation that is acknowledged in the phrase, "who can stand on the reef and name that below water and sky." In correlation with sovereignty, Perez invokes spatial and temporal depth on the page as an omission in bidimensional cartography. This is the main affordance that tildes bring to the proposed decolonial trajectories across the page; they are indexical of the multiplicities excluded from this specific practice of mapping space. Yet, as diacritics signaling an inflected pronunciation, the tildes evade a specific referent. Like the Chamorro words employed throughout *from Unincorporated Territory*, tildes index an alternative historical experience that bypasses the nation's amnesia as it burdens colonial space and empty time with the depth of Oceanic temporalities. The tildes are self-referential in that they produce the space we don't see on the page; tildes reassert the spatiotemporal intervals that mark a different rhythm and allow for the ongoing production that Perez's poetry instantiates as praxis and form of decolonial agency.

Against Redúccion

A poem from *[guma']*, titled "*ginen* sounding lines *[chamorro standard time: UTC +10:00]*," conveys an aspect of the spatiotemporal experience of transoceanic separation between Guam and the mainland US. In another instance similar to the US intervention in Korea (discussed in the third chapter), the bidirectional flows that result from the imposition of the nation form can be discerned in the wave of migration that reached the US from Guam during the second half of the twentieth century; having relocated to California during his youth, Perez and his family were part of that migration wave. Addressing this diasporic situation, "*ginen* sounding lines" problematizes the notion of a shared time between Guam and California, complicating the idea

of a surface continuum that the incorporation of Guam to the national territory of the US suggests. Beginning with another centered tilde, "*ginen* sounding lines" continues with the following:

> *remember just*
> the time
>
> -table mom made
> and taped
>
> to the fridge *when it*
> *is two pm here*
>
> *it is eight am the next*
> *day there—*
>
> mom always talking story
> on the phone—
>
> long distance
> counting
>
> minutes *when it*
> *is eleven am there*
>
> *it is five pm the day*
> *before here* [42]

Following the global instauration of UTC, or Coordinated Universal Time, toward the middle of the twentieth century, the nation's homogeneous time was projected as enveloping the surface of the planet. The convergence of manifold localities into a single uniform time facilitated the coordination of a global present, almost as if such a coordination erased the space in-between—which brings to mind the destruction of space that Marx had described. The timetable that is taped to the fridge in Perez's home displays the set of equations that make a transoceanic *now* seemingly possible, linking the domesticity of the household with another location on the other

[42] Perez, *[guma']*, 36.

side of the planet. I qualify this as seemingly possible because the present that brings together Guam and California remains oddly dislocated—in Perez's reading, it suggests a kind of *contrapuntal now* occurring over more than one day, as in the notion that "*when it is two pm here it is eight am the next day there*." Mining this dislocation, the thematic coordination of time in the poem contrasts its form, as the intercalation of italics and roman type produce a braided and heterogeneous temporality: from the first lines' syntactically coherent pairing of the two temporalities, "*remember just* | the time," the poem marks its rhythm through the encounter of a present taking place in the past ("*when it* | *is two pm here*") and an ongoing present oriented towards the past ("mom always talking story" and "long distance | counting").

The initial couplet hints from the outset at the idea of a temporal counterpoint or depth as the imperative to "*remember just* the time" anticipates the failure of its request: it anticipates our incapacity to remember "just time" as contentless time, bereft of the events that mark its rhythm. The third line reveals that this couplet was in fact fragmented by an enjambed word break, which further asserts the impossibility of contentless time by suffusing time itself, word and concept, with situated and historic content.

The transnational simultaneity that organizes spatiotemporal perception in "*ginen* sounding lines" is actuated in an image from *[lukao]*, the fourth volume in the series. The first of a set of graphic compositions that Perez terms "poemaps," the image plays with cartographic conventions in order to reorient its spatial referents according to Perez's syntax. The caption for the poemap reads: "poemap based on 'Telegeography cable network map, 2009,' from 'Critical Nodes, Cultural Networks: Re-Mapping Guam's Cable Infrastructure,' by Nicole Starosielski in *Amerasia Journal* 37:3 (2011): 18–27." The following quotation from the referred article is displayed below:

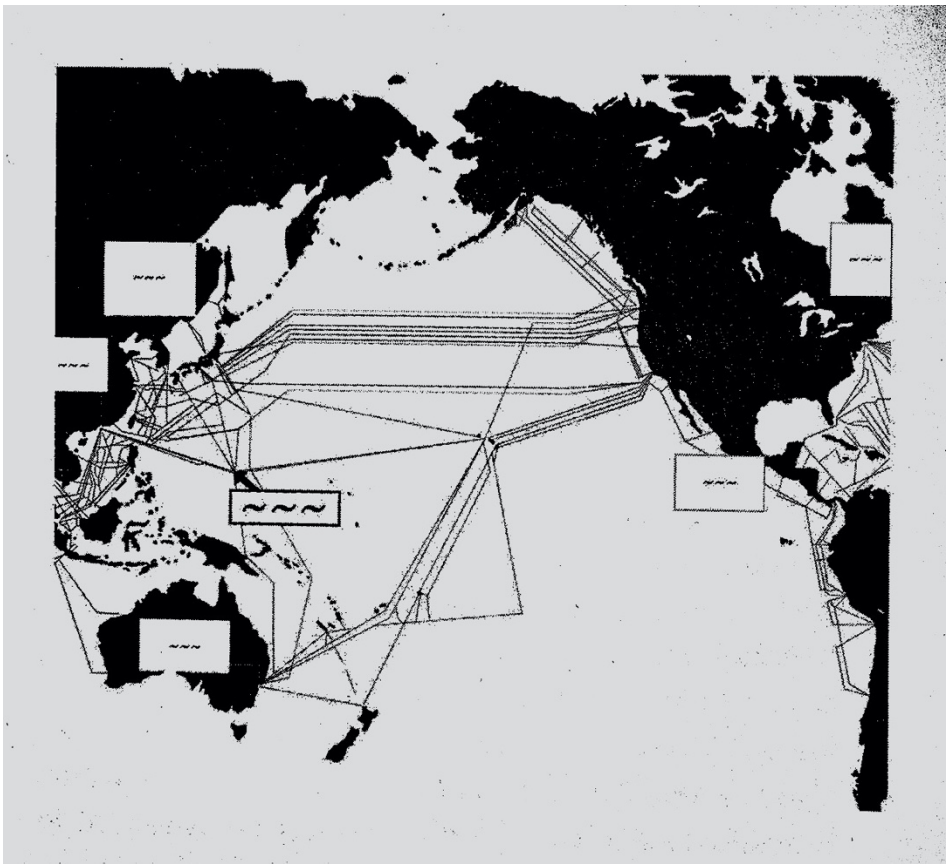

Figure 6: "Poemap," Craig Santos Perez, *[lukao] from Unincorporated Territories* (Richmond: Omnidawn, 2017), 9.

> Undersea communication cables are durable and cost-effective infrastructures supporting the interconnection of America, Asia, and Australia. Many of these cables, which carry almost all transpacific Internet traffic, are routed through the island of Guam. Historically, more cables have landed on Guam than in either Hawai'i or California, two other major hubs for signal exchange.[43]

As legends on a map, or replacements for them, the tilde triads that stand for every major hub of undersea cables corrupt the purpose of the initial map. At issue is not whether this map can orient its viewer, since the Pacific constellation of land and ocean remains identifiable, and the specific infrastructural network of interconnected nodes does not lend itself to misapprehension. Rather, in its more direct evocation of a corrupted referentiality (where the mirroring arrangement of tilde triads bring to mind the ellipsis glyph) Perez voids the local referents that mark the specific

[43] Perez, *[lukao']*, 9.

names of places on the map. The movement in the map insinuated by the connecting lines is rendered anonymous, which exaggerates its cartographic abstractions. Contrasting the tidal currents of the ocean that separates these lands and that were familiar to Chamorro sailors, the channeled movement of data is completely impervious to the itinerary of its displacement across the globe. The tildes that mark Guam's position in the map are considerably larger and as such they index the historical tendency for cables to land on Guam, which Starosielski mentions and Perez quotes. Recalling the absence of Guam on maps, which Perez refers to in his Preface to *[hacha]* (quoted in the epigraph of this chapter), the size of the tildes evokes the absence of the island's historical and cultural specificity. This twofold effect glosses the two sides of the same reduction: we interpret the form of the infrastructure as agentially-preempted—where cables just happen to land on Guam—while we note the absence of historical content that such an infrastructure enables.

In the Preface contained in the first volume of the series, Perez speaks of a "redúccion" of "Guam" which "enacts the cultural, political, geographic, and linguistic 'redúccion' from three centuries of colonialism," in order to further explain this term:

> "Redúccion" is the term the Spanish used to name their efforts of subduing, converting, and gathering natives through the establishment of missions and the stationing of soldiers to protect these missions. Guåhan has always been captured (and thus defined) for its strategic position in the Pacific (as a stopping point on the Spanish Galleon Trade Route, as a significant advancement for the Japanese Army during World War II, and as an American military stronghold). My hope is that these poems provide a strategic position for "Guam" to emerge from imperial "redúccion(s)" into further uprisings of meaning. Moreover, I hope "Guam" (the word itself) becomes a strategic site for my own voice (and other voices) to resist the reductive tendencies of what Whitman called the "deformed democracy" of America.[44]

Throughout the Preface, Perez places an accent on the second syllable of "redúccion," which could be read as an error: in Spanish, the word would have its last syllable stressed, "reducción."

[44] Perez, *[hacha]*, 10–11.

Regardless of whether this is in fact an error, I choose to read this displaced accent and stress as displaying the itinerary of colonial occupation over Guam in that it merges the Spanish and English pronunciations of the word, and hence lends itself to the multiple deployments of reductionist configurations over the island.

The conceptual and historical baggage of "redúccion" turns visible the capitalist aims behind the transformation of Guam into a transatlantic hub as it exhibits the imperial violence that reduces Guam's specificity to such a function. "Redúccion" testifies to the Chamorro experience of abstractions and omissions, particularly as these relate to the oscillation between total space and total time that upholds capitalist accumulation and imperial militarization. The physical network of cables that sustains the global network of data upon which information capitalism sustains a global *now*, an erasure of space, relies on the imperial occupation of Guam that guarantees the island's transparency as a hub—it guarantees the omission of its historical specificity through the imposed inexistence of time.

In this light, we should note how at the heart of "*ginen* sounding lines" there is another assessment of the living voice as outside of the page. As the rest of the poem shows Perez describing his mother's voice, voice takes precedence over the infrastructure not only of transoceanic cables, but over the nation's migrations:

> her voice
> transoceanic
>
> cables
> *pull sounding lines*
>
> between island
> and continent
>
> *when it is six pm here*
> *it is twelve pm*

the next day there—
she shows [us]

how to dial
"one six seven one

and the number"—

The appositional relation between "her voice" and "transoceanic | | cables," fragmented as it is by a line break, prioritizes the bridging or navigational role of interpersonal affective links over the infrastructure that runs "between island | and continent." In this regard, it is important to note that these two temporalities, manifested by italics and roman, intersect each other when the ongoing present relays the voice of Perez's mother in roman: the direct speech previously in italics appears in a present tense at the center of an otherwise ongoing present in gerunds. The fragment quoted in roman marks the merging point of a *here* and a *now* of both temporalities, and it does so through the presence and presentness of voice. From this point onward the poem unravels as other discursive sources invade the poem:

rotary vocal chords

pulse when
it is one am here

it is seven pm the next
day passes

into years—
fewer and fewer

calls lost
connections

avian silence—i
want to remember

when [we] once

belonged—[45]

The next three lines in italics that follow the intersection of the two temporalities display an affected form; the oddity of the phrase "*rotary vocal chords* | | *pulse*" makes it unlikely that this is still the relayed words of Perez's mother. What at first replaced the infrastructure of the cable lines across the ocean by voice now appears as an unstable merging of machine, voice, and electricity breaking down the distinction separating each. Similarly to how ": *oceania compositions* :" posits the ocean as distance and medium, as space and form of transportation, the infrastructure that enables a phone call across the Pacific becomes embodied by the voice that travels through it. One way to rephrase this would be to refer back to Perez's poemap and link his mother's voice with the tilde triad: depth is portrayed through the singular flows, in this case a voice, that chart and, in the process, produce the space depicted in the poemap as they occupy it.

Intertwined with the loss of clear boundaries between medium and content, infrastructure and voice, time likewise shifts and blurs the separation between the initial two temporalities; "*day* passes | | into years—" suggests an elasticity of time that provokes the dissipation of the transoceanic connection. The construction "avian silence" is a recurring motif of *from Unincorporated Territory* which alludes to the ecological catastrophe that the occupation of Guam has provoked on its ecosystem. More specifically, it refers to how several species of birds were forced into extinction; the poem "*ginen* the micronesian kingfisher *[i sihek]*," for example, chronicles how the appearance of alien snakes in the island, brought by army personnel, disrupted the habitat of the micronesian kingfisher, bringing it to extinction. Thus the mention of "avian silence" signals the uncanny silence that results from such an absence in some of the

[45] Perez, *[guma']*, 56–7.

island's forests, which is elsewhere in the poem portrayed as a nightmare: "[our] nightmare : no | birdsong."[46] In this context, "avian silence" links the silences of lost connections across the ocean with Guam's devastated fauna through their shared causes, namely US occupation.

Toward the final lines, the positions that had oriented the space of the poem geographically (between California and Guam) and temporally (between the past and the present) lose their fixedness. In the setting of connections lost, the first-person's desire to remember throws belongingness into an atemporal situation where its orientation toward the past as an ongoing remembrance is isolated by the singularity of the "once" of belonging, just like the brackets that surround "we." Throughout the series pronouns and possessive pronouns in the first-person plural are set off from the surrounding text by brackets in allusion to the excerpted condition in which Guam exists as an unincorporated territory of the US. Here the interplay with belongingness intensifies the sense of unincorporation in order to signal belongingness to that single collectivity in space and time: "i | want to remember | | when [we] once | belonged" reiterates the poem's braided temporalities by returning to a collective past of belongingness excerpted from time, cut off from the present. The will to remember belongingness speaks of an isolated past not mediated by the nation, not an imagined community, but an experience situated in the domestic and familial. In the persistence of the will to remember, to infuse time with content, the colonial condition that the nation form aims to occlude remains available and expresses unbelongingness to the *here* and *now* of the nation form and the US.

Throughout *from Unincorporated Territory*, memory and familial intimacy are the most prominent forms of anational poetics. In fact, memories of domesticity denote the fact of unincorporation, of a divergence from the nation's spatiotemporal configurations through the

[46] Perez, *[guma']*, 24.

persistence of lived colonialism. While the immanence of the anational is spatially figured as enveloping the national scene, as in Myung Mi Kim's planetary rescaling (in the third chapter) or Ortiz's American landscape (in the fourth chapter), Perez approaches the anational through the discrete intimacy of the familial. In *[hacha]*, the poem "*from* ta(la)ya" portrays Perez's relationship with his grandfather:

> he points to the ceiling of his small apartment in fairfield, ca
> "you hold the nicho like this" he says
> "and the nasa around your fingers like this"
>
> his hand of
>
> ghost knot
>
> tight weave
>
> and pull cross- [47]

Again relaying voice to mark the unincorporated excerpt, "*from* ta(la)ya" intersperses different historical episodes with these accounts of domestic intimacy, which are set off by tildes. A similar transposition of space and time from the one occurring in "*ginen* sounding lines" develops here, but instead of transatlantic cables, the infrastructure on which this transposition relies is mnemonic. Perez's grandfather mimics the act of fishing using the instruments and terms employed in Chamorro culture and in doing so produces the singular space of the island: the body immersed in the reality that the deictic designates, produces the social space of Guam—albeit in a ghostly manner, as Perez comments while stressing the strength of such a ghostly bind through the tight knot of the fishing thread. The pull of this thread connecting with the past reaches back to an unspecified moment which the halved hyphenated term opens to without arriving at. Yet Perez intercedes in order to weave the fishing line, to participate in the social

[47] Perez, *[hacha]*, 29.

production of this space with lines of poetry interspersed in a woven pattern that extends this mnemonic textile.

The poem continues to intercalate accounts of Guam's history in a more impersonal and factual manner with this intimate portrayal of his grandfather, which further elaborates the production of this social space and the kind of labor required:

> his hands begin to cramp he looks at them
> surprised they are empty [taya]
> he looks at the empty ceiling
> he says "you have to imagine" [48]

Although the suspension of production of this social space is depicted as caused by an intrusion of the physical reality of the nation—an intrusion of the labor expenditure required from the grandfather as he mimics fishing in Guam while his muscles in California begin to cramp—immaterial labor is likewise foregrounded in the need to imagine. Unlike the immaterial labor coerced from colonized subjects that the nation form demands, the kind of labor that Kim's "Into Such Assembly" reorients through disinterpellation, the imagination mobilized here serves other purposes. That is, imagination is not summoned to articulate a community of simultaneity through the abstractions of the nation form, but is rather summoned to inhabit a singular spatiotemporality produced through the act of bodily remembrance. A passage from a subsequent section of "*from* ta(la)ya" describes how Perez's grandfather "stands in the small kitchen | and demonstrates how to walk | | thru the tides," which details another instance of this mimetic labor of remembrance which further specifies the Oceanic aesthetics and forms of spatiotemporal perception that produce the reality of Guam in California.[49] As an act of survivance through the

[48] Perez, *[hacha]*, 30–1.
[49] Perez, *[hacha]*, 39.

continual practice of Chamorro culture, a circularity is insinuated through an Oceanic hermeneutics that sustains the capacity to interpret beyond the capacity to perceive:

> he explains how to know what kind of fish hides
> beneath the water by reading the surface movement of
> currents and shadows [50]

Recalling Michael Taussig's observation, we could posit that if "Mimesis sutures the real to the really made up—and no society exists otherwise," then the ways in which Perez's grandfather mimics Guam's reality and in which Perez sutures, or weaves, that reality to his poetry mutually reinforce a sociality that carefully wedges the reproduction of the nation form. [51] Perez directs the attention of the reader to the persistence of alternative realities preserved in the mnemonics of domestic intimacy.

Similar to the weaving of the fishing line through poetry, in this case Perez extends the need to imagine through his poetry: the mimetic act demands imagination from the reader to construct a space beyond the emptiness of the nation ("the empty ceiling") and, more importantly, to likewise orient the imagination towards the construction of spaces and temporalities articulated through the singularity of bodily remembrance and familial intimacy. Or, in the terms of this dissertation, Perez posits the need to imagine forms pertinent for the singularity of remembrance, familial and colonial. This colonial, domestic locus describes a sociality of asynchronous genealogies branching through the nation's projected spatiotemporal homogeneity. Perez charts a reciprocal subsumptive interplay to the expansion of imperialism across the planet through the displacement of colonial families; acting as grafts introduced in the

[50] Perez, *[hacha]*, 31.
[51] Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A particular History of the Senses* (London: Routledge, 1993), 86.

nation's spatiotemporal mesh, these domestic scenes proliferate as anational possibilities at a more limited level than peoplehood, but with the same fractal potential of scaling outward.

Coda: Secrecy and Autopoiesis in Moten and Gumbs

Following the centrifugal dynamism that each of the previous chapters chart, this coda briefly analyzes the beginning of two poetry collections, Fred Moten's *the little edges* (2015) and Alexis Pauline Gumbs's *Dub* (2020), as points of departure for a communal branching out beyond national delimitations. The nearly four decades that span the historical purview of this dissertation, from 1981 to 2020, suggest a growing investment in disengaging from the national scene among the poets considered. Each comparative case—Jennifer Tamayo's repurposing of Gloria Anzaldúa's cenotes and radical belongingness, Myung Mi Kim's disinterpellating poetics building upon Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's dictation, and Craig Santos Perez's spatiotemporal poetics as elaborating on Simon Ortiz's landscape aesthetics—points to the articulation of collective poetics that actively build futures through poetic resonances and political coalitions. This coda assembles another comparative case by returning to Amiri Baraka to more closely describe how minor poets unlearn the national scene in order to organize forms of sociality through poetic exchanges. More specifically, I note how Baraka's changing same informs the development of networks of poetic sociability during multiculturalism, which are notable in the poetry of Moten and Gumbs. These instances of anational poetics enact what Sylvia Wynter terms "*an autopoietic, autonomously functioning, languaging, living system*," which takes the collective toward self-aware anational configurations.[1]

[1] Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations" in *On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 32.

Exemplifying the forms of sociability that anational poetics weaves as unfolding beyond the nation, Moten comments on the essential influence that Baraka has over his writing: "Baraka is not only the condition of possibility of my writing but also almost always anticipates my critiques of him even though the critiques remain necessary."[2] Such a condition of possibility speaks to the historical genealogies through which the anational connects a past before the nation to a future after it; that is, Baraka and the changing same provide a model to think through the historical conditions of possibility of anational poetics and how they foster forms of sociality through poetic exchanges.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I read "Hymn for Lanie Poo," from Baraka's *Preface to Twenty Volume Suicide Note*, as evidence of his investment in black self-determination through the changing same. The two poems that follow "Hymn for Lanie Poo" in *Preface*, "In Memory of Radio" and "Look for You Yesterday, Here You Come Today," further nuance this investment by describing Baraka's relation to popular mass culture during the early sixties. "In Memory of Radio" reminisces about the radio shows that Baraka used to listen to as a kid—with the first line pondering "Who has ever stopped to think of the divinity of Lamont Cranston?" in reference to the protagonist of the pulp novel-turn-radio drama *The Shadow*. "Look for You Yesterday" extends this perspective by addressing comic books, but also acknowledging a "maudlin nostalgia." In fact, Baraka would later comment that "Look for You Yesterday" is "about my vision of my childhood, some of the things that have stayed with me and how I used these things to show that I am gradually older."[3] I read these two poems as theorizing how mass popular culture operates in relation to both a national scene and minority

[2] Fred Moten and Charles Rowell, "words don't go there" in *b jenkins* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 111.
[3] Quoted in Werner Sollors, *Amiri Baraka / LeRoi Jones: The Quest for a "Populist Modernism"* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 53.

writing, which helps Baraka further conceptualize the changing same. My interpretation of these poems relies on his refunctioning of nostalgia by putting it in conversation with the genre of blues music—a genre already evoked by the allusion to Count Basie in the title. As a manifestation of the changing same, blues music allows Baraka to inflect his nostalgia in such a way that he can question the assumptions that mediate his attachment to the national scene.

The conversation between blues music and mass culture relates to the forms of genre attachment through which these poems describe Baraka's profound nostalgia. As epics that mythologize certain types, "genre" radio shows and comic books allowed Baraka to see the world through strict national categories. Such a perspective furnished a clear role for the poet as sage and storyteller, compounding the individual prominence of the heroic protagonist with the author's craft through the production and safeguarding of order and hierarchy pertinent to both trades. For example, Baraka describes a station's programming schedule as ordering time and his role within that order—both in the past invoked and the present of writing: "At 11, *Let's Pretend*/& we did/& I, the poet, still do, Thank God!" Similarly, he wonders, "Am I a sage or something?" giving a specific name to that prominent figure upholding the epic narrative's interpretative capacity to order the world.[4] "Look Here for You Yesterday" likewise observes how "An avalanche of words | could cheer me up. Words from Great Sages."[5] Baraka is aware of the influence these genres have on him as forms of attachment, elsewhere embracing pulp cowboy books as "the truest legacy of my spirit."[6]

His nostalgic attachment to genre instills a historic stasis upon the poems where the question of "When will world war two be over?" returns as an incapacity to manage the social

[4] Amiri Baraka, *S.O.S.* (New York: Grove Press, 2014), 12.
[5] Baraka, *S.O.S.*, 14.
[6] Amiri Baraka, *Tales* (Brooklyn: Akashic, 2016).

upheaval of the sixties—an incapacity which insists that "THERE *MUST* BE A LONE RANGER!!!" to confer the old order that is longed for. "All the lovely things I've known have disappeared," Baraka confesses in "Look Here for You Yesterday," seemingly embracing a nostalgic mood that cannot find valuable attachments in the present. However, his embrace of nostalgia is duplicitous, just as the love Baraka proffers for these disappeared things; earlier, "In Memory of Radio" communicates a suspicion about this word:

> & Love is an evil word.
> Turn it backwards/see, see what I mean?
> An evol word. & besides
> who understands it?
> I certainly wouldn't like to go out on that kind of limb.[7]

As playful and jejune as Baraka's reversal of the word is, instantiated in the poem by that forward slash, it signals a profound awareness of the forms of attachment, the kinds of limbs, upon which his nostalgia rests. Baraka shows that there is a flip side to the word "love" (note that his emphasis is on the signifier) which reveals the forms of attachment that these genres enable—as exhibiting evil, this flip side shows how these forms of attachment transform and modulate their visibility, much like the protagonist of *The Shadow*:

> What was it he used to say (after the transformation, when he was safe & invisible & the unbelievers couldn't throw stones?) "Heh, heh, heh, Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows."[8]

Along with the reversal of evol/evil into love and vice versa, The Shadow's knowledge of the intimate attachments "of men" evokes not only the material properties of shadow, but of the medium through which this content is broadcast.

Radio waves come to symbolize the infrastructural invisibility of this evil/love coordinating Baraka's nostalgia. Their reach is portrayed as near ubiquitous. Baraka's question

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[7] Baraka, *S.O.S.*, 12.
[8] Baraka, *S.O.S.*, 13.

about "the divinity of Lamont Cranston" can assume that if not everyone has thought about this divinity, everyone could have because everyone was listening to the radio, albeit to another station: "(Only Jack Kerouac, that I know of: & me. | The rest of you probably had on WCBS and Kate Smith, | Or something equally unattractive.)"[9] That Baraka addresses this "rest of you" that completes a whole suggests that radio itself inaugurates a social space, the nation's public sphere; that is, radio confers a medium of exchange by producing a shared space through its infrastructural, initial interpellation. Moreover, such an interpellation produces both the whole and segments it by way of the modulation of the amplitude or frequency of the radio waves. In other words, radio produces its publics through the criterion that Michael Warner describes as "stranger-relationality": unlike the manifest positive content of the nation, a public "unites strangers through participation alone, at least in theory."[10] So the specific audience of a radio show, like *The Shadow*, produces a public segmented through different tastes within a whole enabled by the nation's infrastructure. Within the poem these publics are differentiated according to their attractiveness—from Baraka's view at least. This depiction of radio sketches the terms in which Baraka will approach the public sphere during the phase in which US official multiculturalism developed decades later: through an alert awareness of the nationalization of peoples as the consolidation and segmentalization of publics.

Comic books, on the other hand, emblematize his understanding of commodity circulation. A similar scene of sociality resulting from the space generated by the circulation of popular mass media takes place in "Look Here for You Yesterday":

> People laugh when I tell them about Dickie Dare!
> What is one to do in an alien planet
> where the people breath New Ports?
> Where is my space helmet, I sent for it

[9] Baraka, *S.O.S.*, 12.
[10] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 75.

3 lives ago…when there were box tops.

What happened to box tops??

O, God…I must have a belt that glows green
in the dark. Where is my Captain Midnight decoder??
I can't understand what Superman is saying![11]

These lines playfully depict Baraka's nostalgia by creating spaces where his voice oscillates between different instances of occlusion and disclosure in relation to forms of possession and lack. From the risible disclosure of the existence of Dickie Dare[12] or the sudden realization of the need to possess a green belt, to the occluded knowledge of what one should do in an alien planet, or the occluded content which cereal boxes hold beneath their box tops, or even the meaning of Superman's words, this rapid succession of questions and observations catalogues loss. The visibility of this field reacts to the constant succession of each line, jumping from one fictional world/planet to another, as if visibility depended on continual circulation. In this rapid movement, Baraka's nostalgia becomes less legible, giving way to alternative forms of relation.

Nostalgia is undercut as the one ordering presence as well. In the last quoted line, Baraka is unable to understand Superman, the quintessential nationalist superhero. Emblematic of his relationship to this pantheon of comic-book characters, Superman's unintelligibility renders his attachment to nostalgia tenuous. As an interpretive problem, not understanding conveys a similar dynamic to that of the love/evil reversal, where the signifier strays away from its signified. This dynamic qualifies the presence of commodities: although Superman is perceived in the act of utterance, form is detached from content in the same way that the box tops lack a content and fail to deliver their promise of exchange in the way of a space helmet. Marking the absence of a decoder projects a scene of impermeable surfaces where proper names elude clear referents and

[11] Baraka, *S.O.S.*, 16.
[12] Dickie Dare was a character in a comic strip of the same name published from 1933 to 1957.

blend with brand names. In this scene, commodities are metonymically referenced through Newport cigarettes as ubiquitous as a planet's breathable air. More to the point, the absence of a space helmet denies the sense of safety that Baraka seeks, depriving him from relief from nostalgia—even though he participated in the infantilized transaction of commodity exchange lawfully and ought to have received his helmet. Together, these poems portray getting older as developing an awareness about the public sphere's inculcation of ordering myths during childhood. Baraka distances his poetic vocation form the figure of the order-keeping hero, adapting it to portray how these myths fail to deliver on the promises they made by estranging their referents—an estrangement pithily captured in the title's chiasmic temporality: "Look for You Yesterday, Here You Come Today."

These poems convey the strategy with which Baraka would react to these national forms of attachment, structuring a tacit form of organization with regards to his poetics and to the changing same. A reversal similar to the flipping of the word "love" in "In Memory of Radio" takes place in the sense that Baraka does not remain attached to either these commodity surfaces or these invisible infrastructures. Rather, his reversal entails the articulation of participation within this national public sphere through the same superficiality and invisibility he perceives, thereby disinterpellating from these forms of attachment and embracing the dynamic of a counterpublic. This reversal comes about as a retreat to the sphere of sociality already practiced by the changing same; it is the blues tradition which points to a way out of the nostalgia that dominates these poems.

Perhaps taking a cue from what Robert Johnson describes, in "Kind Hearted Woman," as studying evil all the time, particularly with regards to love, Baraka's nostalgia for popular mass

media needs to be assessed through the inflections that blues music perform upon his poetry.[13] For example, both poems give blues the last word: while "In Memory of Radio" follows The Shadow's monologue with a blues quatrain ("O, yes he does | O, yes he does. | An evil word it is, | This Love."[14]), "Look Here for You Yesterday" closes with the following description: "My silver bullets all gone | My black mask trampled in the dust | | & Tonto way off in the hills | moaning like Bessie Smith."[15] In this scene of departures perceived from the point of view of the Lone Ranger, the mythology of the superhero begins to vanish. Yet Tonto, far off as he may be in the hills, persists through his moan heard like blues singer Bessie Smith's. As form and as referent, the blues tradition constitutes an alternative way of relating to the loss of order in both poems; precisely as a form of attachment to a changing same, Bessie Smith, long dead by the time Baraka writes, provides an anchor for loss's similarity in difference, allowing to decode the far-off but lingering presence of this Native American caricature-turn-blues singer as a surreptitious minor voice haunting the public sphere.

The mediation granted by the blues tradition amounts to what Houston A. Baker Jr. terms critical memory. One of two rhetorical forms of construing the past, critical memory opposes nostalgia—which for Baker entails "a purposive construction of a past filled with golden virtues, golden men and sterling events" much like those of Baraka's popular mass culture pantheon. Critical memory, on the other hand, "is the very faculty of revolution. Its operation implies a continuous arrival at turning points. […] The essence of critical memory's work is the cumulative, collective maintenance of a record that draws into relationship significant instants of

[13] The specific gist of Johnson's intervention with his version of this song is to give prominence to the dichotomy of evil and love: developed from an earlier blues song by Bumble Bee Slim, "Cruel Hearted Woman Blues," which in turn was based on "Mean Mistreater Mama" by Leroy Carr, Johnson's version foregrounds kindness in relation this study of evil.
[14] Baraka, *S.O.S.*, 13.
[15] Baraka, *S.O.S.*, 18.

time past and the always uprooted homelessness of now."[16] Approaching the ways in which Baraka theorizes and practices the changing same, Baker describes the cumulative temporality of a meaningful past in relation to an uprooted present. Such an account approximates the salience of blues remembrance over nostalgia toward the end of both poems, pointing toward the collective labor of maintaining this tradition. Critical memory could also inform the temporal structure that Baraka elaborates in works such as "Hymn for Lanie Poo" and "Suppose Sorrow was a Time Machine," which, as I argued in the first chapter, display past and present as reciprocally affected.

For Baker, critical memory is central to the production of a black public sphere emerging against the grain of the predominant, white-supremacist, public sphere that organizes the US and its impositions upon black life. As "the 'b,' or negative, side of a white imaginary of public life in America," Baker argues, "black Americans have so aptly read this flip side [that] They are drawn to the possibilities of structurally and affectively transforming the founding notion of the bourgeois public sphere into an expressive and empowering self-fashioning."[17] One possible interpretation of the black sphere that Baker describes could point to the risk of construing it as the negative of a white public sphere, which would constrain the revolutionary faculty of critical memory within the national frame of transforming (or reforming) the bourgeois public sphere. In fact, Baker acknowledges such nationalist possibilities when he refers to the US Constitution and national flag as "valued sites of patriotism and pride for the black public sphere."[18] However, there is an inherent dynamism outlined here, one that proceeds by flipping the dominant account of the public sphere and that describes a more volatile form of sociality, particularly with regards

[16] Houston A. Baker, Jr., "Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere" in *The Black Public Sphere*, ed. The Black Public Sphere Collective (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 7.
[17] Baker, "Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere," 13.
[18] Baker, "Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere," 23.

to Warner's notion of stranger-relationality. That is, if Baker considers that the black public sphere originates as a flipped side of the national public sphere, then the potential I trace in Baraka's conception of popular black music unfolds in an incessant flipping that constantly turns away from the visibility of a public sphere and instead recedes into a fugitive or hidden sphere of sociality. This dynamism pertains to Baraka's blues-inflected conceptualization of popular mass culture, particularly in the sense of cultural objects circulating as commodities.

In "The Changing Same," his essay on popular music I addressed in the first chapter, Baraka argues that R&B music is closer to blues, to a black genealogy of expression, than avant-garde contemporary jazz is. He describes some jazz musicians as weakening toward "a middle-class place" where assimilation turns likelier: "There are simply more temptations for the middle-class Negro because he can make believe in America more, cop out easier, become whiter and slighter with less trouble, than most R&B people."[19] Ornette Coleman receives the sharpest critique, as the energy of his music only produces a "bebopier bebop, a funkier funk. […] Like ivy, finally growed up and fastened to an academy."[20] Institutionalization, given the prevailing social structure, becomes a marker of distance from the source of expression. For example, coolness, in Baraka's evaluation, comes to describe another assimilative process, an intellectual tendency to abstract that distances from black tradition:

> Literary Negro-ness, the exotic instance of abstract cultural resource, say in one's head, is not the Black Life Force for long if we are isolated from the real force itself, and, in effect, cooled off. Cool Jazz was the abstraction of these life forces. There can be a cool avant, in fact there is, already. The isolation of the Black artist relating to, performing and accommodating his expression for aliens.[21]

[19] LeRoi Jones, *Black Music* (New York: Akashic Books, 2011), 196.
[20] Jones, *Black Music*, 175.
[21] Jones, *Black Music*, 192.

Coolness measures the extent to which culture has been abstracted, excised from its praxis, as well as the fragmentation of the collective, the individualization of the artist as an isolated intellectual. In contrast, R&B music retains a proximity to the collective—even though Baraka speaks of R&B music in "the context of mainstream America," that is, circulating as commodities. For Baraka, there is something more radical, "Blacker," in this music because, beyond its commodification, it can communicate black life: "That life. It screams. It yearns. It pleads. It breaks out […] the vibrations of a feeling, of a particular place, a conjunction of world spirit, some of everybody can pick up on. […] It is an ominous world alright."[22] Popular culture, in this light, bears a similarity to stranger-relationality, as it connects black people through the circulation of its cultural objects.

If the commodity form designates congealed social labor, Baraka speaks of an expressive excess that disrupts the commodity's surface. This is the life that "screams," "yearns," "pleads," and "breaks out" beyond the commodity fetishism that substitutes social relations with commodity relations—R&B music does not cool down in isolation because it circulates and reproduces black sociality in its singularity. In the same way that formal subsumption marks the crevices and fragmentariness of the nation form, Baraka conceives of a similar fissure in the commodity form where the process of its production, the labor congealed in its constitution, remains available as a mode of sociality attuned to the temporal reciprocity between past and present. There is a temporal reversal inherent to this possibility, one already sketched in "Hymn for Lanie Poo" when considering the deconstruction of wicker baskets into the elements that constitute them: "we all know this wicker baskets | would make wild-assed trees."[23] Just as the temporal linearity that organizes the nation form is susceptive to reversal when considered

[22] Jones, *Black Music*, 203–4.
[23] Baraka, *S.O.S.*, 6.

through the changing same, the commodity form is also liable to be perceived through the elements that comprise it.

Baraka's argument pertains to the conditions of possibility of expression with regards to the spatiotemporality of the changing same. These are the conditions of possibility within which Moten places his own writing and this is the spatiotemporality he describes when, in his critical study *In the Break*, he thinks about "how the commodity who speaks, in speaking, in the sound—the inspirited materiality—of that speech, constitutes a kind of temporal warp that disrupts and augments not only Marx but the mode of subjectivity that the ultimate object of his critique, capital, both allows and disallows."[24] These conditions of possibility refer back to *Blues People*, to the singularity of black experience and its expression; they mark the event of slavery as the production of commodities that speak, an event both inherent to capitalism's spread around the globe and disruptive of capitalism's axiology.

The spatial aspect of this spatiotemporality amounts to the interiority of the commodity form that the fissures of black expression reveal. Contrary to the Marxian mechanics of commodity circulation, where value is not inherent to the commodity but determined with respect to other commodities in the market, the expressive commodity is "inspirited" with an interiority. In Moten's analysis, "The speaking commodity thus cuts Marx," occasioning an "irruption [that] breaks down the distinction between what is intrinsic and what is given by or of the outside; here what is given inside is that which is out-from-the-outside, a spirit manifest in its material expense or aspiration."[25] Such an irruption, per the conditions of possibility of Moten's writing, is present in Baraka's thinking about black music circulating in the public sphere; this is

[24] Fred Moten, *In the Break* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 11.
[25] Moten, *In The Break*, 14.

the dynamism that describes black expression as an incessant and excessive flipping yielding an interiority available as black sociality.

"And the social consciousness displayed in that music. Pharoah Sanders will say OMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM. Which is more radical than sit-ins. We get to Feel-Ins, Know-Ins, Be-Ins."[26] Baraka's paraphrase of Sanders is indexical, deictic; the elongated "OM" does not convey the expressive excess at play, but only points to it, away from the page, in the aural register of voice, inside of it. Voice contains a world of expression and experience, of feeling, knowledge, and being. It is an interior world that coordinates the radical prospect of revolutionary potentials beyond the surface of the commodity form and beyond the written page, an interiority preserving and fostering forms of black sociality. Turning away from the practices of political resistance that were acquiring more national visibility toward the end of the sixties, such as sit-ins, Baraka stresses the radical potential of black expressivity.

For Moten, "Such aurality is, in fact, what Marx called the 'sensuous outburst of [our] essential activity. It is a passion wherein 'the senses have…become theoreticians in their immediate practice."[27] For Marx, the attunement of sense perception responds to social conditions in the sense that the "*forming* of the five senses is a labor of *humanized* nature […] a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present."[28] Moten repurposes Marx to describe a form of sensing, an aesthetics, that responds to the specificity of black social life, where the enslaved as a speaking commodity trace an alternative genealogy and form of sensing which is receptive to the expression of black emotion. This is an immediacy of experience and

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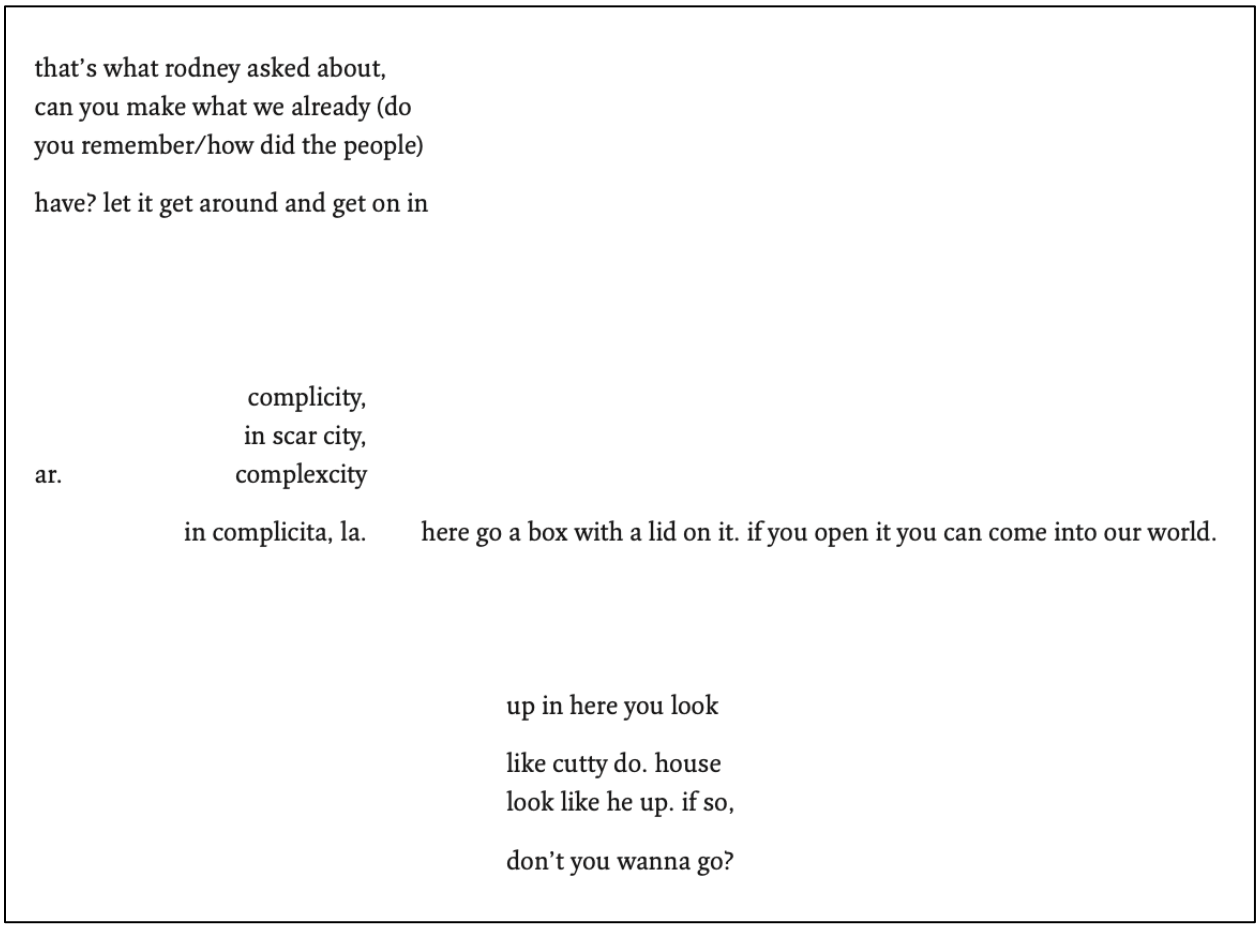
[26] Jones, *Black Music*, 204.
[27] Moten, *In The Break*, 11–2.
[28] Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, trans. Martin Milligan (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1988), 109.

expression, a bind that nuances stranger-relationality, throwing it into the spatiotemporal warp of the black public sphere and its history. Moten's poetry is likewise oriented to the conditions of possibility of such an interior sociality and as coordinated by the changing same. The first page of the first poem of *the little edges*, "fortrd.fortrn" is displayed below:



that's what rodney asked about,
can you make what we already (do
you remember/how did the people)

have? let it get around and get on in

complicity,
in scar city,
ar. complexcity

in complicita, la. here go a box with a lid on it. if you open it you can come into our world.

up in here you look

like cutty do. house
look like he up. if so,

don't you wanna go?

Figure 7: "fortrd.fortrn," Fred Moten, *the little edges* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2015), 3.

Through the interplay of enjambment and parenthesis, the poem's syntax pushes us to ponder the appositional relation between making, doing, and having. But as evasive or perplexing as the title and opening of the poem might be, with its parataxis and sonic playfulness, the sentences "here go a box with a lid on it. if you open it you can come into our world."[29] stand out in their

[29] Fred Moten, *the little edges* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2015), 3.

contrasting clarity and self-awareness. The contents of the box offered, hidden beneath a lid, promise access to a world which, one assumes, provides a context and sense for the poem's own cryptic perspective. Yet such an assumption is proved wrong with the following lines (and the rest of the poem and book) by returning to an intricate syntax: "up in here you look | like cutty do. house | look like he up. if so, | don't you wanna go?"[30] By transposing the inside of the box to the inside of a house and denying an inside glimpse in the process, these lines assert that the appositional relation between making, doing, and having constitutes, in all its complexity, the singular social space the poem creates.

Parallel to the analysis of black expression circulating though commodities, we can reflect on the transformations that the praxis of minor poetry undergoes in the period that separates Baraka and Moten. This develops by way of a comparison between their depictions of enclosures and containment through the image-trope of boxes. If the valorization of the commodity's surface over its content or use value (e.g., cereal) in Baraka's case serves to convey the failure of the commodity to deliver on its promises, then Moten's account displays the adoption of such a deflective and occlusive strategy as a mode of circulation in the public sphere for a form of sociality that refuses to be recognized or identified. At stake here is an interpretation of their poetry through the premise that, as Baker phrases it, "black Americans have always situated their unique forms of expressive publicity in a complex set of relationships to other forms of American publicity (meaning here, paradoxically enough, the sense of publicity itself as authority)."[31] Baraka's and Moten's poems describe a counterpublic radicalized through singular forms of expression circulating in secrecy through a national scene saturated by the circulation of commodities. That Moten's "fortrd.fortrn," for example, is a world informed by

[30] Moten, *the little edges*, 3.
[31] Baker, "Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere," 13.

social dynamics, by a collective history and participation, is announced from the very first line of the poem through the mention of Rodney King as a metonym for the 1992 LA riots.

Against the portrayal of the LA riots as an anomaly, "that's what rodney asked about" reframes them as an ongoing cultural activity, which suggests a kinship affinity with the poem itself. In its entangled syntax and cryptic meaning, we could interpret Moten's poem as holding a divergent account of the event, where the aftermath of King's beating and arrest, along with the widespread rioting, informs a different interpretation—one pertaining to and shaped by the complex apposition of making, doing, and having. Moten intentionally situates his poetry *in complicity* with this cultural activity through a poem that persists in and by hiding its content through forms of expression shaped by the history of black experience. "fortrd.fortrn" outlines a perspective heeding to Nahum Dimitri Chandler's imperative to "desediment the dissimulation of a war" in our understanding of the LA riots as part of the historical violence that the US has inflicted on black people; to desediment, in this context, provides another instance of anational gestures that aim to turn away from the nation and from its bellicose forms of interpellation. "How can we speak of the massive violence that preceded what has been called the rebellion or riots in the streets of Los Angeles?" Chandler asks before stating the incommensurability of this violence with speech:

> In the face of incommensurability […] we cannot *speak*, as in depart from or arrive at truth. We can only respond, make a choice—a decision—in short *judge*, in other terms, *be responsible*. *We must act as if we were responsible*. For, we will, always, be responsible. This, it seems to me—strangely enough—without "words" and speeches, communicates with the response of tens of thousands in Los Angeles, and across the country (and this "country" is not homogeneous with the United States of America).[32]

[32] Nahum Dimitri Chandler, *X—The Problem of The Negro As a Problem for Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 1–2.

Chandler's assertion of the incommensurability of speech aligns with Moten's "fortrd.fortrn" if we conceive of speech as privileging transparency in terms similar to those of the major (as opposed to the minor)—the kinds of discursive practices sanctioned and recognized by the public sphere. Chandler's call for responsible action in a country that is separate from the US echoes Moten's emphasis on action and peoplehood; "that's what rodney asked about" foregrounds a nonverbal question, phrased in the action of the event, which in Moten's gloss entails a call for further action: "can you make what we already (do | you remember/how did the people) | can you make what we already do?" This syntactical overlap not only binds the actions of making, doing, and remembering, but also opens the action of present making to the remembrance of the past as a people.

The refusal of transparency, of codifying the event through a semantics shared with the public sphere, proceeds through Baraka's lesson about the reversal of the public sphere's dynamics—particularly as reliant on spectacle. Daniel Tiffany notes how "At the heart of the spectacle, one finds the logic of the open secret," where "obscurity is converted into its effects; the enigma becomes the object of a guessing game; the inwardness of language—its incommensurability—finds expression in social being."[33] Detaching the communicative language of the public sphere's speech from the expression of social being produces, in Tiffany's account, "hermetic yet expressive communities" that stand against the conventional or dominant models: "In contrast to the new ethos of instant accessibility and universality (i.e., the dogma of translation), the poetics of obscurity offers a blueprint for monadic communities which are at once inscrutable and reflective, discontinuous and harmonious, solipsistic and expressive."[34]

[33] Daniel Tiffany, *Infidel Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 30.
[34] Tiffany, *Infidel Poetics*, 11–2.

Tiffany's account of hermetic expressivity provides a general understanding of the ways in which minorities articulate discreet networks of sociality.

Tiffany's description can accommodate the specificity of black experience, where the interiority of expression entails a hermetic form of sociality, and it can also approach a wider spectrum of minority writing among and across communities. For example, we could speculate on the poetics of re-membrance as the articulation of a community bound not only by the preservation of memories, but by the form in which these memories are preserved: gathered but not incorporated, the re-membrance of the nation's violence organizes communities not only through the content of experiences, but through the form in which they are retained. We could figure such a monadic or *cenotic* arrangement of discreet collectivities across minorities—which would include Anzaldúa and Lorde, as well as Tamayo and Davies—as an anational form of being in dispersion away from the nation.

Obscurity against the demand of transparency aligns with Moten's understanding of poetry, anticipated in the title of *the little edges*, as "what happens or is conveyed on the outskirts of sense, on the outskirts of normative meaning."[35] In an interview accompanying his collection of poetry *b jenkins* (2011), he recalls Saidiya Hartman's injunction, "the right to obscurity must be respected," as a political imperative corresponding "to the need for the fugitive, the immigrant and the new (and newly constrained) to hold something in reserve, to keep a secret."[36] Such an imperative rests at the outset of any hermeneutics of anational poetics—and of the poets addressed in this dissertation—as the acknowledgment that the anational unfolds beyond what the nation frames as visible. According to Moten "Baraka carries an experiment, a secret, with

[35] Moten, *b jenkins*, 104.
[36] Moten, *b jenkins*, 105

him that changes with him and by way of him."[37] Codifying the secret as experiment and vice versa elaborates on the improvisational quality of this form of sociality. The secret/experiment, as a general minor practice, describes singular practices among oppressed collectivities, which seek to persist beyond and through their conditions of oppression. Akin to Vizenor's transmotion as survivance, Moten identifies the inheritances that Baraka enables as participant in this tradition. Whereas for Moten, his writing constantly seeks to further the praxis of the changing same by branching out to this social milieu; whether through name-dropping, as in the twice-titled poems with names of people in *b jenkins*, or his theorization of the undercommons (with Stefano Harney) and fugitivity, Moten's poetics is oriented toward fostering forms of sociality beyond the purview of the nation.

Such an orientation enables the network of poetic expressivity he holds with Baraka (and with the changing same in general) by way of a release of poetry from the compartmentalization of its circulation as a commodity. As production and praxis, poetry unearths its etymological genealogy and performs an autopoiesis of its own conditions of possibility and emergence—in similar terms to how Moten conceives the possibility of his writing in relation to Baraka's. But the crucial aspect of autopoiesis as informed by the changing same is its collective practice, its actuation of a form of sociality in accordance to poetic lineaments—poetry turning self-pollinating. This transition toward collective autopoiesis can be described through the shift that Wynter marks when stating that "*humanness is no longer a noun. Being human is a praxis*," where the human "is not only a languaging being but also a storytelling species."[38] Wynter periodizes two separate moments, and highlights the function of the nation in relation to the first moment where the prevailing dynamics revolve around the conception of human-as-noun

[37] Moten, *b jenkins*, 111.
[38] Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 23, 25.

captured by implicitly referencing a normalized standard way of being human—which she terms, in evocation of Derrida, a *referent-we*:

> This dynamic emerges, for example, in the "imagined communities" of our respective ethno-class nation-states: the genre-specific subjects of each such nation-state are enabled to subjectively experience themselves/ourselves in fictively eusocialized terms—this across all stratified status quo role allocations—as inter-altruistic kin-recognizing member subjects of the same *referent-we* and its imagined community.[39]

Something akin to the inclusion/exclusion logic of the nation is at work here by marking the distinct inflections that each imagined community produces for their standardized account of human-as-noun. It is by proximity to such a *referent-we* that an individual and collective form of attachment is produced and sustained.

A *referent-we* produces a human-as-noun conception that is likewise perceived as an exclusionary genre of being human, as imposing a norm and forcing into invisibility any divergence from it. The transition toward a conceptualization of being human as praxis requires a pluralization and profusion of genres, as Wynter states, "we need to speak of our *genres of being human*" and acknowledge "the central role that our discursive *formations*, aesthetic fields, and systems of knowledge must play in the performative enactment of all such genres."[40] To the extent that Baraka's and Moten's articulations and practices of the changing same emerge as divergences of the *referent-we* operative in the US, they shed light on an anational genre of being human; an open genre developed in alignment to its specific spatiotemporality and sociality, and responding to its own autopoiesis.

Alexis Pauline Gumbs's *Dub* develops a poetics attuned to this profusion of genres, paraphrasing Wynter's premise in a prefatory note to the book: "if the ways of thinking, being, and understanding that made colonialism and slavery imaginable were constructed over time,

[39] Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 27.
[40] Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?," 31.

and heretical to the ways of thinking, being, and understanding that came before them, it must be possible to understand life, being, and place differently by now."[41] Gumbs, whose poetics perform sociality by writing through and with other authors (her first book, *Spill, Scenes of Black Feminist Fugitivity* written in dialogue with Hortense Spillers's work, her second, *M Archive, After the End of the World*, with M. Jacqui Alexander's), embraces Wynter's project by participating in it and altering our ways of understanding and being. She does so by conducting a writing experiment "on the scale of one life connected to all other lives, on the scale of three individual mornings connected to every dawn of existence." With this experiment, Gumbs starts to hear

> the perspective of my ancestors from the Caribbean region. And then my Irish ancestors who shipwrecked into the Caribbean and stayed. And then beyond the Caribbean region. My coastal whale-listening Shinnecock ancestors. My untraceable Arawaka ancestors. My Ashanti ancestors who survived the middle passage. And then the ocean itself. In each case, I found myself confronting stories that I had been told, or that had been told around me, or that had been silently providing the context for my racial, national, and cultural existence.[42]

As the point of departure for *Dub*, Gumbs's proliferation of ancestral identifications bridges the project of radical belongingness proffered in Anzaldúa's poetics and reformulated in Tamayo's "becoming a peoples": the scalar amplitude of her retrospective identifications moves through the constraints not only of nationhood and peoplehood, but of species—she renders porous the taxonomical impositions that constrain life forms. In her own terms, such an experiment affects every possible form of identification and attachment, from intimate kinship to scientific factuality, as she "began to understand that the scientific taxonomy of what constituted a species or which family, phyla, genus, in some cases even kingdom and domain, a particular form of life was, was as debatable and discursively unstable as the narratives within my family of who was

[41] Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Dub, Finding Ceremony* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), ix.
[42] Gumbs, *Dub*, xi-xii.

an inside or an outside child, and who was related and why and how, and certainly as complex as what Wynter teaches us about: the discursive construction of man."[43] Gumbs's embrace of a collective autopoiesis induced through Wynter's teachings destabilizes and remains with instability as a resource for writing. Her book unfolds through the premise of sociality grounded on constantly recognizing anew. Evocative of the reciprocity with the landscape and its elements that Simon J. Ortiz's poetics performs, Gumbs opens the amplitude of the changing same toward the recognition of nonhuman kinship.

For example, at the outset of the work, the first three pieces are prose poems that anaphorically articulate a scene of sociality. The opening poem, "request," conveys a series of wishes through the subjunctive mood: "we would like it if you wrote us poems. we would like it if you wrote us long life sentences. we would like it if you broke sentences and gave us more life than you or we were told would be contained."[44] The subjunctive mood works in a similar fashion to the speculative documentary genre that in *M Archive* investigates an imagined futurity. But "request" is more straightforward about its autopoiesis and genre-destabilization aims: in the yoked acts of making and breaking, the wish conveyed is emphatic about the ongoing production of its social scene and the forms it assigns to life; more incisively, it performs a transparent rehearsal of the kinds of attachments that it proposes for such a social scene. Wanting and liking spread out as desires that nonetheless refuse to impose themselves but accommodate their interlocutor's desires through the open possibilities of the subjunctive. This openness of the subjunctive becomes the mode of acknowledging the autopoiesis of sociability, as the last item in the series of sentences states, "we would sincerely appreciate it if you stopped pretending to be

[43] Gumbs, *Dub*, xii.
[44] Gumbs, *Dub*, 1.

alone."[45] Gumbs employs the subjunctive mood with a periperformative intent: instead of the binding language of the law, such as that of the nation's interpellation, she works through the adjacent field of oblique illocutions which address an interlocutor without fixing them in a social position. Her subjunctive activates the collective links that the expression of desire implies in relation to the possible forms of worlding available.

The following prose poem, "commitment," further instills an illocutionary function by presenting a series of promises as its anaphoric structure: "we promise to wake you up if you don't get the point of the dream. we promise to show up if you show up. every day. we promise to make you feel sick when you lie to yourself. we promise to let love through if it's love you came to do."[46] The structure of the promise transforms the subjunctive expression of desire in "request" to more rigorous forms of attachment; as a performative utterance, a promise does what it says in the act of saying it, binding speaker to interlocutor. Gumbs complements the earlier expression of desire with a corresponding expression of commitment; but the gist of this structural complement still lies in its embrace of autopoiesis, as the end of the poem divests the promise from a specific content: "we promise you everything. everything. all we ask."[47] The act of promising as a commitment is redirected toward a form of sociability attached only to its indeterminacy, to the potentiality of everything as constituting the totality of what is demanded—the promise of everything is commensurate with the full commitment to the sociality articulated.

Building on the gestures of "request" and "commitment," the third poem provides, and is titled, "instructions" in the way of imperatives to narrate: "tell them about the eastern shore and

[45] Gumbs, *Dub*, 1.
[46] Gumbs, *Dub*, 2.
[47] Gumbs, *Dub*, 2.

running. tell them about underneath the boat." As a more transparent form of collective autopoiesis, "instructions" narrativizes the sociality that the preceding poems have outlined by recursively demanding a story: the anaphoric structure "tell them about" provides a content without a form, thereby projecting a profusion of stories and storytellings with divergent forms and genres. For example, "tell them why we need armor and what we did before the harm. tell them about flint, magic, coral, god, and fire. and what we left to tell the tale."[48] evokes the specificity of content as a shared experience yet refuses to constellate the items that constitute the experience through a form. In the circularity of inducing narration by procuring the elements that constitute the narration, "instructions" acknowledges the departing moment of "request" by outlining a history: "tell them who taught you to dream. to stay. to breathe. and then show them who taught you to leave."[49] As a stand-in or replacement for what in this context would be a fiction of origin that could explain the specificity of a collectivity, that is, as a replacement for a national premise, the retrospective disposition of "instructions" opens its temporality to departures. It refuses the constraints that imposing a form on sociality entails, particularly as a preamble to the "opening" that the next poem's title announces.

These three poems perform a destabilization of taxonomy at a social level in response to Wynter's human-as-praxis. At the core of this poetic experiment lies a proliferation of possibilities with regards to the pronouns that personify all actions in the poems. Gumbs replaces the *referent-we* that would mark a standardized understanding of being human with pronouns lacking fixed referents which produces a scene of anonymity. This mode of experimentation evokes the bind between experiment and secrecy that Moten's account of Baraka suggested, letting the praxis of its production hide beneath language in ways similar to Moten's poetics. In

[48] Gumbs, *Dub*, 3.
[49] Gumbs, *Dub*, 4.

other words, Gumbs's poems unfold as a play of shadows with real though secretive referents. "if you gathered them they would be everyone," begins "opening" in order to transform the conditional into an imperative:

> gather them.
>
> recognize them in your jawline, your wet eyes, your long-fingered hands, seeking what but this multitude. if you gathered them they would not fit on this island. they would spill back into the ocean whence they came. when you gather them they will have fins and claws and names you do not know.
>
> gather them anyway.[50]

At the dispersing end of multiculturalism, where its promises of belonging dissipate amid the resurgence of monocultural nationalism, Gumbs redresses the radical belongingness that Anzaldúa enunciated by recognizing affinity, kinship, and community beyond reified cultures and beyond the formal constraints of the nation—beyond all formal constraints actually, by embracing the potentials of anational attachments as they open to indeterminate life forms.

> gather them more. gather them still.
> they will unfound you and surround you unfind you and unwind you travel to you unravel through your own needle. gather the thread. collect your dead.[51]

The exhortation that Gumbs puts forth invites recognition of the self in its becoming, its gathering, as a mode of relationality with "them," "who would be everyone." Her weaving of this collectivity is driven by a radical gathering that undoes the nation form by purposefully ignoring any possibility of exclusion. While the nation form posits an incessant gathering through time and space as the disguise of its exclusions, Gumbs conjures a collectivity of incessant gathering without exclusions or boundaries. In terms closer to Wynter's teachings, Gumbs disrupts the forms of discursive containment thrown over being, and over being a black woman specifically.

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[50] Gumbs, *Dub*, 6.
[51] Gumbs, *Dub*, 7.

"I think the container has many names. Heteropatriarchal capitalism? Colonialism? The Western idea of the individual life?" Gumbs comments, "who we are is beyond the limits (or container) of one lifetime."[52] Breaking through the individualized containment of life, Gumbs's imperative to "collect your dead" spreads to the past and future. An alternative understanding of such a sociality describes how Gumbs gathers multitudes, human and nonhuman, and in the act lets them disperse. As a gathering in dispersion, she evokes the anational as the threshold through which collectivities exit the nation in myriad fugitive trajectories.

[52] Alexis Pauline Gumbs interviewed by Joy KMT, "We Stay in Love with Our Freedom: A Conversation with Alexis Pauline Gumbs" in *Los Angeles Review of Books*, February 4, 2018. https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/we-stay-in-love-with-our-freedom-a-conversation-with-alexis-pauline-gumbs/.

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