

INTERPOETICS: RESPONSES TO ISSUES
IN TAIWANESE AND AMERICAN POETRY, 1980-2002

by

YIHSUAN TSO

(Under the Direction of Ronald Bogue and Kam-ming Wong)

ABSTRACT

My dissertation proposes a new theory, interpoetics, to explain the common traits of four poets who have published works of preeminent quality and quantity during the last two decades—Taiwanese Lo Fu, Jewish American Jorie Graham, Asian American Cathy Song, and Latino American Martín Espada. Using these poets as examples, I argue that the greatness of these poets resides in their crossing the boundaries between poetry and self, between poetry and the body, and between poetry and politics. The theoretical framework of interpoetics is broader and more inclusive than Harold Bloom's influence theory in that interpoetics expounds poetic creation from an intercultural and interdisciplinary perspective, taking into account both the synchronous (connecting terrains) axis and the diachronic (responding to a tradition) axis of a creative process, thus escaping Bloomian androcentric, uni-cultural, and diachronic constraints. Moreover, each chapter of this dissertation challenges and revises extant philosophies or theories. Chapter One borrows Zhuangzi's notions and Chan to resolve the content-form dualistic dilemma in theories of transcendence. In Chapter Two, I argue that the evolution of Cathy Song's poetry presents one of the expressions of embodied girlism critical to the

third wave American feminism's demarcation from the second wave. Inbodied girlism is a phrase I coined to name my theory, which seeks to connect theories of the body and girl studies. Chapter Three explains Martín Espada's political poetry, in his words, as "an act of political imagination" written by the poet as a prophet and political "visionary" in response to poetry's waning influence on public life (Zapata's 11). In this chapter, I employ my poetics and globalization theories to examine the permeability between Espada's poetry and politics. Through these interdisciplinary, interlinguistic, and intercultural reflections, this dissertation claims that the poetry of Lo Fu, Graham, Song, and Espada has encoded social and cultural concerns that challenge existing boundaries.

INDEX WORDS: Contemporary American poetry, Contemporary Taiwanese poetry, Poetics, Chan, Taoism, Feminism, Globalization, Lo Fu, Jorie Graham, Martín Espada, Cathy Song

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DEDICATION

To my family and humanity

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My family supported me without many complaints during the writing process. I have benefited from the invaluable comments of my advisors Professors Ronald Bogue and Kam-ming Wong as well as Professors Betty Jean Craige, Katharina Wilson, Barbara McCaskill, and Susan Rosenbaum. The plates before the introduction could not have been done without the generosity of Lo Fu, who lent me his manuscript and allowed me to conduct an interview with him and take photos. I am also thankful for the funding of the Graduate School Dissertation Completion Assistantship and for the nurturing environment my department and the University have created.

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Figure 1. Photographs of Lo Fu, Lo Fu's wife, and Yih-suan Tso. Left: Lo Fu standing in his backyard shaded with white poplars. Right: Lo Fu and his wife in front of his residence, the Snow Pavilion, in Vancouver. Bottom: Lo Fu and I on the first floor of the Snow Pavilion. All photographs were taken during my research trip in June, 2003. I express my gratitude to the host and hostess for their hospitality and their permission to take these photos.

① 漂木

没有任何时刻比现在更严峻的。
 往日
 在沙滩上
 便那 ~~天~~ 假使 ~~一株向日葵~~ 一株向日葵
 双双偕亡 被浪泥的一曲挽歌
 一块木头
 被潮冲上岸边之后
 这才发现 一隻空瓶子 张着嘴
 在一艘远洋渔舟的周围 张着嘴
 唱歌
 瓶子 你吐 (也许是呕吐)
 烟 你 沉。
 不空 你 沉。
 向 潮
 那块木头又回到
 巨浪高扬的漩涡中
 一块木头去了
 把麻木说成严峻
 任何镜子都找不到这种语言

Figure 2. The fair copy of the first page of Driftwood. “An elegy” (“一曲挽歌”) has been crossed out and replaced with “a sunflower” (“一株向日葵”). Courtesy of Lo Fu.

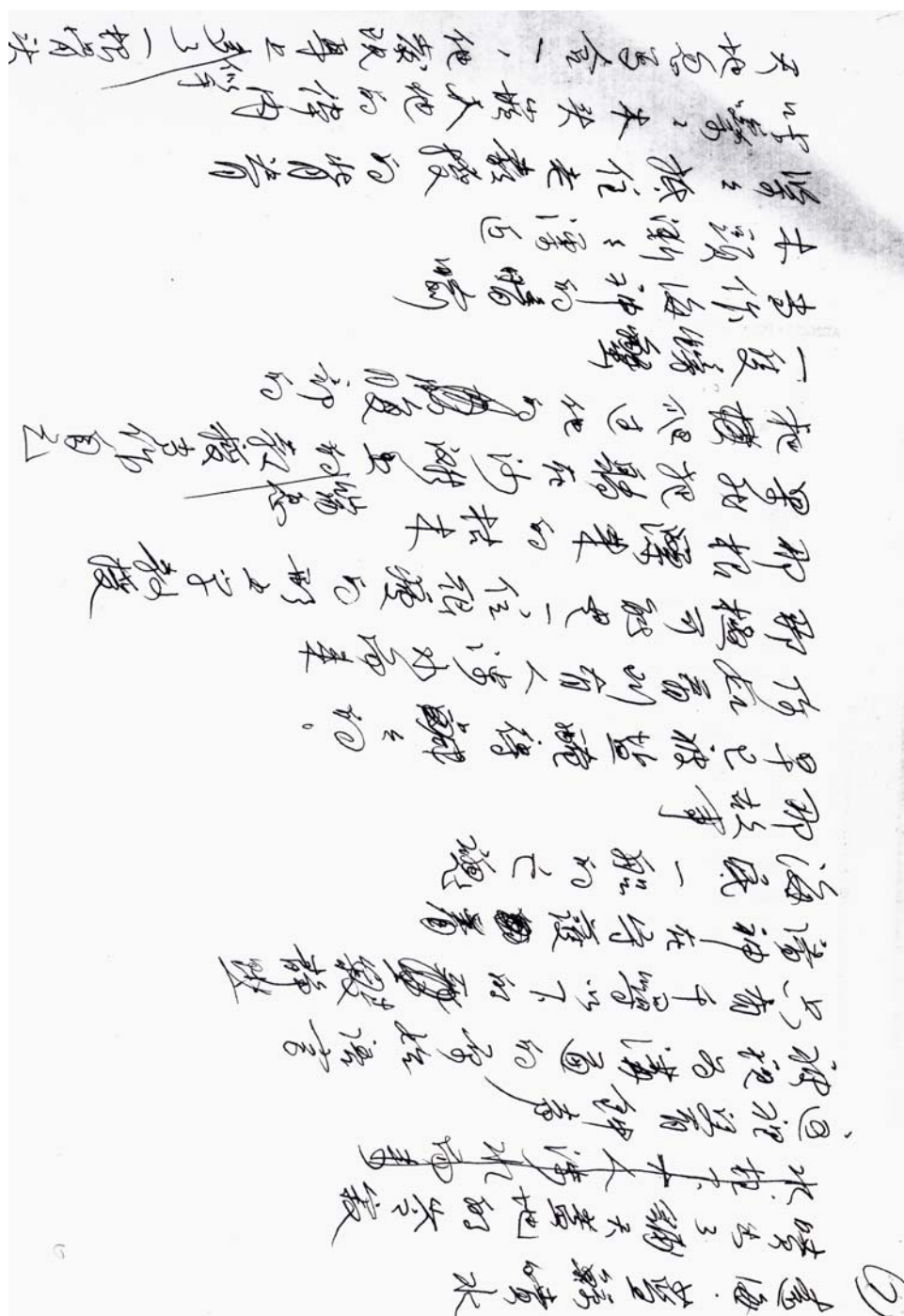


Figure 3. The fair copy of page 31 of Driftwood. In the fair copy, the fifth line reads: “Solely silence a thousand fathoms below / is regarded as the primitive language for communication” (“被視為溝通的原始語言 / 只有千呷以下的寂靜”). In publication, these lines were changed to: “Here no bells are heard. / Wind and rain are the only language” (“這裡不聞鐘聲 / 風雨是唯一的語言”) (Driftwood 31). Courtesy of Lo Fu.

INTRODUCTION

My theory defines interpoetics as a poetic strategy to create a new strain of poetry by connecting heterogeneous and incongruous terrains. Advancing globalizing and interdisciplinary synergism in poetry, interpoetics suggests that important poets respond to dominant issues by composing poetry of a diverse nature, which, as a product of interdisciplinary thought, would revitalize language, literature, and culture with new paradigms. This theory of interpoetics explains poetic creation from a comparative, intercultural, and interdisciplinary perspective while taking into account the synchronous (connecting terrains) axis and the diachronic (responding to a tradition) axis of a creative process. In this way, interpoetics offers a broader view than Harold Bloom's influence theory, in that Bloom interprets poetic creation in an androcentric, uni-cultural, and diachronic manner. Moreover, interpoetics can not be reduced to universalism, pluralism, or the performativity of postmodern re-appropriations, since interpoetics does not propose or promote in theory a single unity, an amalgamation of heterogeneous ingredients, or ongoing appropriating activities. Leaving other levels for future explorations, this dissertation seeks to decipher the enactments of interpoetics at three levels, namely, interself, intersomatic, and interpolitical levels, in Taiwanese and American poetry published since the 1980s.

The period from 1980 to 2002 is chosen as the time frame because in this post-postmodern epoch in Taiwan and in the United States, there is no single poetry theory that can be said to have reached sole preeminence in literary criticism; meanwhile, boundary crossing among nations, cultures, languages, and disciplines is at its height caused by immigration and migration, imperialism, global capitalism, and the accepted definition of a culture as multi-cultures. Thus, it is interesting to consider boundary crossing in poetry under the system of interpoetics and to observe this poetics's effects in more than one national literature. To expound on the textual implications of interpoetics, this dissertation selected poems from the oeuvres of four contemporary poets who have published works of considerable quality and weight during the last two decades and whose artistic achievements and innovative creativity have been recognized nationally and internationally—Taiwanese Lo Fu, Jewish American Jorie Graham, Asian American Cathy Song, and Latino American Martín Espada.¹

Each of the three chapters of this research deals with one interpoetic level and one or two poets. The first chapter “Interself: Poetics of the Lotus” canvasses boundary crossing between the poetic self and poetry in Lo Fu’s and Graham’s poems. Lotus, the seat of Buddha, is emblematic of the site of self-cultivation. The Lotus Sutra (妙法蓮華經; Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra) explains that when a person realizes that all phenomena are but spurious representations, a person can regain suchness, or the original nature of the self.

Just as a lotus can bloom in a filthy environment, a person can find his or her original nature of the self in a world filled with interfering representations.² Lo Fu appropriates Chan discourse to catalyze Chan transmutation of the no-self into poetry. In contrast, Graham in meticulous chronography depicts the transfiguration of the self into poetry. Lo Fu prescribes this transmutation as a cure for prosaic and plain Taiwanese poetry, whereas Graham offers this transformative model as an alternative to autobiographical and confessional American poetry on the subject of re-imagined, heightened personal life.

In Chapter Two, “Intersomatic: Inbodied Girlism,” interpoetics describes boundary crossing between poetry and body in Cathy Song’s poems, in which the girl’s body constitutes a symbolism for self-empowerment and self-determination. This symbolism reflects both the emergence of Song’s own voice as an artist and the formation of third wave American feminism’s agenda in challenging “woman” as the sole embodiment of femininity. Inbodied, a term I coined, suggests a current trend in American poetry and feminism in seeing body as the site of resistance and an opportunity for self-expression. Linking theories of the body and girlism in female psychology and in third wave feminism, my theory of inbodied girlism offers reconsiderations of the boundary between body and literature.

Chapter Three, “Interpolitical: Poetics of Political Action,” explains Martín Espada’s political poetry as, in Espada’s own words, “an act of political imagination” written by the poet as a prophet and political “visionary” in response to poetry’s waning influence on public

life (Zapata's 11). At a time when entertainment such as TV, MTV, other multimedia, and the Internet draw readers away from poetry, Espada's political poetry attempts to expand poetry's readership and to restore poetry's reverential status as an art that represents the national spirit by conflating poetry and politics. As Miguel Algarín proclaims about poets in the 1990s in his introduction to Aloud, an anthology of Nuyorican poems: "There need be no separation between politics and poetry" (10).³ Read retrospectively in the tradition of beat and language poetry, and contemporarily in the Nuyorican Poets Café's multicultural and performance agenda and in the Nuyorican literary movement in the United States, Espada's poetry reaffirms poetry as a highly political and public art.⁴ A poet who "come[s] from the working class and feel[s] comfortable creating within it," Espada continues the lineage of beat poets, who give voice to the lower class's values and feelings.

Espada's Poetics of Political Action amplifies the effects of poetry in the public sphere by making the political personal in poetry since, as Espada suggests, personal experiences "give politics a human face" (Bread 18). Political in imagination and sympathy, Espada's poetry is geared toward raising social and political consciousness. Espada's poetry is at once personal, etching the living tragedies of inner city tenants and farmworkers, and political, quirkily putting the institutions on trial in his courtroom of words, while always painting the prospect of improving the status quo. Espada's poetry shakes readers out of their complacency about this world and out of their indifference to the people surrounding

them. His poetry challenges liberal writers in regard to real life politics and to the subject of poetry: “If you agree with this issue, what are you doing about it? Why are you not writing the same kind of poem?” (González “Legacy” 6). The Poetics of Political Action may not be able to change the world radically, as Espada admits; yet this poetics effectively revamps readers’ attitudes toward their world and toward poetry. The unambiguous clarity of Espada’s poetry obliges readers to face the reality of life and of politics. Crossing the boundary between poetry and politics, Espada convinces us that the debate over whether poetry and politics can meld “is a luxury you and I can’t afford and our communities can’t afford,” when we confront the undeniable truth of poverty and misery in his verse (González “Legacy” 6). Espada’s poetry with its eloquent coercion urges readers to take political action and to write about politics.

Interpoetics has generated cross-boundary intellectual activities that for two decades have sustained the dynamic efflorescence of poetry in Taiwan and in the United States. Lo Fu, Graham, Song and Espada have responded to prominent issues in poetry first by associating heterogeneous terrains, then by authoring a new species of poetry. The poetry begins a new tradition that carries on the creative strength of Taiwanese and American literatures.

Notes

¹ Though one Taiwanese poet and three American poets were chosen for this research, an interplay of Taiwanese, Chinese, and American poetics will be sought for and other poets commented on within each chapter in conformity with this research's interdisciplinary spirit. Lo Fu was selected for he is, in my view, the greatest Taiwanese poet of this era. No other Taiwanese poets can compete with his magnitude when all their lives' works are taken into account. A constant prize winner like Lo Fu, Graham received almost all the honors and awards an American poet can possibly get and writes the most readable and enjoyable philosophical poems since those written by T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, and John Ashbery (Casper 189). Parallel study of Lo Fu and Graham, who both addressed the subject of self, illuminates not just the transformation of western aesthetics in Lo Fu's poetry but also the barrier, which Graham seeks to overcome, of sustaining a lyrical voice in the auto/biographical and confessional veins.

This research inadvertently encompasses a wide spectrum in ethnicity with regard to American poets, owing to the author's belief that American poetry should be represented by poets with more diverse styles, and that it is the critic's responsibility to map and enlarge the reader's intellectual territory. This selection comprising poets of various ethnicities in turn presents a wider range of subjects and thought than would an aggregation formed by American poets of purely Caucasian origin. Song's works possess high merits in Asian American poetry, and she also ranks among those Asian American poets attracting most critical attention. Approaching poetry from another perspective, Song suggests that poetry not only has validity in life but can also be felt by the body, which beats to the same rhythm as does history. Espada was selected not only because he is "*the* Latino poet of his generation" writing in English, but also because he reinterprets the skeptical tradition in poetry by careening from suspicions about poetry toward doubts about life ("Martín Espada");

Espada's poetry raises the ethical question, once poetry presents truth, how should the reader interpret and deal with it?

² Ms. Suchen Chen's comments and Burton Watson's translation of The Lotus Sutra (1993) help clarify this concept in the Sutra.

³ Nuyorican, coined from New York and Puerto Rican, refers to the community of Puerto Rican Americans living in New York, especially the English-speaking second generation (Algarín 5; Mohr xiv). Poets such as Miguel Algarín and Miguel Piñero from the Nuyorican Poets Café use this term to honor their Puerto Rican heritage.

⁴ As Algarín suggests, "[t]he interrelationship between what has been heretofore thought of as a highbrow art and its [poetry's] appeal to a mass public has become a very important polemic, i.e., poetry seems to want to move into daily American life" (18).

CHAPTER 1

INTERSELF: POETICS OF THE LOTUS

In the first chapter of Lo Fu's epic Driftwood, "a piece of a priori wood / floats from this shore to another shore" a myriad of times while searching for "a divine voice" (55-56).¹ Underlying these voyages is a salient impulse to cross the boundaries between old and new selves. The female narrator in Jorie Graham's poem "The Dream of the Unified Field" provides one possible answer to the shuttling between selves as she comments that the snowflakes in their "gathering and loosening . . . define, as a voice would, the passaging through from / the-other-than- / human" (Materialism 80). This quote from Graham's poem has shaped my critical concerns in this chapter. My purpose in this chapter is to explore the reverberation of the self's freedom in issues of voice and subjectivity through readings of Lo Fu's epic Driftwood and Graham's poems. I constructed my theoretical framework, the Poetics of the Lotus, which suggests that through transformation, the self crosses boundaries between various states or versions of itself and achieves freedom from the limits of a fixed identity and old paradigms. I argue that Lo Fu and Graham break the rigidity of voice by portraying a self with complete freedom expressed in both the self's boundary crossing to its

other and the effects of this crossing, the self's volatility in transformation and renewal. At the end of this chapter, I propose that a paradigm formation of subjectivity, which has been influenced by multicultural and globalizing thoughts, has emerged in Graham's and Lo Fu's poetry, which I have named "new philosophical poetry."

I chose to analyze and compare Lo Fu and Graham because of the excellence of their works and for the similarity of the poetics they employ. Born in 1928 in Hunan province, China, Lo Fu spent his adult life in Taiwan serving in the military. In Taiwan, Lo Fu co-founded the Epoch Poetry Quarterly and has grown into an influential major poet by publishing profusely, editing poetry anthologies, and garnering almost all notable poetry awards (Long 2, 9). Lo Fu immigrated to Canada in 1996 and in 2001 published the epic Driftwood, his most important late work (Tsai 38). Like Lo Fu in Taiwanese poetic circles, Graham is a stellar figure in American poetry today. Born in New York City in 1951 of a Jewish mother and a Catholic father, Graham grew up and went to a French lycée in Rome, Italy (Lambert 43). Graham was educated in the Sorbonne, France, and later attended New York University and the Iowa Writers Workshop (Lambert 43, 39). Graham published her first poetry collection Hybrids of Plants and of Ghosts in 1980 and won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1996 for her collection The Dream of the Unified Field (1995). Like Lo Fu in Taiwanese poetry, Graham has received almost all major American poetry awards.

This chapter makes contributions to literary criticism by examining some areas overlooked by critics. No efforts have been expended to complete a theoretical discussion of the first chapter of Lo Fu's Driftwood. Moreover, little critical attention has been paid to the religious and feminist implications embedded in Graham's poetry. My readings call attention to the intertwined relations between religiosity and aesthetics in Lo Fu's Driftwood, and between these and feminism in Graham's poems, and also provide an explanation for both this complexity and the new subjectivity model.

POETICS OF THE LOTUS

The lotus is used extensively in Buddhist sutras to symbolize a person's transformation and rebirth in Buddhist dharma and the self's crossing over from this world to the realm of dharma. Many sutras describe rebirths taking place in or on a lotus blossom. For example, the Lotus Sutra describes a lotus blossom as the site of rebirth: "A woman will be born in a lotus blossom on the Treasure Seat . . . in the Peaceful and Joyful World after she dies if after she hears this chapter [on 'the Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King'], she practices accordingly" (Sheng-yen Quemiao 343).² Again, in a passage in the Sutra of Hui-neng, the lotus is a sign that the self is now in the world of dharma: "Once you believe

that a buddha is not verbal, / Lotuses will bloom from your mouth” (Jingang 125-26)³. The lotus in both excerpts betokens the transformation of the self.

The lotus deftly characterizes the self’s transformation through meditation.

According to passages from Buddhist sutras, this border between the human world and another realm replete with mystery and forces beyond mortal ken can be crossed in a turn of the mind; to a person who has reached mystic enlightenment, the border between the human world and the world beyond no longer constitutes a barrier. My term **the Poetics of the Lotus** designates the border crossing between the human and other realms through the self’s transformation.

I will explain further the naming of this poetics. Though Lo Fu’s poetry employs the imagery of the lotus and Graham’s poetry the image of Jacob’s ladder to delineate border crossing between worlds, the lotus is a more appropriate term for a poetics about internal self-transformation beyond time’s limits. A prominent example of crossing to a spiritual world can be found also in the Old Testament in which Jacob sees a ladder in his dream, which opens a channel between heaven and earth.⁴ After he awakes, Jacob is convinced that the two worlds are not completely split and that God is omnipresent: “Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it! . . . This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (Gen. 28.16-17 in Metzger 36 OT). Two reasons underlie the use of the term lotus. While Jacob’s ladder connotes an

external path to a spiritual realm, the lotus embodies the inside transubstantiation of the self from a corporeal to a supernatural state. Though Jacob's ladder emerges in Jacob's dream at night, it evanesces with his awakening. By contrast, the lotus blooms irrespective of time and of one's state of consciousness.

The Poetics of the Lotus characterizes the self first as a subject transcending time and space, second as an evolving entity, and third as a being situated among the multitudinous things and beings in the universe. The first characteristic of the poetics delineates the self's independence and freedom from limits imposed by the span of life and body. This characteristic suggests the self's power in transcending reality and coincides with the Buddhist concept that heaven or hell is formed by a person's three *karma*—"thought, word, and deed"—and is not gods' gift or punishment (Soothill 403). The second feature envisions the self as made up of successive phases of transitions and changes, and favors continuous dialogues between the self and the world. The third trait adumbrates a divergence in the view of the postmodern self and the modernist ego as Fangming Ch'en suggests. Ch'en maintains that the striking difference between the two terms, the ego used by modernists and the self utilized by postmodernists, resides in a shift in emphasis, with modernists emphasizing psychological activities and the subconscious and postmodernists focusing on a subject's place in the external world (164). As Fangming Ch'en suggests, a subject is now defined as the interactive relationships between the self and the objective

world (164). This notion portrays a self which is free, evolving and subject to the world's influences.

The Self's Freedom

Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry delineates a free self whose transformation and evolution resemble life's impermanence and complexity (see figure 5).

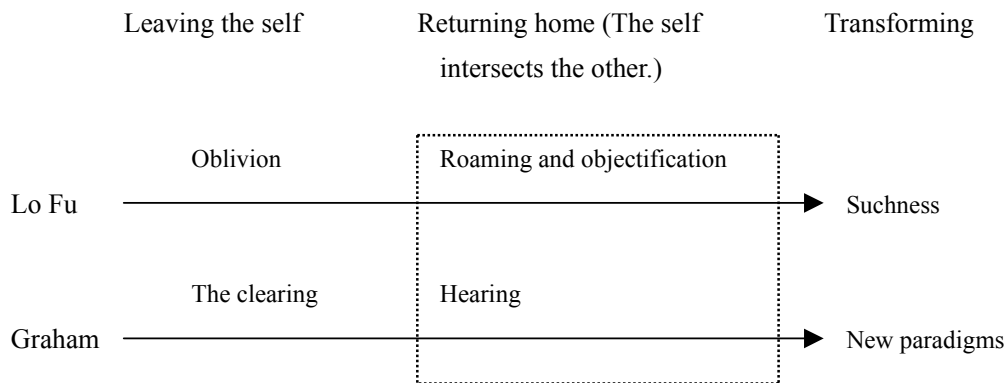


Figure 5. The Self's Freedom

Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry portrays the self in transition from one state to another; this transition reflects life's temporal and mortal nature. Both Lo Fu and Graham celebrate an ontological aesthetic, and as life itself is a continuum rather than stasis, they see beauty in a process rather than in an ending. Lo Fu's epic Driftwood and many of Graham's poems portray the self in a course of development; first the self absents itself, turning from culture defined as metaphysics, ideologies, and all preconceptions the self possesses. Lo Fu borrows Zhuangzi's term "oblivion" or forgetting the self to describe this turn, while Graham in her own terms, envisions a clearing that appears in the mind.

Next, during the second stage, in an imagined intersection with the other, often symbolically presented as a return home, the self approaches the truth in the other, which I define as everything other than the self. Graham's poetry employs the motif of hearing to describe the self's readiness to understand the thingness or otherness in this stage. Lo Fu's Driftwood delineates this readiness and the self's freedom from its cultural burden in Zhuangzi's notion of roaming and of objectification, in which the self transfigures into diverse beings and things in the universe so as to comprehend the principles underlying the phenomena in the universe. The other in Lo Fu's Driftwood is represented by Tao or Chan in nature, while in Graham's poems it appears variously as myths, philosophies, God, personal experience, and nature. During the third stage of transformation, the self returns to suchness or its original nature in Lo Fu's Driftwood, and is able to utter criticism of itself and its cultures from the viewpoint of the future self. In Graham's poems, the self's transmutation is presented as it sheds old paradigms of thought and adopts new models of thoughts.

Crossing to the Other: Ascetic Principles

Affirming ascetic principles either in Taoism, Buddhism, or Christian ideas, Lo Fu and Graham revive the ascetic spirit, and in their poetry, like Christ, an enlightened Taoist or

Buddhist, a transformed self mediates the divine and the human, and the self and its other in border crossing.

Buddhist and Taoist Asceticism: No Distinction, Oblivion, Roaming and Objectification

Buddhist and Zhuangzi's ascetic ideals pervade Lo Fu's poetry. Influenced by Chan thought, Lo Fu maintains that the travel between worlds increases as the desire to distinguish worlds subsides. The self regains its original nature or suchness when it makes no distinction between the phenomenal and the dharma world, or between anything. Therefore, the Lotus Sutra says that a "bodhisattva or mahasattva . . . observes the true entity of phenomena without acting or making any distinction[s]" (Watson 197).⁵ The Buddha explains in the Diamond Sutra that to return to suchness, the mind "should hold onto nothing when a notion arises" (Jingang 16).⁶ In other words, an achieved Buddhist does not separate the realm of phenomena from the realm of the dharma and thus is not confined to the view that life is empty; whoever has a mind to discriminate differences will be limited to practicing Hinayāna and will miss the opportunity to gain higher wisdom though he can escape from being reincarnated to a lower realm. Moreover, according to this same idea of no distinction or "nondualism," an achieved practitioner does not hold the narrow view that life is made up of phenomena and does not focus all attention on the issues of life and death (Watson Lotus xv).⁷

In the original preface to Mārā Songs (1974) and in an essay in Lo Fu: Selected Poetry of the Century (2000), Lo Fu interprets suchness as the “real self” fused with the multitude in a state where the self forgets both itself and objects: “The greatest venture a poet can have is to tame the language. . . . To achieve this goal, a poet must first cut oneself into pieces and then knead oneself into everything. As a result, individual existence becomes one with beings in the universe. . . . This heart in poetry is the heart of the multitudinous” (Moge 140-41).⁸ Therefore, “ ‘the real self’ is the self having transformed into all beings” (Moge 141).⁹ To Lo Fu, this “ ‘real self’ is perhaps the only goal a poet in all his life pursues assiduously while crafting images and wrestling with language” (Moge 140, Lo Fu • Shiji 5).¹⁰ The self experiences freedom when it returns to its original nature because the dividing line between the self and the universe is broken; as Lo Fu comments: “Since we are totally open to this world, we are completely out of the confines of the world” (Moge 141, Lo Fu • Shiji 6).¹¹

The Chan idea of no distinction frees the self’s imagination in Lo Fu’s epic Driftwood (2001), in which the driftwood, a symbol of the self, freely traverses Taoist, Buddhist, and the human worlds.¹² While the Buddhist idea of making no distinction assists the self in gaining freedom, Zhuangzi’s notion of oblivion takes the self in Driftwood to a transcending and new position from which to comment on society and cultures through the asceticism this notion implies. Lo Fu intends to write a new cultural history via a meditation on the self’s

confrontation with the other. Oblivion or forgetting the self, the ascetic method taught by Zhuangzi, cleanses the self of cultural and social sediments and returns it to its original, clean state: “Depart from all appearances, which are all the laws. / A new cultural history will arise from a pinch of cold embers / and from our oblivion” (Driftwood 222).¹³ Oblivion can be explained as relinquishing the cultural self: “Detach from the bodily form and expel intellect / to regain my absolute emptiness, box-like. / Then, strain to forget the self” (Driftwood 226).¹⁴

In addition to Buddhist and Taoist ascetic thoughts, Zhuangzi’s notion of the self’s roaming and its objectification, the latter referring to its transformation into the multitudinous, nourishes Lo Fu’s poetry: “Zhuangzi with the butterfly and The Great Compassion Mantra speak in turns / without parleying” (Driftwood 62).¹⁵ The highest, clearest nihilistic wisdom remains either a metaphor or an ideal to Lo Fu. Zhuangzi’s ideas of roaming and of objectification constitute Driftwood’s methodologies, guiding the direction of the narrative and assisting the reader in reaching the enlightenment about life.

Christian Asceticism: The Other’s Resistance to the Christ-like Self

Christian ascetic principles inform Graham’s poetry. Graham translates asceticism as awareness of the other. In interviews, prose or verse, Graham reiterates her belief that the well-being of the self depends highly on its contact with the other, which is defined as everything other than the self, in developing and stabilizing a self-identity while also

changing it. For example, in an interview about her recent book Never, Graham emphasized the importance of remaining in contact with physical nature: “If we stop looking at it [nature], we stop attending to it. . . . At a certain point, we stop being real to ourselves” (“Time”).

The other remains intransigent to analysis because of its obduracy toward verbal expression.

In Graham’s description, divineness and mystery housed within the other resist the analysis of reason to give it form and put it in words. In her religious and philosophical poems,

Graham uses Christian ascetic ideal as a metaphor for abstinence from forms. For instance,

Graham delves into and seeks to explain Christ’s mysterious dual human and divine attributes

in her poems “Holy Shroud” and “Noli Me Tangere,” in which the other makes forays and

inroads into Graham’s language and destabilizes any interpretations of Christ’s nature.¹⁶

Like Christ, who in order to redeem the souls descends to the earth and into hell, the narrator

in these poems attempts to remain in contact with the other. In an interview, Graham says

that the resistance of the other to the desire of the self to give form to poetry is one of the

governing principles in her poetry published up to 1996, a statement also true for those poems

published later: “I essentially had an encounter with something I would consider ‘other’,

something that resists the will of the speaker” (“Conver.” 12).

In the history of American poetry, Graham’s other is equivalent to Emily Dickinson’s Circumference and Wallace Stevens’s essence of poetry, as all three terms endeavor to explain both the self’s individuality and its involvement in the world. For example, the

divine nature crosses the center of the Dickinsonian Circumference without interfering in its outward expansion and adventures. In Dickinson's poem 802, God traverses the speaker's Circumference, contrasting the limited time of humans with His immenseness:

Time feels so vast that were it not

For an Eternity –

I fear me this Circumference

Engross my Finitude –

To His exclusion, who prepare

By Processes of Size

For the Stupendous Vision

Of His Diameters – (2.607)

Were it not for God, the narrator's poetic career of limning "Circumference" would engage ("[e]ngross") all her attention. Luckily, she turns her inferior status of leading a finite existence into an advantage by delineating His eternity that traverses her mind but does not dominate it. God cannot encompass Dickinson's art but only penetrate it as Dickinson said in a letter: "The Bible dealt with the Centre, not with the Circumference" (Letter 950 in 3.850).

A quote from Stevens suggests that the other in both Graham's and Stevens's poetry must almost succeed in possessing but must finally give up the scepter to form: "*The poem must resist the intelligence / almost successfully*" (qtd. in Graham "Intro." Best xvi).

Graham's poetry, she says, is sparked by "the stubborn resistance of *things* . . . [a]nd how their resistance activates love, desire, imagination. . . . In this they [things] incarnate mystery" ("Interview" Snodgrass 153). For example, in Graham's poem "Dream of the Unified Field," the Old World and Columbus, through their encounters with and colonization of the other, the New World, have to modify their assumptions about reality and acknowledge the existence of another continent, America, which drastically changed the Old World's ideas about itself. In "The Liberated Voice" section of "New Philosophical Poetry," I will also explain that by postulating a voice that is simultaneously immanent, transcendent and evolving, Lo Fu and Graham have resolved the problem of the limitation of voice.

The Subdued Skeptical Mode

Lo Fu and Graham represent the subdued skeptical mode in contemporary poetry, which suggests that truth lies beyond language and subject matter. In contrast, Taiwanese poetry written during the Japanese occupation was mostly written in the protest mode.¹⁷

The ironic mode prevailed in the modernism in postwar Taiwanese poetry up until the 1960s

when three poetry societies—the Modernist, the Blue Star, and the Epoch Poetry Society—and poets of mainly Chinese cultural heritage dominated the scene.¹⁸

In 1964, the Bamboo Hat Poetry Society was founded by Taiwanese poets who write in the community mode and seek to form a sense of community and cultivate affection toward one's native soil (Gu 357, Wen 638).¹⁹ Beginning in 1972, Jerry Kuan, Tang Wenbiao and other poets affiliated with the Dragon Race Poetry Journal advocated realism and Chinese nationalism (Pang-yuan Chi "Mellowing" 51). Countering voices, the Native Literature Movement from 1977 to 1979, had more enduring and lasting influences on Taiwanese poetry and awakened an indigenous consciousness that had long been in formation (Yeh "Intro." xli, Lin 39).²⁰ Community and linguistic modes describe most of the fine poetry written in Taiwan from the 1980s to 1990s.²¹ Nativism in poetry has gained greater momentum since the year 2000. Nativism is defined as "the policy or practice of preserving or reviving an indigenous culture" ("Nativism").²²

The community mode devotes its attention to the land where literature is produced, the linguistic or postmodern mode focuses on language, whereas the subdued skeptical mode, the tone Driftwood is written in, ventures to transcend secular concerns and to interpret life from the perspective of the self, who is in control, though not fully, of his or her existence in the world. Poetry of the subdued skeptical mode seeks to leave the issue of identity behind and to ponder the self from a perspective that transcends mortal existence.

American poetry has undergone many revolutions in tone in the last several decades. The modernist ironic mode with its analyses of paradoxes and dualities in the 1960s gave way to the sincere mode in confessional poetry and its attempt to faithfully present tempestuous, tragic events and emotions in personal lives. From the late 1960s to 1970s arose the objective mode in Language poetry. Yet a **subdued skeptical mode** emerged during the same period, and in overall quality, poetry written in the subdued skeptical mode as exemplified by Graham's poetry surpasses verse of the objective mode. The sincere mode in the confessional poetry of Robert Lowell, Denise Levertov, Anne Sexton, and Sylvia Plath differs from the later subdued skeptical mode in that the sincere mode establishes itself on the poetry's truthfulness to the experience and emotions of the self, while the subdued skeptical mode casts a stronger suspicion on both reality and language and pins its hopes on truth beyond language. Graham admires those poets who are "the raging, passionate, doubting believers—Crane and Hopkins and Berryman and Dickinson and Donne and Stevens" (Schiff 63). These qualities of her favorite poets reflect Graham's skeptical attitude toward poetry.

In Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry, the sincerity is retained and mingled with a skepticism toward the self epitomized in the analytical or empirical treatment of the subject matter of poetry, in this case the self. This skepticism, which is evoked often in quasi-religious experiences, recognizes the existence of the other and the other's influence on

the self in poetry. For example, comments on the jacket of Graham's The Errancy tout her poetry's "mergings of the sacred and the spiritual." Lo Fu's Driftwood in the concluding line suggests that poetry constitutes the poet's "meek dreams" because the poet realizes that he must give the poems form, while allowing the other to rend this illusive form which is the trails that the self's boundary-crossing travels make (246).²³

The essential trait of this subdued skeptical mode is in the poet's open-mindedness to admit the force of the other into the poetry to tame the self's control of the poetry, which reflects the tendency in global society to check ethnocentric, unicultural, and imperialist thoughts with awareness and acknowledgement of the wills and existence of other peoples, other thoughts, and other cultures. As Graham suggests, "to feel in contradiction with yourself is part of what art can give you" ("Time"). The multicultural and cosmic impulses can be vividly seen in Graham's fear that Americans after September 11 may "oversimplify" their feelings and thought ("Time"). Likewise, before Lo Fu's driftwood can find "a voice with divine nature," it must set out on a self-exile, visiting myriad places and undergoing diverse self-transformations into other objects and beings (Driftwood 56).²⁴ Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry reflects a major switch in poetry since the 1980s from rationalism toward ontologism, and from nationalism and imperialism toward democracy redefined in the multicultural and global light.

The Poetics of the Lotus maintains that through mystic enlightenment, the self can cross the boundaries between the human world and other realms in a turn of the mind. The transformed self is the place of boundary crossing between worlds and the action of boundary crossing itself. The self travels between Taoist, Buddhist and human worlds in Lo Fu's long poem Driftwood, and it roams between the human and the world of the other in Graham's poems "The Dream of the Unified Field," "High Tide," "Holy Shroud," and "Noli Me Tangere." The self as one among the multitude communicating with the multitudinous and cosmic principles is central to Lo Fu's Driftwood and Graham's poems. In Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry, the self is no longer treated empirically as an object or an isolated field for logical analysis and deduction. The Poetics of the Lotus judges the self in its complex facades and in its mutative states voyaging among worlds.

LO FU

The School of Mystic Enlightenment

The Spirit

Lo Fu's poetics in Driftwood inherits the thought of the School of Mystic Enlightenment. Yan Yu's (1180-1235) concept that the most exquisite poetry grapples with

the spirit of things and evokes mystic enlightenment sets forth the founding statement for the school. According to Yan Yu, “the pinnacle of the art of poetry is called entering the spirit” (8).²⁵ In his epic Driftwood, Lo Fu extends Yan Yu’s notion to query self-identity in the universe: “Poetry that enters the spirit / Can then approach the universe’s nucleus / And find the niche of the self among the multitude” (Driftwood 150)²⁶.

While Yan Yu compares this mystic enlightenment to one’s sudden apprehension of Buddhist dharma, Lo Fu makes further inference of the enlightenment to Tao and to the Principle or Li:

Passing poetry critiques is like giving opinions about Chan. . . . Just as mystic enlightenment encapsulates at large the way of Chan, so it synthesizes the way of poetry. (Yan Yu 11, 12)²⁷

Yan Yu of the Song dynasty suggests using Chan as a metaphor in poetry criticism. . . . What is his so-called “mystic enlightenment”? We know that the original nature in Chan is tantamount to the Tao of Laozi, and to the Principle of the School of Principles in the Song and Ming dynasties.

(“Summary on Interview” 281)²⁸

Lo Fu goes on to explain the spirit this enlightenment attains: The “original nature in Chan,” which Yan Yu wishes to reach via poetry, “is an absolute noumenon, which can neither be explicated in words nor analyzed with reason. We can only intuit . . . and enjoy it in

personal perception and experience rather than brood over it or explicate it from the outside. . . . In reference to modern western aesthetics, mystic enlightenment is a mental resonance that appeals to intuition” (“Summary on Interview” 281).²⁹

Whether deploying Chan, Tao, or the Principle as a metaphor, both Yan Yu and Lo Fu describe a cosmic principle external to humans and to our world, which the poet intuits in poetry, accruing a reverberation among this cosmic principle, poetry, and sentient beings and objects in this universe. Yan Yu says that this resonance can be reached by intuition rather than reason.³⁰

Fine poetry eludes reasoning paths and does not fall into fishing cages made of words. . . . This poetry is like an antelope’s hung horns, seen yet leaving no tracks for seeking. . . . The poetry is like sounds in the air, colors in an image, the moon in water, and a reflection in the mirror. Though its words may be finite, the poetry produces endless reverberations. (Yan Yu 26)³¹

Like Yan Yu, Lo Fu interprets mystic enlightenment as a resonance spurred by the visible world and received by the poet’s intuition:

A sine qua non congenital prerequisite of the poet is pure aesthetics. The external world reflects on the poet’s mind. . . . This mental resonance arises from our intuition instead of our cognition; therefore, our aesthetic experience is not interfered with by reason. (“Summary on Interview” 274)³²

Lo Fu identifies Yan Yu's mystic enlightenment to be this resonance and agrees with Yan Yu that it is an act of intuition. In Lo Fu's opinion, westerners explain this supernatural resonance as invocations of gods while Freud explains it in modern psychology as subconscious activities ("Summary on Interview" 271).³³ A poet's aesthetic ability is the capability to attain "mystic enlightenment, which is intuitive mental resonance . . . and mystic perception beyond language" (Lo Fu xiaopin 68).³⁴ Lo Fu likens this resonance to the ecstasy music induces in its listeners, who forget themselves in the melodies ("Summary on Interview" 274).³⁵ Lo Fu explains it further in Chan terminology: A person in this state gains "a pure experience that extinguishes the limits of time and space, where the multitude meld into one" ("Summary on Interview" 283).³⁶

Yan Yu maintains that the finest poetry is a wordless art, which transcends representation, exposition and reasoning: "Therefore, where it has reached luminosity, it is translucent and cameo-like without being the sum of its parts" (Yan Yu 26).³⁷ Likewise, Lo Fu maintains that "poetry itself is 'wordless.' The poet 'presents' his thoughts in images" (Lo Fu xiaopin 45).³⁸ Like Yan Yu who suggests that the poetry is not the sum of its ingredients, Lo Fu contends that peerless poetry creates an ambiance for its meaning, "an infinitely large space for the reader's imagination" (Lo Fu xiaopin 68).³⁹

Contemplative Realms

Lo Fu extends Yan Yu's whole-instead-of-parts theory to the view that poetry builds worlds and civilizations within itself. Lo Fu argues that poetry creates values and builds worlds for people's contemplation:

What values does poetry create? I think that first it creates contemplative realms. . . . Poetry's task is not to depict an already known world but to create by imagination a more wonderful and unknown world of imagery. (Xuelou 135)⁴⁰

To both Yan Yu and Lo Fu, poetry that conveys mystic enlightenment has entered the spiritual world of cosmic harmony in thought.

To Lo Fu, the motive to enter another world is to find the self and its existential meaning. However, before attaining enlightenment, the self must first be freed from the constriction of reason. In Lo Fu's epic Driftwood, Taoism and Chan are two strains of thought that liberate the self into untrammelled meditation on existence.

A Lone Seeker of Truth

Lo Fu adapts Qu Yuan's use of the symbol of poisonous plants, and in Driftwood, a traitor of one's country become a lone seeker of truth. In Driftwood, poisonous plants signify the self's lonely pursuit: "And the loneliness you [the poets] safeguard / is the most

poisonous Angel's Trumpet" (Driftwood 133).⁴¹ The word "poisonous" implies "alone" as these are homonyms in Mandarin.⁴² The first chapter of Driftwood castigates Taiwanese and Chinese cultures while offering advice. Lo Fu, "the poet who sings with his wounds," opens the scars ("large syphilis sores broke into laughter") of the histories of these two nations (Driftwood 44).⁴³

A lone seeker of truth believes that a transcendental position has made his or her judgment more accurate than other contemporaries. The tradition of this thought traces back to Socrates, who died for truth, and to the poet of Chu, Qu Yuan, who in his conversation in extremis with a fisherman insisted on his judgment of the events and later drowned for this truth. This seeker's thought is guided by truth such as verity, Tao, Chan or other quasi-religious principles. The self of this seeker is in flux because it is dissatisfied with the status quo and does not reconcile with reality. The seeker's quest for truth, which can only be experienced privately by mystic enlightenment, cultivates an individualism that isolates the self from the public in its search for truth. As Lo Fu suggests, "the highest expression of tragic experience is neither in death nor in pain but is in the 'existential despair' one feels after 'self-isolation' " (Lo Fu shilun 225).⁴⁴ Loneliness and wandering are the two main traits of this seeker.

The Driftwood's Earthly, Taoist, and Chan Roaming

The driftwood is a symbol of the self, which is liberated in Tao and Chan. This self has transcended death and all dualities, and has gained freedom in contemplation. In its Taoist and Chan roaming, the self seeks to reach mystic enlightenment by recovering the clarity worldly disturbances and interferences have concealed. Poetry that addresses the nature of things or their Beings can convey this mystic enlightenment because poetry establishes “being by means of the word,” according to Heidegger (“Hölderlin” 304). Lo Fu quotes Heidegger’s phrase in Chinese, which translated into English is: “Poetry is divine thoughts on existence” (Driftwood 128, Wang 358).⁴⁵ Driftwood identifies truth as cosmic principles, Tao and Chan, which bring the universe, beings, and things into harmony. By describing truth’s holiness, Lo Fu suggests that poetry provides the place for the self to navigate among worlds so as to obtain truth about human existence from a perspective not bound by the temporality and spatiality of mortal existence.

As Lo Fu indicates, “the first chapter ‘Driftwood’ directly expresses the principal theme of the poem, to wit, the poem’s original idea” (Driftwood 286).⁴⁶ Hence my interpretation of the poem Driftwood will focus on the first chapter, “Driftwood,” while also referring to the poem’s conclusion and relevant lines in other chapters.

At the beginning of Driftwood, the self, symbolized by the dusk, is shaded from the meaning of existence. Heidegger calls this condition “concealment,” Zhuangzi terms it deficiency in understanding (明), and Buddhist masters name it lack of understanding (無明). The first chapter, “Driftwood,” bearing the same title as the poem, presents the theme of the self’s roaming among the earth, Tao, and Chan. In accordance with Heidegger’s view that art could bring truth out of its concealment, at the end of Driftwood, the self realizes that life is empty, and it returns to its original nature, which transcends dualities and differentiations.

Enlightenment for Heidegger and Zhuangzi, and in Buddhism

Of the two types of truth, the ontological meaning of Being and ontical analysis of Being’s structure, art expresses the first kind:

This entity emerges into the unconcealedness of its being. The Greek called the unconcealedness of beings *aletheia*. We say “truth.” . . . The work, therefore, is not the reproduction of some particular entity . . . ; it is, on the contrary, the reproduction of the thing’s general essence. (“Origin” 665-66)

Being is perceived in the artwork’s world, which in Heidegger’s language means activities and events surrounding it.

The quest for the knowledge of Being in Heidegger’s thoughts is akin to the search for clarity in Zhuangzi’s philosophy. First, one diminishes the ego in order to cultivate a

clear mind, which begets wisdom in ease.⁴⁷ Next, essential to achieving this clarity is to acknowledge that all things are equal; as Zhuangzi suggests: “If one would proclaim right what others declare wrong and consider wrong what others deem right, then it is best rather to have a clear mind. . . . Opinions advocating that one thing is right are beyond calculation. Views pronouncing that it is wrong are innumerable as well. It would then be best to keep a clear mind.”⁴⁸ Likewise, Lo Fu maintains that “the poet’s serene contemplation [or mystic enlightenment] . . . sees the multitude in the universe as a whole without differentiations” (“Tanshi” 12).⁴⁹

Like Zhuangzi, Buddhists maintain that lack of “understanding” of the nature of things leads to the adumbration of truth, which germinates from an attachment to the concept of self.⁵⁰ This attachment launches a cycle of the soul’s transmigration or reincarnation made up of twelve *niḍānas* or concatenating causes and effects, which arises from lack of understanding and ends in death (Commentaries 42, Soothill 206).⁵¹ Maintaining that all appearances are false, and that only dharmas are real, Buddhism teaches people to keep thoughts and concepts from rising in the mind, even the concept of lack of understanding since “there is no lack of understanding, [and] no opposite of lack of understanding,” as the Heart Sutra explains.⁵²

Leaving the Shore in Dusk

The driftwood sawed off from a tree floats on the sea, driven by currents. Finally, it is washed ashore in dusk by low tide (Driftwood 23). Stranded on the beach (a metaphor for life), the driftwood is in a state of Heideggerean thrownness. Having gone through life and death, the driftwood is life's best exegete. The driftwood is equipped with both experience in the secular world and freedom, which as a tree it did not have, in journeying. Moreover, since it is in an interim state—after death and waiting for another reincarnation—and outside time (“From death / till the next incarnation, / several years it will be in the least. . .”), the driftwood is in a transcendental position to explicate life (Driftwood 26).⁵³

This **drift identity** (my term) causes a voluntary alienation from nationalism. The driftwood is not in exile but is in self-exile. The driftwood's attitude toward cultures is different from the attitude of late immigrants to Taiwan, most of whom came over with the Nationalist government after its retreat from China. Balcom comments that these “mainland émigrés were largely ostracized from local society” in Taiwan because they were “[s]een more as rulers from outside than as compatriots” (“Intro.”) The government, then newly established in Taiwan, aggravated the problem of these people's national identity by professing that they would but sojourn in Taiwan until battles were won, and then they would return to China (Balcom “Intro.”). The drift identity with its cosmologicalism does not

acknowledge any place as the center since the center moves with the self, whereas the exile identity, still nationalistic, perceives itself as in a marginal relation to the homeland.⁵⁴

When the next tide rolls in, the driftwood sails out again as a navigating explorer inquiring into the essence of life, which nature will reveal. On sea journeys and during its reverie, the driftwood will discover the meanings of its existence and of life in general, what Heidegger calls “the being of beings” and “being in general” (Being 9).

Returning Home

Heidegger, Zhuangzi, and Chan Buddhism all maintain that the truth about existence is already there though concealed. The theoretical construct which maintains that truth is already there within the self presented frequently in the theme of returning home is a prominent feature of **homesick literature**, a term I invented to define literature that carries a theme of home going. Such homesick literature harbors cosmologicalism rather than orthodox religious beliefs, and usually contains elements such as a quest for existential meanings, departure from one’s home country for reasons that are not one’s faults, a lone protagonist who understands sensual pleasure but whose mind finds tranquility in nature, a search for a homeland that agrees with truth, and a homeland already in one’s mind.

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short story “Ethan Brand,” in which sin inside one’s mind is the homeland that Ethan Brand finds, is a harbinger of homesick literature in the twentieth

century; the latter has a political overtone in engaging politics by imparting the idea that existential wisdom instead of truth judged from circumstances should be the benchmark of politics. In Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry, the self returns to itself for answers. The quest for the original homeland in Lo Fu's Driftwood and Graham's dream of Eden—the earthly paradise in which the self and nature, subject and object, soul and body, and humans and God are united, though whose closure Graham also resists in poetry—contain salient traits of homesick literature. This homesick concept is also expressed in Jorie Graham's preface to Dionisio D. Martínez's Climbing Back, in which she interprets the understanding of existence as a trip home: “[B]eing *here* is the only change you have, selfhood the beginning of something insistently circular: go home” (17).

Likewise, “the original homeland” the driftwood searches for is “buried in the deepest place in the heart” (Driftwood 56).⁵⁵ The driftwood calls the place it searches for “the original homeland” in contrast to the homeland that it has left; therefore, going home is not going back to the same condition. As Zhen Li suggests, returning to a future homeland does not mean a return to the past but rather a return to the original state and the original relationship between humans and the world (126).

This theoretical construct of returning home is implied in the epigram excerpted from “A Lament for Ying” by Chinese poet Qu Yuan (329-299 B.C.) and featured in the beginning of Driftwood (Yip 72). In the quote, Qu Yuan looks back at his former capital city while

traveling farther away from it: “With my back toward Xia Pu, I send my thoughts westward / To mourn the daily distancing of my former capital” (Driftwood 22).⁵⁶ Lo Fu uses this quote to compare driftwood to the poet Qu Yuan, whose poems are replete with comments and emotions about his hometown. Like Qu Yuan, the driftwood, while pursuing the original homeland on its nomadic life on the sea, offers criticism of the cultures, lives, and politics of the two shores it floats between.

The epigram evokes the difference between two languages associated with the homeland one leaves behind and the original homeland one searches for. The vision of the original homeland is associated with nature’s language that the self hears in its Taoist and Chan roaming, while its retrospection on its cultures is connected to the Mandarin language. The fair copy gives clues that Lo Fu intends to make a distinction between the primitive language (“Solely silence a thousand fathoms below / is regarded as the primitive language for communication.”) of nature and the civilized Mandarin language (see figure 3) (Driftwood 31).⁵⁷ The final printed version depicts driftwood listening to the language of nature on the sea: “Here no bells are heard. / Wind and rain are the only language,” in which the word “primitive” has been deleted and “Silence” replaced by “Wind and rain” (Driftwood 31).⁵⁸

Nature teaches the ancient truth about the emptiness of life with its elements of wind and rain; this truth is guarded by gods as the poem describes: “Below a thousand fathoms, /

gods are on the ship's sides, / guarding / the full shipload o' the dead's souls at the bottom of the sea. / That story / has long been covered with oysters" (Driftwood 31-32).⁵⁹ On the sea the driftwood experiences this Taoist nature in a harmony with the multitudinous beings: "The wood's heart beat the same rhythm / as schools of fish, seagulls, and seaweed on the horizon. / In their breathings of one frequency, / vaguely can be heard the deep down / surges of the evening tide in the uterus of the great sea" (Driftwood 30).⁶⁰ In contrast, Mandarin does not enlighten the self about the eternal truth but awakens its homesickness of the tradition, presented in a look backwards: "Yet allow that high and upright moon and phrases / to still hang at / the homeland's bloodless sky" (Driftwood 29).⁶¹

Eternal Time

Yet how can these two impulses, forward and backward, and these two languages coexist in the self? In Zhangzi's philosophy and in Chan, everything is identical when the self reaches a mental state beyond dualities and distinctions. The poem's opening lines announce that driftwood has transcended time, life, and death; the present moment is also eternity: "No other moment is solemnner than this moment. / The setting sun / did not leave a single dying word / on the beach / but along with a sunflower [fair copy: 'an elegy'] at the extreme of the horizon, / two in a pair, deceased. / A piece of wood / was washed ashore by the tides" (see figure 2) (Driftwood 23).⁶²

The driftwood transcends time and time's divisions because it is inanimate; for the lifeless driftwood, time is eternity. Therefore, for the driftwood, every moment is the present. For the driftwood, this instant is as serious and as important as the next moment, which is signified by the coming and going of tides. Later the driftwood is swept out to sea again during high tide, yet it drifts back again in low tide.

The wood drifts back in low tide to a Chan ("barren") beach where time is eternity ("the end of time") and comprehends that emptiness is the essence of life (Driftwood 27).⁶³ A passage excerpted from the Heart Sutra immediately following extends the transcendence of time to the transcendence of all dualities and distinctions: "The Buddha said: / Śāriputra, all dharmas are empty. / They neither arise nor extinguish, are neither filthy nor clean, and neither increase nor decrease. / Thus there is no color in the sky, and no eyes, ears, the nose, the tongue, the body, the mind, / colors, sounds, smells, or tastes. At the end, there are no aging and death" (Driftwood 27).⁶⁴ Master Sheng-yen suggests that the Heart Sutra mainly expounds the Buddhist wisdom that emptiness is the essence of life (Commentaries 128). In Buddhism, everything is empty and unreal compared to truth.

Time in ancient Chinese poetry likewise is often eternity, according to Lo Fu: "There is no tense in classical Chinese poetry, which indicates that the poet does not make the observation at a specific time and instead presents the true appearance of nature from the perspective of eternity" (Lo Fu xiaopin 10).⁶⁵ Driftwood inherits this literary tradition and

makes it more emphatic by stating in the first line that the time this poem will address is eternity. In contrast with the eternity that remains the same are the cycles of lives represented by the setting sun and the sunflower, which turns with the sun; both the sun and the flower record and show time's passing and its differentiations. Describing the sun and the sunflower as "deceased" links the cosmic cycle of day and night with the growing and withering of vegetation, and with the birth and death of humans (Driftwood 23).⁶⁶ Lo Fu's revision increases the poem's coherence as the imagery of "a sunflower" connects the poem more tightly with the theme of time than "an elegy" does. Many times the driftwood crosses the sea to another shore to find its home. The first time the driftwood reaches the shore, it learns about life's thrownness and about the solemnity of the present moment. The second time it is washed ashore the driftwood comprehends that time is eternity, and that emptiness is the essence of life.

Culture as Tao

For the third time, the driftwood arrives at the shore. In this story of the driftwood's union with an old professor, Tao supplants metaphysics in defining culture. The driftwood becomes one with an "old professor" lying on the sand: "The wood advanced gradually and / pressed up tightly against the old professor's spine. / Crack! The wood fitted into his body" (Driftwood 32).⁶⁷ The professor embodies metaphysics ("the scrawny / authority in

metaphysics”) or superficially argumentative theories, whereas the driftwood represents the will, such as desires for fame, for political power (to be “a flag pole on the plaza”), or for the creation of new things (Driftwood 32, 33).⁶⁸ The wood gives the old professor verve; after the union, the professor’s “metaphysical face in the wind / rustles loud” with vigor (33).⁶⁹ However, the conflicts between atemporal metaphysics and the temporal will result in the wane of the power of metaphysics (“Philosophy has the tendency of impotence.”), which is outmoded in time: “Time and the moths” crawling out from the professor’s “works on metaphysics” “all bare their menacing white teeth,” gnawing at the professor (Driftwood 33).⁷⁰ The professor “flings up his arms and shouts: / Abandon—craftiness. / Renounce—pretended morality,” quoting Laozi’s words on diminishing one’s desires (Driftwood 33-34).⁷¹

While the professor denounces the knowledge he represents, the driftwood also attempts to disengage itself from the professor, leaving this remark in Zhuangzi’s words: “Rather than / moisturizing each other with saliva / let oblivion come between us / in rivers and lakes” (Driftwood 34);⁷² the driftwood is determined to disunite from metaphysics and has chosen Tao instead. This remark suggests that for beings in the universe, saving each other from death with their dingy means is inconsequential; rather, they should preserve their individuality while enjoying the fellowship in Tao, which is the order of cosmic cycles.

Beings driven by the forces of Tao can roam freely though separately in this wide universe.

Tao is the culture they share.

Absence of the Self/Nation and Presence of Tao/Cultural Essence

In literature, frequently the absence of entities fruitfully brings out the presence of abstraction. For example, Lo Fu comments that “only in sheer solitude and after enormous loss can a person experience entirely the harmonic relationship [or Tao] between humans and nature” (*Xuelou* 123).⁷³ Moreover, in Taiwanese poet Kuang-chung Yü’s poem “On the Back of Multi-lump Camel,” the absence of China coincides with the presence of its cultural tradition, which the narrator fondly remembers: “Thus dreaming or awake on the back of multi-lump camel / back to China. Ah, go back; finally go back to / such a China—living abroad, a traveler from one place to another. / . . . What sutra has the seeker fetched?” (168).⁷⁴

In modern and contemporary literature written in Chinese, a visible differentiation between China and Chinese cultural heritage is caused by the political reality of modern and present-day China. Yong Fei maintains that political chaos causes a crisis in nationalism and schizophrenia in the psychology of modern Chinese humanities (101). Modern Chinese people, according to Yong Fei, often associate the political conditions of China with traditional culture and attribute their dissatisfaction with the status quo to Chinese culture (101); these people’s criticism of Chinese tradition actually reflects their disgust of and

despair toward reality (101). Yong Fei gives several examples for this association. The New Cultural Movement during the May Fourth period and Duxiu Chen's opposition to patriotism all arose from the confounding of traditional culture and present conditions (Fei 101). In *Driftwood*, Lo Fu suggests that language instead of a nation preserves the essence of culture and maintains that political entities and languages are treated separately; according to the narrator of *Driftwood*, "the relationship between the Chinese language, revolutions, love making, / and schizophrenia / is more or less paradoxical" (*Driftwood* 45).⁷⁵

Taiwan: The Dream of the Broken Net

Thus remarking on culture, the driftwood sets out to sea from the beach by itself for the third time and is again sent back to shore by the waves of the tide. The driftwood admires the setting and the rising sun on the coast of Taiwan. The daydreaming driftwood imagines that it rises up to the sky, taking a bird's-eye view of this island (*Driftwood* 39). It notices two distinguishing features of the country of Taiwan—"sad" and "ornery and intractable" (39).⁷⁶ This first trait, taken from the title of the movie on the February 28 Incident, "A City of Sadness," alludes to persistent foreign threats in Taiwan's colonial history, on which the driftwood makes this comment: "Everywhere" in Taiwan "is hung the broken net of fate" (39).⁷⁷

The imagery of the net is taken from a Taiwanese folk song, “Mending a Broken Net.” “Net” and “hope” are homonyms in Taiwanese, and a broken net implies that a person’s dream for a better life in the future has been shattered owing to certain factors. The lyric tells of a woman’s adverse fate (Driftwood 39).⁷⁸

Beholding the net, my eyes turn red. What a big hole is broken.

Desiring to mend it, I could not find a single tool. No one understands how
my heart wrings.

If I let it go today, forever there will be no hope.

For the prospect, I will sew the open seams and rummage for tools to mend
this broken net.

Hands on the net, my head turns heavy. What a miserable and lonesome
person I am!

Where has my dear run and hidden? Why hasn’t he come and helped?

(“Mending”)⁷⁹

Composed in 1948, one year before the official deployment of the Nationalist government in Taiwan, “Mending a Broken Net” reflects the suppressions of local powers during that period. Owing to government censorship, a third stanza with a happy ending of harvest was added to the lyric (“VI. Mending”).⁸⁰ “Mending a Broken Net” alludes to Taiwan’s adverse fate

suffering from foreign invasions and occupations by the Spanish (1626), the Dutch (1624-1661) and the Japanese (1895-1945) (Yufa Chang 512, 514). The Nationalist takeover resulted in great casualties in 1947 (Yufa Chang 516-17), and Taiwan still faces the threat of being occupied by China.

However, “the broken net of fate” has two interpretations; it could be interpreted as having a dim hope or as having a hole through which to escape fate (Driftwood 39).⁸¹ A parenthetical aside adverts to the ambiguity of the phrase: “(The person who mends the net and the fish which has escaped from a hole in the net / have the same fate, yet they interpret it respectively.)” (Driftwood 39).⁸² The phrase has been adapted from a political expression, “One China, yet they interpret it respectively.”⁸³ In this poem, Taiwan is compared to the fish that China wishes to catch; a Chinese nationalism read as a clan theory explains political rights as blood relationships and a nation as a family from a broad anthropological view. Although the fish and the fisherman explain existence from various perspectives, the aside implies that they have the same fate of thrownness, and that they will discover the concealed meanings of life while interacting with their worlds.

The second “ornery and intractable” feature describes Taiwan residents’ claim to sovereignty over Taiwan. While Laozi’s Taoist utopia is serene and rustic, Taiwan in the poem is distinguishably urban; the inhabitants’ will to live and their claim to Taiwan’s sovereignty are expressed in the sensuality of their lives. In Laozi’s utopia, “neighboring

states are within each other's sight, and people in one state can hear another state's roosters crow and dogs bark. Yet till death people in these states live separate lives without associating with each other" (Laozi 322).⁸⁴ In Taiwan, a contemporary Shangri-La, people likewise "can hear each other's roosters crow and dogs bark"; however, so many people inhabit its main and other islands ("People thrive in number.") that Taiwanese live a sensuous life close to each other: "The fragrance of rice plants, the fragrance of alcohol, and the fragrance of human bodies" (Driftwood 39).⁸⁵

The vitality and indomitable will of these inhabitants are also mirrored in the land's physical landscape (volcanoes, new mountain ranges, stiff faults, short rivers, harbors quickly filled up with sludge, and fragile strata), its tempestuous climate—"typhoons" ("Ineradicable tinea and sores") and many an earthquake ("A python stripped of its skin, wriggling")—and the look of the fruits it produces ("Pineapples. Thorny subtropical style.") (Driftwood 39-40).⁸⁶ The inhabitants' intractable will is also reflected in Taiwan's dramatic political scenarios. In its democratic development, in a few decades Taiwan has swiftly flung behind one milestone after another, including the life-term presidency of Chiang Kai-shek and of his son Chiang Ching-kuo and other events ("Hemorrhoids. The after-effect of sitting on the Dragon Chair for a long time. / . . . Which generation are the swaggering doves on the square [of the Presidential Building] ?") (Driftwood 40-41).⁸⁷ The turnover of political power in 2000 to President Shui-bian Ch'en from the Democratic Progressive Party was shocking to

the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) and its supporters: In “the National Museum of History,” “old ancestors were startled awake by a new inaugural speech” (Driftwood 41).⁸⁸ Moreover, Taiwan is streamlining its congresses, which crave the cameras but neglect their duties in general sessions (“The fists in congresses. The crows were startled from their nods.”) (Driftwood 40).⁸⁹ Written from the perspective of elites, Driftwood suggests that the public has to stop abusing freshly gained freedom of congregation (“Street demonstrations. Ducks leaped into pools in trance and frenzy.”) (Driftwood 41).⁹⁰

Though Taiwanese enjoy their political rights in the form of direct voting at all levels, transportation amenities such as the metro, and a low-premium everyone-inclusive national health insurance, these conveniences have not been matched with similar advances in the nation’s intellectual and religious lives. The Taipei Rapid Transit System, depicted as “appendicitis admitted to the hospital which has just closed for the day,” and the National Health Insurance, which covers many services while charging minimally, portrayed as “a herd of overweight hippopotami striding across the street,” are not without their faults (40).⁹¹ Moreover, information from the media and from political or social propaganda fills the contemporary mind and impedes thinking as “cholesterol” impedes the flow of blood in the arteries (Driftwood 40).⁹² A modern Taiwan glutted with informational refuse is portrayed in its intellectual life as “a puffy philosopher” and in its political condition as “a drunkard clutching and kissing a utility pole” posted with election slogans (Driftwood 40).⁹³

Cutting-edge technology can neither improve the speed of thoughts nor increase spiritual wealth: “Air conditioners, fridges, VCRs, fax machines, and computers. Barrenness all over the city. / Plug in life. Plug in nerves and dreams. Credit cards, phone cards, and health insurance cards. / Hospitals are the nearest. Churches are the farthest. / Funeral houses are the closest. God is the most distant” (Driftwood 41).⁹⁴ The Taiwanese are addicted to sensual gratification in every “carnival city. Streetlights sustain its smile in midnight. / Pubs closed. Beer mugs spat white foam in exhaustion” (Driftwood 41).⁹⁵ Therefore, when there was “a blackout,” which shut down modern entertainments in cities fed by electricity, the Taiwanese exercised their senses instead of brains: “The sounds of chewing betel nuts rose and fell” (Driftwood 41).⁹⁶

Partly owing to China’s threat to occupy the land, a superficial, shortsighted pop culture has been evolving in Taiwan (“A hit-and-run peddler culture”) (40).⁹⁷ People favor quick-return and short-term investments (“the stock market culture of short-term investments”) such as “playing low-bid mah-jong,” which is “the most delightful [experience of] deep water and scorching fire” (Driftwood 40).⁹⁸ Culture is superficially and commercially replicated. When one folk puppet show became popular on TV, for example, imitators churned up similar shows and sequels: “Shiyanwen puppets were everywhere on the streets” (Driftwood 40).⁹⁹

Credulity toward propaganda and the inability to reflect on their own characterize the residents in both Taiwan and China, as they revealed their dependence on the media: “The TV set exploded. Some people on the other shore burst into temper” (Driftwood 42).¹⁰⁰

Xiamen and other coastal cities in Fukien, China can receive TV broadcasts from Taiwan.

Shanghai, China: The Tower in Slumber

At dusk, the driftwood sets sail from Taiwan for Shanghai, one of the major harbors and the largest city in China, where in 1921 the Chinese Communist Party was founded (“Shanghai” Dillon 277, Perkins 450). Here Enlai Zhou and Richard Nixon signed the Shanghai Communiqué in 1972, recognizing the communist People’s Republic of China, which took over Taiwan’s legal status in the United Nations the year before (Perkins 357). The poem portrays Shanghai in the image of an underwater tower resembling a shipwreck, which extends an earlier metaphor of life as a sunken boat. Shanghai, like its new rising “skyscrapers,” is the pride of China’s modernization (Driftwood 42).¹⁰¹ However, everyone in this modern building, a symbol of Shanghai, is in deep sleep; people in this mansion do not feel the urgency to search for the meaning of life and life’s dignity: “Nihilism like a black umbrella / occupied the whole building. / No one seemed to be awake [fair copy: ‘(except the wood)’]. / People breathe with their gills and / do not recognize any lives except water” (Driftwood 44).¹⁰² In this underwater building, people change into fish and can

recognize only ocean life but not other styles of life, such as living on the land, which tells of their insufficient awareness of the outside world. The imagery suggests that Shanghai residents have been used to living without pondering life. For these people, life is wasted because they survive “like maggots teeming in a dung hole” without aspiring to understand the essence of life (Driftwood 42).¹⁰³ While recent election results are the most shocking development to some Taiwanese (“Doomsday [fair copy: “of the world”] may not be / more frightening than a pair of pants suddenly hoisted up to the top of the flag pole.”), fakeness or the refusal to confront reality is the modern malaise that is plaguing Shanghai: “What could be more startling / than finding a fake coin in one’s pocket” (Driftwood 26, 43).¹⁰⁴

The poem flashes back to the early root of China’s blindness to its own image. In 1839 during the late Qing dynasty when China resumed its contact with other parts of the world through commerce, China finally began to perceive itself as one among other nations. After the First Opium War (1839-42), in which China was defeated, China allocated foreign concessions in Shanghai—to France in 1847 (“Here used to be the French concession / Red-headed [Indian] sheriffs three to five in a group / strolling the streets extorted protection fees along the streets from French Firmianas.”), to England in 1842, and to other nations successively—and opened harbors for foreign trade (“Shanghai” Perkins 449, Driftwood 44).¹⁰⁵

The poem relates that Chinese nationalism had nearly vanished during the 1900 Boxer Rebellion and the Invasion of the Eight Allied Armies; the Chinese lost their faith in the Qing government during the siege of Peking that year. At the same time, extortions of western merchants and militaries superseded extortions of Chinese warlords, gangsters, and officials. Chinese nationalism during this period is represented in the poem by a pro-Nationalist ganglord. This Chinese ganglord was despondent long before his death, as the poem portrays that he was addicted to opium and had lost the control of his mind: “The lord of the Green Gang lay on the opium couch, / taking a gulp of / the smoking capitalism. / In the year of Gengzi [1900] when he died, he held a teapot with a broken spout, / and sails in the Huangpu River [in Shanghai] like a shroud / wrapped up patches of divided clouds / and floated away into the distance. / The trade wind had blown here a bush of black poppy” (Driftwood 44-45).¹⁰⁶ Tea was one of China’s major exports and accumulated great fortunes for China during the early times of international commerce (Spence 129). Yet the British found opium, the merchandise with an even higher profit, to balance the trade with China (Spence 129). In the poem, opium and the teapot symbolize British-Chinese trade from the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century when the British traded opium for tea and silver with the Chinese (McMahon 15). The Qing dynasty ended infamously in history (“In one night rivers and mountains dwarfed several inches.”) (Driftwood 45),¹⁰⁷ its officials like “a horde of large, fat rats / in a flurry hid into a page of hollow history” (Driftwood 45).¹⁰⁸

Next, the poem fast-forwards to the present when Pudong, Shanghai has been zoned as a new commercial district (Driftwood 47). In contrast to the Chinese whose individual consciousness has been dormant for most of Chinese history, communist China has taken several mutations from nationalism to revolutionism, and is moving next to Marxism tempered with capitalism. To break out from the Nationalist encirclement, Chinese communists fled from the Jiangxi Soviet in 1934 in the Long March, which solidified Mao Zedong's leadership and also boosted nationalism among Chinese communists, who heeded less and less the Soviet's commands ("On the way of the Long March . . . / one must be careful. / The fatal ideology [fair copy: 'nationalism'] tied tightly to one's pants string / would explode once loosened.") ("The Long" 245, Driftwood 48-49).¹⁰⁹ Next came the phase of revolutions when Chinese leaders had the absolute authority to dictate the nation's future. After defeating the Nationalist government in a communist peasant revolution, Chinese communists in 1949 declared the founding of the PRC in Tiananmen Square.

In the PRC's history, two reform movements to request freedom and crackdowns on bribery took place in Tiananmen Square, first in 1976 and next in 1989, and were suppressed (Spence 697). In between these two mass protests was the Cultural Revolution started by Mao Zedong in 1966, also in Tiananmen Square, where Mao inspected more than a million Red Guards (Zongzhi Li 284). The Red Guards later banded together to destroy what they considered feudal and old: "That year, Red Guards grouped together to see the Christ [fair

copy: ‘Chairman Mao’] in Beijing, / while truckloads after truckloads of hails of “Long live!” could be heard / rolling down the gutters. / . . . One foot [of the Red Guard] stepped on the train’s side, / and the other dangled on the top of the Monument [to the People’s Heroes] in Tiananmen Square. / Revolution is such fun” (Driftwood 49-50).¹¹⁰ During these revolutions and protests, Mao’s inflated ego led to “ten years’ holocaust. Once again” in the history of China, a political leader presumed to be “God [and] savagely interfered with history” (Driftwood 55).¹¹¹ Disasters and famine follow these revolutions and political turmoil (“Food stamps. Hunger. Gastric ulcers. / Typhoid. Dysentery. The Quotations of Chairman Mao Zedong. / Floods. Earthquakes.”) (Driftwood 50).¹¹² Mao Zedong’s desire to make China a modern country launched an economic revolution, the Great Leap in 1958, when people threw plows, axes, and other iron utensils into furnaces to make steel (Mackerras 5). Satirically, “the sole postmodern industrial product” of this movement was the polluted industrial landscape (“the black sun rising from the steelmaking furnace”) (Driftwood 50).¹¹³

When China established its first special economic district in 1979 in Shenzhen and adopted open-door and reform policies, the nation signaled a change in its pure Marxist economy, which has since grown into a capitalist-flavored socialist economic system (Liu 574). Economic policies released by Deng Xiaoping in 1992 during his southern trip to Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shanghai, and other cities led to more economic reforms and

political adjustments so that for this last two decades, China has not been strictly following Marxist revolution theories (Liu 654). China finds itself in the midst of many directions: “Time’s meat mincing machine / slashed the blind, hustling souls on the streets. / . . . Whether the breakdown of traffic lights was caused by libidinal impulses was hard to tell. / . . . Where Nanking Road led to was no longer a geographical question” (Driftwood 52).¹¹⁴ China finds itself situated in an eerie mixture of Marxism and capitalism: “Marx seemed to stand under the French Firmianas. / Near the door of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China was a / drinking fountain, which capitalists were accustomed to using. / . . . Party Secretary is also General Manager,” holding “a key to both heaven and hell” (Driftwood 52, 55).¹¹⁵

The shipwreck building in the times of revolutions now emerges as a new tower, where the people have new interpretations of capitalism: “Skyscrapers. / Reading [Karl Marx’s] Capital from the height of over fifty floors brings weakness to one’s feet” (Driftwood 53).¹¹⁶ However, economic reforms, people’s right of congregation, and democracy have a long way to go: “Small town enterprises” are like “a monk who has flown to space but believes that he has reached heaven. / . . . On the square, snowmen on hunger strikes are arrested one after another by the sun. / Raising one’s arms like a praying mantis to stop the tank” is “surrealism in the style of Zhishen Lu” (Driftwood 55).¹¹⁷ The narrator, like Cui Hao of the Tang dynasty, knows that the Chinese have not reached their ideal homeland:

“Yellow Crane Tower. Cui Hao knows a long time ago that heaven is still far away”

(Driftwood 54).¹¹⁸

The Quest for a Language

The driftwood questions what is “the original homeland in its mind,” for which it is searching in its “metaphysical roaming,” and how it can find this ideal land (Driftwood 57, 55).¹¹⁹ Machines and other modern conveniences cannot instill life and dreams into modern civilization (“Plug in life. Plug in nerves and dreams.”) (Driftwood 40). Technological conveniences and wealth cannot help the wood in its quest for this homeland. The driftwood concludes that only the Chinese language can infuse feelings and mental clarity in the head muddled by ideologies and propaganda (Driftwood 41). The driftwood “continued to pour water melted from snow on its head / and to adopt an extremely sober / method, one surpassing the art history methodology,” in its quest for an eternal (“brass”) and “divine voice” to transmit its dreams and thoughts (Driftwood 55-56).¹²⁰ So it “planed down its wooden body, / and then with tweezers carefully picked up / one after another shiny golden words / (of the Han or more ancient dynasties), and next / stuffed them into the vessels of arteries / to let the words flow into the skull that has long been barren, and into / the sticky and muddled / ideologies / stirred up with ketchup” (Driftwood 56-57).¹²¹ To find the

homeland in its mind, the driftwood needs a language which tells the “truth” and can withstand the erosion of time.

Truth in Tao/Ideologies

Drifting from China back to Taiwan, the driftwood realizes that truth is hidden in the mixture of Tao and ideologies. This commixture is compared to the clouds, also a trait of legendary Taoist islands, that perennially envelope Taiwan: “Clouds and fog surround the island. / . . . Tao, a lamp, / or a drum beat from a high mountain / has been corroded by vitriolic ideologies / and turned into exceedingly heavy worldly affinities” (*Driftwood* 57, 62).¹²² These clouds that lie between the sky and the human world also symbolize unsettled and inexplicit connections between divine and human spheres.

As the driftwood explains, the sky, an emblem of Tao, is so far from the earth that the earth seems like a too complex symbol of Tao: “The autumn sky— / too high, and too blue [fair copy for this line: Sometimes it is stunningly high. It is so blue that it leaves one at one’s wits’ ends.] / so that the earth becomes an extremely multifarious and complex symbol [fair copy: ‘metaphor’]. / Interpretations seem unnecessary. / Emptiness sometimes is a type of opulence” (*Driftwood* 60).¹²³ The driftwood finds its answer to truth in this bountiful emptiness symbolized by the clouds between the sky and the earth. The driftwood then

compares this emptiness to a cloudy yard: “Now I return to this old magnetic field. / The white clouds all over the grounds of the yard / still find no one to sweep” (Driftwood 63).¹²⁴

Therefore, the two poles of many dualities or interpretations of Tao draw close toward each other. Poetry that enters the spirit and approaches truth tells a story built on the extinction of the two poles and on the border crossing between these dualities: “The Red Dust secular world is a myth woven out of smoke and fog, / which is circulating between the congresses and baseball, / between the Presidential Building and markets, / between industrial parks and McDonald’s restaurants, / between betel nuts and semiconductors, / between kidnappings and the Tzu Chi Merits Society, / between Baodouli night market and the Council for Cultural Affairs, / between Lihua Yang and Tzuhao T’an. / . . . Early in the morning the Taipei Rapid Transit System / systematically transports protesting crowds and mayoral candidates / one by another into a particular chapter and section in history. / On TV, legislators speak with their fists; / off the TV screen, legislators cheer with ganglords cup to cup” (Driftwood 59).¹²⁵

The intermingling of high and popular cultures in Taiwan testifies to the extinction of dualities. Bribery pesters both congresses and professional baseball leagues and frustrates these organizations’ normal growth. Profits and gains are at issue in the horde in the Presidential Building and at marketplaces. Just as companies in industrial zones seek to create economic and scientific miracles by erecting plants on newly allocated land,

McDonald's fast-food restaurants, which sprang up everywhere, attempt to reap profits by taking root on a foreign land. The island of Taiwan produces both betel nuts for the consumption of its working class and semiconductors for the assembly lines of international corporations. Taiwan hit international headlines both for the heartless kidnapping and slaughter of a teenage girl Pai Hsiaoyen, and for the charity of the Buddhist organization the Tzu Chi Merits Society. In contrast to the pop and low culture in Baodouli night market, which features snake dishes and brothels, a high culture exists in traditional and fine art performances sponsored by the Council for Cultural Affairs. The folk artist Lihua Yang is popular among her fans just as the old poet and co-founder of the Blue Star Poetry Society Tzuhao T'an is widely known among his readers, Lo Fu included. The metro transports everyone to his or her destination, carrying the masses, who requests political rights through non-institutional channels, and the mayoral candidates, who exercise their political rights within the system. The Taiwanese watch legislators scuffle on TV for their causes and learn from other media that legislators carouse with gangsters after work.

The driftwood starts its roaming at a beach and a sea of time. Then it wanders to a Chan beach, next to a Taoist ocean and beach, and also to Taiwan. After floating to China, it drifts back to Taiwan. Finally, the driftwood remarks on life in general. According to the driftwood, its roaming is concerned with two main subjects. The epic Driftwood is "on" existence such as "life and death," human desires ("fire"), humans' thrownness in the world

(Life is like the “wind, a homeless, fallen leaf.”), and religions (Driftwood 62).¹²⁶

Driftwood is also about current political circumstances across the Taiwan Straits—the future of China, the prospect of Taiwan, potential crises (“Tomorrow a deeper chill will waft from the inner layers.”) and conjectures about the two countries’ futures (“rumors”) (Driftwood 62-63).¹²⁷ The poem compares the Taiwanese government under the threat of China to “a dangerous building,” and China to “the ruins across the waters” where traditional cultures and values are on the brink of disappearance (Driftwood 63).¹²⁸

Evoked by existential thrownness and political turbulence, the driftwood comments on art in the contemporary time of crises. An ontological, political, and cultural end-of-the-world feeling is transmitted through the imagery of dusk (“a stem of anemic setting sun”), the time of the day the poem begins and ends in (Driftwood 62-63).¹²⁹ The use of “stem” relates this image to the lonely sunflower in the setting sun in the very beginning of the poem. Seeing this view, the driftwood is mystically enlightened about existence, realizing that the essence of life is emptiness, and that life’s current condition is one of mixed and interconnected dualities. Seeing “God gradually receding” beyond the horizon and lives of all sorts quickly fleeing without a promise of eternal life, the driftwood concludes that by connecting ideologies and Tao (“Without desires, one cannot understand Tao. / Without a whole vat of melted snow, the body’s boiling cannot be quelled.”), a poet in a godless time creates art that partakes of sacredness (“a little pinch of phosphorus that

belongs to oneself”) through the transformations of a self situated in this world (Driftwood 61-62).¹³⁰

Chapter Two of Driftwood explains further the extinguishing of the polarities of life and death. In this second chapter, “The Salmon: A Closeup of Dying,” a salmon relates its placid acceptance of the cycle of life and death (Driftwood 65).¹³¹ Lo Fu received his inspiration for this chapter during a trip to the Adams River in British Columbia, Canada. Lo Fu comprehends life’s thrownness and dignity when he watched the homeward migration of sockeye salmon: “What we saw was life’s tragedy. . . . I was startled and saddened, and even more I felt life’s sorrow, fatalism and unrivaled dignity” (Xueluo 69).¹³² This second chapter of Driftwood extends the style and the theme of mortality in Lo Fu’s earlier poem “Death of the Stone Cell.”¹³³ Like the first chapter, the second chapter closes with the scene of the setting sun, signifying the inseparable tie between life and death.

Ontological Aesthetic

Chapter Three of Driftwood, “Messages in the Bottle,” comprises four sections in which Lo Fu mourns his mother and expresses his views on the poet, time, and God (Driftwood 109).¹³⁴ The first section bemoans the loss of Lo Fu’s mother, who died in 1981 in China (Xuelou 29). The second section discusses Lo Fu’s poetics and the poetics of

Chinese and other foreign poets. The third section comments on time's passing, while the fourth section contends that God exists in the multitude, where the poet seeks redemption and also "through poetry, relieves life's sorrow and pain" (Shijian 2).¹³⁵

The second section of the third chapter bears an epigraph from Heidegger's "On Höderlin and the Essence of Poetry," which translated into English is: "Poetry is the thought on existence" (Driftwood 128).¹³⁶ This epigraph justifies the use of words to describe the driftwood's travels. In "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger maintains that "the founding of truth" is the nature of poetry (697). The truth refers to the ontological truth, and art is the means through which this truth can be revealed: "Art is truth setting itself to work" (668). According to Heidegger, among all types of art, poetry can best transmit art's essence ("The nature of art is poetry.") ("Origin" 697).

Further, Heidegger has chosen an abstract concept, art, to encompass both the artist and the art work ("[A]rt is the origin of both artist and work.") and suggests that an artist attempts to express art in an artwork ("Origin" 650). What Heidegger calls art is akin to Yan Yu's term of mystic enlightenment. Yan Yu maintains that it is mystical enlightenment that the poet seeks to express and the reader will attempt to understand. Both Heidegger and Yan Yu form an ontological circle around art, artist and artwork and promote an ontological aesthetic that envisions art as the essence that establishes communication between the artist, the artwork, and the reader or viewer. To Lo Fu, Heidegger and Yan Yu, beauty is an

ontological process in which truth about art's being is revealed. The truth is neither the artwork's beginning, its end, nor its components:

To express "the real I," one must first cut oneself into pieces and then knead oneself into everything. As a result, individual existence becomes inseparable from the beings of the universe. (Lo Fu xiaopin 79)¹³⁷

Beauty is one way in which truth occurs as unconcealedness. . . . Truth is present only as the conflict between lighting and concealing in the opposition of world and earth. . . . The strife . . . is figure, shape, Gestalt. ("Origin" 682, 687, 688)

Therefore, where it has reached luminosity, it is translucent and cameo-like without being the sum of its parts. (Yan Yu 26)¹³⁸

Presence of the art's Being from concealment creates *Gestalt*, which can be explained as a form, which is a unified ontological whole that encompasses art, the artist, the artwork, and its reader or viewer.

Becoming the Ruins

In the fourth chapter, the first person narrator is both the self and human civilization; the self is compared to a city that has become the ruins: "I lower my head to pry deep into

myself: / Just the way I expected— / not a single tile is left” (Driftwood 211).¹³⁹ Next, the self that has “crumbled into a ruins” ironically makes this comment: “I am very satisfied with the status quo of my well in which not a drop of water is left” (see figure 4) (Driftwood 246).¹⁴⁰ In this imagery, the ruins shrink to a dry well. This imagery contains an allusion to the river god in Zhuangzi’s fable “Autumn Floods.” In this fable, the boasting river god has neither increased in intellect nor understood Tao: “The time of the autumn floods came and hundreds of streams poured into the Yellow River. The river’s racing current swelled to such proportions that when one looks from bank to bank or island to island it was impossible to distinguish a horse from a cow. Then the river god was smug, thinking that he is the epitome of all the beauty of the world. . . . Ruo, the god of the North Sea, said to him: ‘One cannot discuss the ocean with a frog in a well because the frog is circumscribed by the ruins where it dwells’ (Zhuangzi 1: 429).¹⁴¹ In the metaphor of a dry well, the narrator in this last chapter expresses his humility as he confronts the cosmic unknown and Tao.

The self-congratulatory tone of the narrator about the self’s emptiness of culture can be explicated at two levels. First, the roaming self has found peace in rendering itself humble and empty of cultural residue, following the Chan idea of abandoning one’s attachment to appearances and Zhuangzi’s concept of forgetting the self. Second, the self’s emptiness connotes freedom as the self succeeds in emancipating its imagination. Therefore,

symbolically, in the last chapter of Driftwood the self has demolished the civilization within itself and become the ruins.

Salute to the Ruins

The title of the fourth chapter, “Salute to the Ruins,” was inspired by a billboard “Salute to Sockeye” Lo Fu encountered during his trip to the Adams River, British Columbia (Driftwood 106).¹⁴² “Salute to the Ruins” presents life’s dignity in the symbol of the ruins foreshadowed in the first chapter of Driftwood. After undergoing various transformations during its roving, the driftwood has lost all its attachments to its bodily image, to knowledge, and to dualities. As the driftwood approaches final enlightenment, this last chapter questions the value of roaming itself, which in Lo Fu’s view leads to spiritual unrest and the crumbling of human civilization (Tsai 40).¹⁴³

The ruins, which refer to China in the first chapter, have different connotations from the ruins in the last chapter. The China in Lo Fu’s youth, in culture, government, people, and language, has disappeared with time. This final chapter’s epigraph excerpted from the Diamond Sutra teaches leaving all phenomena so as to find dharma and the way to transcend China as reality. Echoing a quote from the Heart Sutra in chapter one about the emptiness of all appearances, this epigraph encourages people to cease employing their thoughts upon phenomena and instead to look with their mind’s eye at principles and worlds beyond. The

self's emptiness in the final chapter connotes freedom and transcendence from reality and current ideologies. The self thus acquires a perspective beyond its cultures and finds mental repose in Tao or dharma. Furthermore, the self-exile extricates the self from its old identities and cultures, extending its freedom in imagination and enhancing its capability in apprehending the nature of beauty; the self's emptiness affirms its renewal and creativity.

In the last chapter of Driftwood, Buddhist emptiness allows the mind to imagine and expound existence from a stance beyond life. In the example of the driftwood, Driftwood recommends that one surpass reality and the limitations of the self through transformations, creating a self which crosses the borders between mundane and metaphysical worlds.

JORIE GRAHAM

Thingness

Like Lo Fu, Graham feels that in order to gain true perception and to acquire freedom of imagination, a poet must flee from the self. In an early interview, Graham used the term "*thingness*" to describe the essence of "the thing suddenly freed of its garment of appearance," by which she refers to imagined essence of things ("Interview" Snodgrass 155).¹⁴⁴ Graham suggests that poetry which depicts thingness should not be in a haste to

arrive at an ending, nor should the poetry proceed merely to form a narrative: The poem “resisted. It compelled me to let go” (“Intro.” Best xvi).¹⁴⁵ Graham recognizes that things launch the formation of poetic form and stand as “the turning-fork” with which to measure the poet’s feel of reality: “The visible” is “[w]hat causes *form* to come into being” (“Conver.” 13, “Interview” Snodgrass 153). To be faithful to things and thingness, in her poetic description, Graham reminds herself to look at things themselves rather than at their mental equivalents. Graham practiced painting so as to discipline her mind: “‘I draw [‘pencil drawings . . . of squash[es] and lemons’] to make myself try to keep the act of looking physical—bodily,’ she explained. ‘So you’re not looking with your brain, you’re looking with your body, to get it’ ” (Schiff 67). To Graham, poetry is born because of things’ resistance against the self, which wishes to put things down into words.

“The Age of Reason”

Graham’s “The Age of Reason” is a satire of the eschatological aesthetic of Yeats and Stevens, who suggest that life’s meanings and beauty are predicated on death. The poem’s title is borrowed from Thomas Paine’s religious diatribe The Age of Reason in which Paine advocates for freedom in interpreting scriptures. Paine suggests that the Bible be read as historical documents rather than prophecies. “The Age of Reason” applies Paine’s viewpoint to poetry and suggests that rather than leading to a certain meaning in the end, a poem delays in forming into a narrative. This poem assigns a poet her normal status of a

human being who writes about her changing and uncertain identity and life rather than the position of a prophet who foretells truth in the end of a poem.

Paine's advocacy of civil rebellion against authority won him the fame of the defender of the American Revolution (Davidson and Scheick 17). Paine's criticism of authority extended to religious issues in The Age of Reason, which presents Paine's deistic view that God reveals Himself in His creation. Paine opposes hierarchical classification of self-revealing (religious) and not self-revealing (non-religious) texts and maintains that passages in the Bible are not prophecies (1: 30, 1: 143). Paine argues for a theology that is purged of superstition and priestly intervention and is founded on the human mind's freedom in divine communion ("My own mind is my own church.") (1:6). Edward H. Davidson and William J. Scheick in Paine, Scripture, and Authority argue that Paine perceived the Bible as "a . . . mystery," countering the "Protestant tradition . . . [suggesting] that the Word explains itself" and favoring instead "the Pauline notion that Scripture can be difficult and obscure" (71). It is this latter attitude toward the Bible that Graham wishes to borrow as a metaphor for the distance between poetry and its story or meaning. Graham perceives poetry as complicated and mysterious and impervious to analytic efforts to tie it to down to a definite reading. Just as Paine in The Age of Reason "assails scriptural authority" as "the dubious foundation of both religion and state in the Western world," Graham in her poem questions the intellectual paradigm Yeats and Stevens establish about the self-revealed meaning of

poetry. Graham in “The Age of Reason” argues for the text’s meaning to remain ambiguous and unapproachable. Graham’s poem “The Age of Reason” suggests that a truth gained through contact with the other is preferred. The portrait of a forever transforming voice in Graham’s poetry reflects her defense of voice as a technique and her advocacy for individual freedom and judgment. Unlike Graham, Marjorie Perloff denigrates the falsity of postulating voice as an expression of personal emotions because to Perloff, the modernist demand for “a *natural or transparent* poetry” depicting things themselves denies both the presence of language in poetry and the reality that language is shared by a community of speakers (Radical xi). While Perloff maintains that language, far from a personal medium, is a public means of communication, Graham answers this argument by suggesting in “The Age of Reason” that an ever-changing voice which reflects life’s complexity can surpass the limitation of being merely personal.

“The Age of Reason” uses the Bible as a metaphor for textual authority and advocates voice’s freedom in transmitting personal feelings. “The Age of Reason” (from Erosion, 1983) proposes life rather than death as the model of beauty. The narrator sees a bird land on an anthill in the narrator’s orchard. Next, the bird flies away with ants in its feathers. The narrator recalls that for unknown reasons, birds sometimes land on coals, cigarette butts, or broken glass, and take these with them. A “human / garden grows” within the narrator’s mind as the narrator seeks to understand these birds’ behaviors (Erosion 17). The narrator

remembers episodes of a movie Woyzeck; after throwing the knife with which he stabbed his wife into a river, Woyzeck drowns himself. On a spring day during “the Age of / Reason,” the “undertakers and / philosophers” search for the knife and lift the white veil covering his wife’s corpse “to see what death is” (Erosion 18). These people are nonetheless disappointed as ironically, they see the subject of their investigation, the body, disappearing; the body quickly decomposes into soil, and the present moment (“the day”) “is everything / they have” (19). The narrator questions “[h]ow far into the / earth” the desire for truth can “still be / love” (19). Disbelieving that his knife “has / reached deep / enough” into the river, Woyzeck goes after it into the river (18). Woyzeck has not found the truth, neither have the morticians and philosophers.

In the poem, death becomes part of the world, unable to be separated out as a story by human consciousness. Likewise, the reader’s desire to assemble “characters and the knife” into a story about death is resisted by “the / honesty / of things” in this poem (Erosion 19). Thus Graham suggests that when reading poems one does not “ask ‘what does this mean?’ but rather, ‘what did you feel?’, or ‘what did you see?’ ” so that one can appreciate “the paradox, ambiguity, irrational thought, associative ‘leaping’ any good poem teaches us to think and feel in” (“Glorious” 22). What the reading moment reveals is the vanishing of the body, an entering into another state.

Respect for and modesty towards things for Graham bring “a *whole view*” into poetry (Gardner 224). According to Graham, the poet starts from “the visible,” then moves to “the partial real,” and finally to “the real imaginary” or the whole and complete perspective (“Interview” Snodgrass 155). Using William Carlos Williams’s poem “To A Solitary Disciple” as an example, Graham argues that Williams “shows how a real (meaning *complete*) moon can only be seen by leaning on the actual, the given (via description)—the spire, the squat building—and crossing through the visible, the partial real, into the real imaginary, (a whole real)” (“Interview” Snodgrass 155). This view is arrived at through errors, “via all the failures, all the archaeology of multiple subjectivities—rather than the old (fake?) objectivity of simple representation” (Gardner 224). Poetry depends on the ballast of things to both Graham and Williams. Graham comes into intimate contact with nature to understand a world “so radically indifferent to one’s presence” and to know herself through describing it (Lambert 41). The dialogue with the other is described as “the rips” in “The Manteau de Pascal,” the currents in “Prayer,” the snow in “The Dream of the Unified Field” and the “ground-winds” in “High Tide” (*The Errancy* 67, *Never* 102). The desire to look beyond one’s self and to look closely at the world has become one of the main characteristics of Graham’s poetry.

Entering the Spirit

The characteristics of Graham's interest in thingness may be approached in terms of three themes—Entering the Spirit, A Feminist Form, and God's History. During the transformation into a new self, the self must discard the idea about its old self and comprehend the essence of things other than itself. Graham's poetry focuses on spiritual communion with the other or everything outside of the self. In her introduction to The Best American Poetry 1990, Graham explains the poet's responsibility in two phrases: "To make the words channels between mind and world. To make them *full* again" (xxviii). Therefore, "[e]ach poem is . . . an act of the mind that tries . . . to make it ['language'] capable of connecting us to the world" (xxviii). The self perceives a numinous presence in the voice of the other: "All poems, it seems to me, being a form of invocation or prayer, attempt to clear the space, so that one can *hear*, not just *be heard*" ("Conver." 12). In "The Age of Reason," crossing to the other is depicted as birds' taking ants, glass, and foreign objects into their feathers. Moreover, Graham compares the syntax of her poetry to a net, which a poet weaves to catch the ineffable spirit, though this spirit can be approached but not captured: "Syntax [and] sentences are a kind of net in which you are trying to capture precisely something that cannot be captured, but it can be approached. . . . [It is, namely,] the sensation of the ineffable" ("Beat").

A Feminist Form

In the Oxford English Dictionary, feminism is defined as first, the “qualities of females” and second, “[a]dvocacy of the rights of women (based on the theory of equality of the sexes)”. Graham’s poetic form has the female qualities of its author and espouses the idea of equality. In Graham’s poetry, the female is associated with freedom, with creativity, and with transcending outmoded paradigms and histories; for example, Eve’s having Adam eat the fruit of knowledge is depicted as the point where human history begins and not the time female weakness plunges humankind into evil. As Eve is the creator of human history, the Hindu goddess Māyā represents for Graham the creative process, “the moment between the desire to create and the created thing—the moment in which the act of creation occurs—and it’s a flash, a woman, an opening—a rip in the fabric” (Gardner 215). Eve and Māyā, both positive figures to Graham, symbolize the entrance of the narrating voice in poetry.

In an interview conducted in 1999, Graham explains that in poetry she attempts to incorporate the unconscious, female energy into her narrator so as to express a time that is at once linear, which proceeds onward like the ticking of the clock, and circular, which returns to eternal values such as mysteries and memory. The final goal of this connection is to form a new self or soul. “That motion towards the opposite in order to complete oneself and forge a *soul*” is prompted by “[t]he desire to create one’s self” (Gardner 223-24).

This motion to approach the other summarizes the performance quality of most of Graham's poems in which the narrator is a protagonist in action rather than an observing onlooker. The other resists narrative impulse in her poetry: "[I]n each of the books, I essentially had an encounter with something I would consider 'other', something that resists the will of the speaker. In . . . *Erosion*, the encounter was primarily with paintings. . . . At any rate, in the next book, *The End of Beauty*, the place of paintings in that dynamic was taken by myth. . . . In the book after that, *Region of Unlikeness*, I tried to use the kind of fact we think of as autobiographical" ("Conver." 12). The narrator's negotiations with the other—things in Hybrids of Plants and of Ghosts, paintings in Erosion, the female in myths in The End of Beauty, autobiographical facts in Region of Unlikeness, space in Materialism, silence in The Errancy, and nature in Never—shape her poetry: "[W]hat I'm trying to do . . . is reincorporate the *hero* [the conscious] part of my psyche back into the unconscious, uroboric [of Uroboros, the snake that swallows its own tail] female. . . . I use poetry to reawaken the mother, the unconscious side. This is a description of any functioning *form*—a vessel for active tension" (Gardner 222-23).

According to Graham, this move toward the female subconscious or "poetic female 'otherness'" as St. John calls it, restores for the reader a full view of the world the body experiences (156). The strong nostalgia for tradition in T. S. Eliot's poetry is mitigated in Graham's poetry by a tendency to envision a future: "They [the hero and the mother] create,

hopefully, a restored, undissociated sensibility, which then permits one to see the ways in which time is at once news time [linear time] and the time of the mysteries [circular time]" (Gardner 223). The hero and the mother, or male and female polarities, "therefore provide a way of thinking about time which is linear and circular at the same time" (Gardner 223).

Graham describes the present self as individual, conscious, masculine, and occidental, and depicts the self in the past as collective ("racial"), subconscious, feminine, and oriental: "The moment when Adam turns to Eve [,] for example [,] and touches her for the first time, it's as if the present tense self in me were turning to the deeply buried or racial self" ("Interview" Snodgrass 163). In the earlier interview, Graham perceives this union as the confluence of science and religion, the former as the male principle and the latter the female principle:

I do think we are at a period in the history of consciousness when the male which has been ascendant in us (and responsible for the great heights of western civilization)—our need for and belief in the rational, the mental, and all the corollary beliefs in historicism, progress, etc.—might in fact have reached its limit, and a swing back towards the female parts of our natures, (towards a different kind of form), might in fact be in process. ("Interview" Snodgrass 163)

In a later interview, Graham recapitulates these metaphors:

[T]he female principle, the unconscious, the great uroboric mother (what I was referring to earlier as the female aspect of the poem), is collective. The male part, individual. . . . I kept having this image . . . of a *group* of women on one side (a sense of collectivity among them, but scary) and a single man on the other, holding up a shield, or a plan, or *an idea*—very alone. . . . [This opposition conveys] that sense of the will of the species and the individual will—the battle between them being also the East/West battle. There’s always, to me, something crucial about Apollo being Western and Daphne still being Oriental. (Gardner 235-36)

The idea of the female other that appeared in The End of Beauty (1987) develops into the partial resemblance theory in The Errancy (1997), as Graham borrows Linda Gregerson’s representational theory on desire. Graham’s notes indicate that the idea of errancy in her poetry finds an explanation in Gregerson’s The Reformation of the Subject (The Errancy 112). Gregerson maintains that errancy in poetry begins with “a gaze [at the other] in the mirror,” and this erotic, “reformed narcissism” launches writing as “ ‘error,’ or wandering” (92). According to Gregerson, partial or “oblique likeness” “governs erotic and spiritual desire” and the act of narration (7). In Gregerson’s representational system, a sign refers to a transcendent principle and remains “transitive or referential” in its meaning, whereas an idol

exists for itself (2). Commenting on Milton's Paradise Lost, Gregerson maintains that the state of language resembles the human condition after the Fall from Eden, and that a literary form's restrictions divulge a "monumentalizing (and idolatrous) impetus" (8). Gregerson explains oblique resemblance as a result of "misrecognition" (defined as "likeness, then likeness revised"), after which a person seeks to emulate a perfect identity he or she encounters and carries an "identity as an evolving principle" (7). Gregerson suggests that "Milton posits a generative (or recuperative) subjectivity in the . . . doubling of Adam and Eve, [and] an immobilizing (and damning) subjectivity in the figure of Satan" (7). Adam as the other to Eve, and God as the other to Adam foster Eve's and Adam's evolving subjectivity (Gregerson 7). Eve's offering Adam the forbidden fruit begins human history and develops Eve's awareness of her female self. Eve's wandering from truth characterizes both human existence and narrative action in poetry. Eve and Adam resemble God because they have free wills. In Gregerson's and Graham's theories of narration, the female sex is associated with freedom, the human species, beginning, collective memory, and finally, democracy. Christ, though male in gender, stands for extreme femininity because He represents complete openness. An anthropomorphic deity, He is part human and part God. Like Eve who propagates the human species, Christ propagates saved souls. In Graham's poetry, the self is a sign that points toward God whose image it is, yet the self remains free and imperfect

because it is a defective copy of God. Moreover, narration is prompted by the writer's desire toward truth, which for Graham can be approached by a close depiction of thingness.

God's History

The motion toward the other also enacts a moment in history (“[P]oems are . . . ritualistic enactments . . . in language, of historical motions.”) (Gardner 221). Graham's poetry attempts to reconcile God's history recounted in the Old Testament with Christ's story related in the New Testament: The Old Testament “is beginning-dependent, the other [the New Testament] ending-dependent. The whole Old Testament exfoliates off the act of Creation, [while] the New fulfills predictions, prefigurations of ‘something’ at the end” (Gardner 236). Graham sees the negotiation and contact with the circular time represented in the Old Testament as essential to energize the linear time depicted in the New Testament: “The Bible itself is a mixture of Occidental and Oriental views of time,” and the Old Testament represents “a circular Oriental view that slowly transmogrifies into the Occidental view with the Advent of Christ and linear time and eschatological narrative” (Gardner 236). These two systems of time are represented in Graham's poetry as the impulse of creation (in the Old Testament) and the impulse of shaping it into a story (in the New Testament).

Graham's religious metaphors to a certain extent derive their inspiration from her Jewish heritage. Graham was born of a Jewish mother Beverly Pepper, a sculptor, and an

Irish Catholic father Curtis (Bill) Pepper, “a former *Newsweek* correspondent” (Lambert 43, Schiff 62). Graham’s works are included in Princeton University’s Leonard Milberg ’53 Collection of Jewish-American Writers, and she submitted an unpublished poem “In / Silence” (later published in Never) to the double issue of Princeton University Library Chronicle published to celebrate the collection.¹⁴⁶ According to the collector Leonard L. Milberg, the two standards in selecting the collection are “people who were clearly identified as Jews, and who had achieved a high level of literary accomplishment” (31). The Jewish people recognize the Old Testament but repudiate the holiness of the New Testament, and they see Christ as a historical man. The Jewish people’s opinions of history to a certain extent affected the view of history in Graham’s poetry.

Graham maintains that truth is inapproachable; in “Some Notes on Silence,” she says that “what is true or immutable is reached past or beyond time, in *silence*” (169). Her poetry shows two impulses, one to search for truth or “to be united with the unknown, to break out of this separateness,” and the other to give up the search and instead to make a conclusion about truth (“to wrench a uniqueness, an identity, from the all-consuming whole”) (168).¹⁴⁷ Graham describes these two impulses in religious terms in an earlier (1997) interview: “I think I ended up finding in poetry a middle ground between the secular and the sacred” (Schiff 64).¹⁴⁸ Among the two impulses, the longing to unite with the silent world is stronger in Graham’s poetry because in her view, the longing rejuvenates the language of a

poet: “I feel like I’m writing as part of a group of poets—historically—who are potentially looking at the end of the medium itself as a vital part of their culture—unless they do something to help it reconnect itself to mystery and power” (Gardner 215). In my terms, Graham develops a “**photographic language**” to capture the moment of these two impulses.

Photographic Language

Beyond Eschatological Truth

According to Graham, the new poetic form for her generation is characterized by “motions against closure,” differing itself from “linear and ending-dependent (eschatological)” meaning that persists in western culture (“Interview” Snodgrass 158). Graham suggests that there are new poetic forms other than linear narrative: “We can perhaps no longer afford for death to be the only mother of beauty?” (“Interview” Snodgrass 158). Since Graham locates truth outside the self and beyond time, her notion of truth diverges from the traditional view, as expressed, for example, in Wallace Stevens’s “Sunday Morning”: “Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her, / Alone, shall come fulfillment to our dreams / And our desires” (55). Graham’s poetry presents truth in continuous creating. For Graham, beauty is the creative energy (“what it [‘composition’] will create”) or the lived complexity (“multiplicity, simultaneity and polyvocality”) (Jarman 254, St. John 157).

Life's changefulness and complexity makes it an apt metaphor for beauty to Graham. For John Keats, a Grecian urn can embody both beauty and truth, whereas for Graham, though a poem may express beauty, truth or a poem's final meaning is ungraspable. The narrator in Graham's poem "For John Keats" visits Keats's grave with a friend Nanette at dusk, a time representing beauty in Keats's day: "Today, with a friend, in an archaic yellow light, I visited / the graveyard" (Erosion 50). The narrator is deciding whether to walk on the flat gravestones or on the grass. However, it is difficult to distinguish the stones from the grass in the graveyard where "the plots, then, overlapped. / . . . Here and there cut flowers had taken root / by accident" (Erosion 50). Therefore, "it was difficult / to know / where not to walk" (Erosion 50). The narrator throws the question to the reader: "Tell me where / it's right / to walk?" (Erosion 50). To the narrator, this graveyard belongs to the living instead of the dead because in her view, "the graves [are] just flat stone markers / in the grass, a gap / where growth / is barely held back for a name" (Erosion 50). The narrator decides to skip on the stones ("I skipped from name to name. . . .") (Erosion 50). The two visitors are compared to gods above the deceased Keats, though these "gods" above do not possess eternal, unchanging identities: "If we are gods up here, / . . . we break every / enframing, being / entirely / transitive" (Erosion 50). As the narrator leaps, her shadows fall on each gravestone as if she were measuring her life with the dead, and Keats's aesthetic with hers. The narrator concludes that beauty resides in the fleeting moments, which cannot be

conclusively represented: “We live up here / by blurring boundaries, calling it *love, the present moment, or / the beautiful*. We live a harsh fecundity, it seems / to me, the symbol tripping much / too freely / over everything / it signifies” (Erosion 50-51). As “tripping” signifies both making an error and skipping, Graham’s view that beauty, beyond poetic language, crosses boundaries and cannot be named or captured has revised Keats’s view that both beauty and truth exist within a work of art (Erosion 50).

Emulsion: The Image in the Information Age

The self’s transfiguration, which I name the Poetics of the Lotus, is an important feature of Graham’s poetry. To Graham, language is the self in the past, the present and the future; language is emotions, time, and a tool all in one: “The language is the mind is the heart is the soul is the moment-in-history is the desire-for-shapeliness is technique is the minutes themselves in those moments” (“Interview” Snodgrass 163). Instead of offering an image of the self, Graham’s language presents a self in an undecided state I call **emulsion**, which in my view has replaced the image as the visual paradigm in the information age.

“**Emulsion**,” the simultaneous presence of various selves, times, heterogeneous ingredients and the world, rather than the image becomes for Graham the dominant model in visual presentation in her poetry. Emulsion generally refers to a “mixture of two or more liquids [not mutually soluble or soluble only in a very limited way] in which one is present as

droplets . . . distributed throughout the other” (“Emulsion” Brit.).¹⁴⁹ The emulsion used in photography is a light-sensitive material having crystals suspended in gelatin and then spread thinly on the surface of a film (“Emulsion” Webster’s and Brit.). My term emulsion describes the self’s relationship to its world in Graham’s poetry, in which the self and the world form a composite yet remain discrete, retaining their own nature and qualities. In Graham’s poetry, the world is depicted as particles disseminated across the self’s ambiance. Examples of emulsion include the snow drifting around the narrator and the flock of birds flying overhead in “The Dream of the Unified Field,” the school of minnows swimming below the narrator in “Prayer,” and sea waves, snowflakes as well as the ground wind in “High Tide.” The self in this composition is volatile and changing, while interacting with other elements in the emulsion. Because of the mutual discreteness of its components and the self’s transformations, this admixture of the world and diverse selves remains in a nebulous condition, whose significance is unclear. By interpreting this admixture and finding the storyline within it, the author and the reader bring the meanings out of it as if making the image emerge from the photographic solution emulsion. The movements, permutation and reconfiguration in Graham’s poetry contrast sharply with the tranquility Ezra Pound’s verse wishes to freeze in an image; therefore, Graham in “The Dream of the Unified Field” replaces Pound’s “[p]etals on the wet, black bough” with “the leaves of this wet black tree at the heart of / the storm,” and the model of emulsion supplants the paradigm of image

in Graham's poem (Materialism 81, Pound 35). To Graham, poetry is like emulsion or the light-sensitive chemical composition on the negative, which the reader will decode. The meaning of the poem remains a "gap," as Graham usually calls it, a conglomerate of concepts and feelings (Gardner 224).

Graham's two recent poems from Never (2002) entitled "Prayer" and "Prayer ('From Behind Trees')" suggest that emulsion has supplanted image as the dominant model in visual presentation. "Prayer," which is also the first poem in Never, was published on December 25, 1999 in The New York Times. Graham's notes in Never explain that it was initially written for the end instead of the beginning of the twenty-first century ("was originally dated 12.31.00") (Never 111). A revised date, "12.31.99," appeared in parenthesis after the poem's title in The New York Times ("Prayer"). "Prayer" is one among five poems written for the occasion under a group rubric, "Poems for a Millennial Year"; the others are John Ashbery's "If You Said You Would Come With Me," Rita Dove's "Millennium Song," Robert Pinsky's "A Toast for 2000," and Virginia Hamilton Adair's "A Winter Note, A Millennium Message" ("Prayer"). All five poems comment on time, though with various perspectives. Graham's "Prayer" mulls over the elapsing of time and likens the self to a school of minnows swimming in unison against water currents and the wakes of the boat, which represent the forces in the world. Among these poems, Graham's and Ashbery's poems focus on the self, while Pinsky's poem deals with the power of memory, Adair's with hope, and Dove's with

history. Ashbery sees heterogeneity and diversity among people, while Graham sees these elements within the self; in “Prayer,” the self in the present moment realizes that the self in the past cannot be kept and will not return: “I cannot of course come back. Not to this. Never. / It is a ghost posed on my lips. Here: never.” (Never 3). Like the school of minnows swimming against the currents, the alliteration and consonance among “millennium,” “minnows,” “minuscule muscle,” “motion” and “minute” form a cluster of sounds fighting the iambic heptametrical rhythm of the lines (Never 3). The small fish the narrator sees swimming under the dock symbolize the sensations and consciousness of the self that join, disperse and rejoin in every minute: “Over a dock railing, I watch the minnows, thousands, swirl / themselves, each a minuscule muscle, but also, without the / way to *create* current, making of their unison (turning, re- / infolding, / entering and exiting their own unison in unison)” (Never 3). The swimming minnows make up a “visible” (and “visual”) current, striving to keep its shape against the “invisible” yet “real” currents represented by waves and boat wakes (Never 3). The fish swimming in “unison” form

. . . a

visual current, one that cannot freight or sway by

minutest fractions the water’s downdrafts and upswirls, the

dockside cycles of finally-arriving boat-wakes, there where

they hit deeper resistance, water that seems to burst into

itself (it has those layers), a real current though mostly

invisible sending into the visible (minnows) arrowing

motion that forces change— (Never 3)

Like the minnows, while forming and transforming into various selves (“unison”) in time, the self courageously attempts to delay life’s degeneration toward death (Never 3). An additional line (“applause where it hits pilings, keels, breaking back into”) after “burst into” in the original poem published in The New York Times transmits the narrator’s praise of the fish’s bravery (“Prayer”). In both editions, these fish swimming in a group impress the narrator as an emblem of “freedom” and of “faith” in human free will (“[T]his is freedom. This is the force of faith.”) (Never 3). “Prayer” suggests that a person’s will to retain freedom and faith in oneself despite the larger forces in the universe is a “longing [that] / is to be pure” (Never 3). Later in the poem, two short words with strong beats—the trochaic “never” and the stressed “here”— form a firm voice asserting the power of time and indicating the self’s evanescence (3). The self’s representation in the poem turns from “thousands” of lively, tenacious minnows into a lifeless “ghost” in the latter part of the poem, which though still in “unison,” has gone pale in time’s swift scuttle (Never 3).

Moreover, the minnows also represent the impulse in the poet and the reader to form a story and find a meaning against the language beyond their control: “I could not choose words. I am free to go” (Never 3). The poet’s desire at the moment of observation works

against this narrative impulse and causes randomness that makes the poetry beautiful, as an early poem, “One in the Hand,” explains: “A bird re-entering a bush, / like an idea regaining / its intention, seeks / the missed discoveries / . . . Just as / from time to time / we need to seize again / the whole language / in search of better desires. / . . . And see how beautiful / an alphabet becomes / when randomness sets in” (Hybrids 28). In another poem, “The Veil,” the veil that separates the story and the world must be rent so that the story can begin: “In the Tabernacle the veil hangs which is (choose one): / the dress dividing us from _____; the sky; the real, / through which the x ascends . . . / [T]here is / a rip in the veil, / which is the storyline” (45-46). This rip is also compared to a mother’s voice calling (“the gap her calling”) her son Andrew to come home (Beauty 47); the mother’s love for her son (“love which is the mother calling you in and you going”) initiates the entrance of her voice into the world (“It’s that she wants to be something the day must cross [.]”) (Beauty 46-47).

Another prayer poem in Never, “Prayer (‘From Behind Trees’),” ponders the proper demarcation between the self and the other (“‘the suitable’ distance between subject and object, gods and humans, humans and nature” in Graham’s notes). The poem describes the present self like a bystander standing behind the trees watching the parade of the future selves: “I am peering, where I am supposed to / discern, / how the new gods walk behind the old gods at the suitable distance” (Never 51). The last line of this poem is adapted from Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert’s poem “Cernunnos”: “The new gods walked behind the Roman army

at suitable distance. . . . The old [pagan] gods watched the entrance of the new [Roman] ones from behind trees” (Never 111, Herbert 80).

In Herbert’s poem, Cernunnos represents the negotiation between pagan and Christian-Roman religious systems (“The real shadow on the collaboration was cast by Cernunnos.”) and embodies Graham’s notion of the changing self (Herbert 80). The Celtic god of wild lives, Cernunnos was condemned by the Christian Church for his paganism and figured often as the Antichrist in the Middle Ages (“Cernunnos”). Graham’s “Prayer (‘From Behind Trees’)” explains the shift from paganism to Christianity as the replacement that comes with time. As Graham’s notes suggest, in this poem gods stand for paradigms in thought and changes in consciousness in every moment.¹⁵⁰ Cernunnos in Graham’s poem becomes a symbol of poetry as emulsion, which is the gap between the poet and the reader, between the restraint of the form and the freedom in words and in sounds, and between the self and the other. The question of “how a poem enters into the world” is visualized as a state of emulsion in Graham’s poetry in which the self intersects with the world, and the story with the real (Swarm 102).

The Lyric Moment

Graham’s photographic language is created to help her expand the lyric moment. The lyric is a controversial term in western history. In the Republic, Plato defines the lyric

by its voice; the dithyramb, Plato maintains, is verse in which the poet speaks “in his own voice” (94). As Timothy Bahti suggests, modernists T. S. Eliot and Northrop Frye define the lyric according to the absent audience lyric poetry construes (3-4). Eliot describes a “meditative voice” with “the poet talking to himself—or to nobody” in the lyric, while Frye, agreeing with John Stuart Mill, defines the lyric as “the utterance that is overheard” (Eliot 89, Frye 249). Recent critics treat lyric as a mode of personal poetry which poets experiment on and break from. Their diverging opinions on and definitions of lyric poetry attest to the deepening intricacies of the term. For example, in the New Definitions of Lyric (1998), Michael Golston suggests that Charles Bernstein writes a strain of “new lyric” which employs a language “uninfected” by capitalist ideologies (Golston 4-5, Bernstein 139). In the same volume, Allison M. Cummings examines the various configurations of lyric subjectivity in Sharon Olds’s, Rita Dove’s, Joy Harjo’s and Susan Mitchell’s poetry (152), whereas Hugh Grady maintains that contemporary people both recognize “the ‘materiality’” of the signifier and aspire for the desire which converges in lyric (192-93). This dissertation will limit the scope of its investigation to Graham’s redefinitions of the self in lyric. For this purpose, the lyric will refer to a genre of poetry short in length and expressive of personal emotions as C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon define it in A Handbook to Literature. The departure from this traditional sense of lyric in Graham’s poetry will be expatiated in the next section, “New Philosophical Poetry,” in which the relationship between lyric and voice,

and the efficacy of the Poetics of the Lotus in giving voice freedom and in freeing poetic license will be treated.

According to Holman and Harmon, lyric is a short, subjective poem expressing personal emotions or ecstasy, a lyric poem has two major characteristics—subjectivity and brevity (“Lyric”). In contrast to the lyric, the epic is a much longer poem written on complex, oftentimes public events that occur over a broad period in history (“Epic”). Helen Vendler suggests that Graham’s poetry attempts to manage huge themes within a short lyric moment, “reconciling the subject of history with the lyric moment” (“Fin-de-Siècle” 124). Graham’s poetry negotiates the epic and the lyric, the historical and the subjective, and memory and desire so as to expand the lyric moment in time and in significance:

And yet the lyrical moment . . . is being made to negotiate more and more these days with the narrative line. We see longer, or expanded, lyrical poems. They’re still after that vertical burn—transcendence—whatever you want to call it. But they want to experience it *in* time (inside the narrative line, as it were) rather than outside of it. It’s as if the parental poles of Whitman and Dickinson were being merged. (“Interview” Snodgrass 154)

In this 1986 interview, Graham notes the tug-of-war between the lyric and epic impulses in poetry and between the personal and the historical. In other words, Graham’s lyric moment is the historical transcribed in the present tense (“the very conflagatory ‘now’ of one’s

historical-yet-subjective existence”) (“Intro.: Something”). Memory about the past and desire in the present moment generate a form that seeks to capture the confluence of feelings and historical moments by digression and delay: “Digression and delay seem to me important zones for us to explore, and possible habitations for our psyches these days” (“Interview” Snodgrass 154). To Graham, these two impulses describe the operation of form in poetry as a postponed hurrying toward the ending (“towards a closure perpetually postponed”) (“Interview” Snodgrass 154).

Graham’s photographic language seeks to capture the spirit of poetry in sequence. In Yan Yu’s terms, Graham’s method presents a succession of contemplative realms. Vendler also suggests that a cinematic sequence of present moments characterizes the poetry Graham wrote after Erosion: “[T]he inevitable present tense of film” creates a format of “this moment, [and] then this moment” in Graham’s poetry (“Married” 76). Vendler’s opinion matches Graham’s own view on time in her poem “Evolution”: “This all first time and then again first / time” (Never 23).

Mass Tenor

A lyric poem usually spans a brief moment because it often treats personal emotions and sometimes “partakes . . . of the quality of ecstasy” (“Lyric”). The sequence of images and events in Graham’s poetry produces a cluster of meanings, which I call “**mass tenor**.” Graham’s poetry conveys mass tenor, and her poems are best read as a whole in its spirit

instead of in its parts. Tenor refers to meaning, after I. A. Richards's definition that a metaphor comprises two parts, its "tenor" or idea, and "the vehicle," which is the image (96). Richards agrees with Shelley that "[l]anguage is vitally metaphorical" and suggests further that "[t]hought is metaphoric, and proceeds by comparison" (90, 94). The Poetics of the Lotus maintains that a poem's tenor resides not in its language but in language's interaction with its other. For Graham, poetry's value dwells neither in the signs themselves, as Language Poets contend, nor in the relationships among signs, as Jacques Derrida proposes, but rather in signs' relationship with the other; poetry's tenor is founded on the negotiations of the self with the other during the self's transformations. The Poetics of the Lotus suggests that truth in contemporary poetry is ontological, and that truth can best be grasped as a whole in all its complexity. The voyages among the sea and shores, and the desires and influences from one shore (China) and from the other shore (Taiwan) in Lo Fu's Driftwood connote that the tenor in poetry can best be interpreted when all things are considered. Likewise, Graham's notion of swarms and her imagery of a group of things—birds, snow flakes or beach debris—exhibit an attempt to capture poetry's mass tenor.

As the tenor of a poem is conveyed by the boundary crossing between the self and the other, a poem's tenor can only be perceived through mystic enlightenment as Graham's poem "The Time Being" depicts: "The idea won't / hold as I push it out. Then it will. Then it / is held [not by me]. Then it is all gone" (Never 48).¹⁵¹ Another poem, "Hunger," contrasts

abstraction extracted by language (“princes”) with nature, which is the other for language, and “Hunger” suggests that the latter is the real subject of her poetry (Never 39). The poem’s title refers to Graham’s ambition to overtake her poetic predecessor Wallace Stevens. In an interview, Graham suggests that she has carved out a great mission for her career: “I think many poets writing today realize we need to recover a high level of ambition, a rage, if you will—the big hunger” (Gardner 215). Graham’s poem includes as an epigraph a quote from Stevens’s “Credences of Summer.” Steven’s lines run: “It is the rock of summer, the extreme, / A mountain luminous half-way in bloom / And then half way in the extremest light / Of sapphires flashing from the central sky, / As if twelve princes sat before a king,” and Graham cites the last line (325). Graham’s “Hunger” emphasizes the passing of time by adding “(Midday)” before the epigraph and using time (“11:54,” “11:57,” and so on) as the headings of many stanzas (Never 39-40). Graham adds the time factor to Stevens’s original design and replaces Stevens’s abstraction with her ontological aesthetic; therefore, “Hunger” depicts thirteen oranges instead of twelve princes (Never 39); “Hunger” begins: “Thirteen fullest oranges pooling at the foot of / their tree” (Never 39). Stevens’s word “princes” evokes nobleness and power, whereas Graham’s ripe oranges on the ground symbolize life, which is richer and more complex than abstraction. “Hunger” invites the reader to grab the fruits instead of their concepts in its ending: “What can be broken always holding what can [not]. / A truth not a symbol. / Grip it in scrutiny” (Never 43).¹⁵² Graham sees beauty in

conflicts and negotiations rather than in death or closure; therefore, in “Hunger” she stresses the first rather than the second line of William Butler Yeats’s “Leda and the Swan”: “The broken wall, the burning roof and tower / And Agamemnon dead” (Anthology 49).¹⁵³

Unlike Stevens and Yeats, for Graham, death has ceased to be the mother of beauty.

Collated Meaning

The mass tenor of Graham’s poetry is collated by the reader. Collation refers to the process whereby the reader arranges the episodes into a story, which resembles the collating of the pages into a book by sequencing. Graham’s poems “Holy Shroud,” “The Dream of the Unified Field,” and “High Tide” illustrate the mass tenor and **collated meaning** solicited by her poetry. Another poem “Ebbtide” suggests that through decoding the visible (for example, nature), the reader understands the story in “the clearing,” the space in the author’s mind she cleared for her poem (Never 38). The narrator’s eyes pass from one object to another while the thoughts roam: “This hand, thus / sugar-stalk. The cane-fields in the back of us, / the length of tubefish back there too” (Never 38). The tenor of the poem is collated from various scenes as the reader passes from the hands, through the groves, and finally to “the clearing” in the author’s mind: “I can see through the trees, / through the cane grove, palm grove, out far enough into / the clearing where / the spine of the picked-clean story shines” (Never 38). The analyses of various poems including “Noli Me Tangere,” “Holy

Shroud,” and “The Dream of the Unified Field” will illustrate the characteristics of Graham’s photographic language.

“Noli Me Tangere”

“Noli Me Tangere,” published in The End of Beauty (1987), presents a good example of the feminist form in Graham’s poetry. “Noli Me Tangere” suggests that writing is feminine instead of masculine because it involves the unconscious and contains randomness. For Graham, both the imagery and the truth in poetry ought to be free and mysterious and not confined or fixed. In the beginning of “Noli Me Tangere,” the angels sitting on Christ’s empty grave proclaim the news of Christ’s resurrection to Mary Magdalene, who is one of the first persons to witness the empty tomb and the resurrected Christ during His delay of ascension to heaven. The poem compares the angels who announce the gospel to Magdalene and the birds which cross the gaps of a chain fence all afternoon to writing. The birds’ motions are like a secret that “cannot be / kept” and “a lie” (a story) that must be revealed (Beauty 41). The narrator asks if it is “the law of freedom” that Magdalene can see Christ but must not touch Him (Beauty 41). The narrator is also befuddled as to whether Christ is light or flesh during this delay of ascension. Like the narrator, Magdalene desires to touch Christ so as to believe in his resurrection, but Christ admonishes Magdalene to believe in what she has seen and not to touch Him. “[I]n that slippage” between language and life, which the distance between Magdalene and Christ signifies, the narrator hears

beauty (Beauty 42). The narrator then comments that like the smoke, which takes up the space of the air or like “the tree-shaped gap the tree inhabits” and “invents,” writing replaces and recreates the author’s desire and passion (Beauty 43). Just as Magdalene suspends her doubt about Christ’s identity and lets Him leave, the reader must leave Magdalene alone without questioning her decision, her story about Christ’s resurrection, and her identity.

Christ suggests a place where polarities are united. “Noli Me Tangere” suggests that if Christ is the truth Magdalene longs to grasp, Magdalene herself represents the human free will to choose to believe in the truth without fully comprehending it. Graham calls the knowledge that Magdalene has “the body’s (the heart’s) knowledge” which involves a large extent of “not-knowing” (“Glorious” 20, 22). The question both Magdalene and Graham ask is, where is truth, or in other words, where lies the meaning of a poem. In the New Testament, Christ ascends to heaven in both body and soul. In this poem, Magdalene would like to know Christ’s identity. Yet, truth is beyond the power of Magdalene’s language and is kept by Christ, the other.

In “Noli Me Tangere,” Magdalene stands for ultimate freedom of the will untethered by reason. Magdalene also represents liberation from the narrative impulse, which propels toward closure and a meaning. Presenting the resurrection scene from Magdalene’s perspective, this poem focuses on Magdalene’s individualism, her freedom, and her choice regarding truth. The encounter with resurrected Christ is a test of Magdalene’s free will,

and Magdalene's freedom to tell her story about Christ is preserved when Christ says "Don't touch me" (in Latin "Noli Me Tangere") and delays the disclosure of the truth (Beauty 40).

In the Bible, Christ says: "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (John 20.17 Metzger 157 NT). Christ asks Magdalene, the first human witness of his resurrected self, to be his messenger to spread the news of his resurrection and to prophesy His ascension in the near future. In the poem, Magdalene, the storyteller, both relates a story about Christ's identity and transforms this story into a belief in a holy event on which the credibility of Christianity is founded. To maintain her freedom in continuing the boundary crossing between herself and Christ, Magdalene must obey the "law of freedom," to wit, "[t]hat she must see him [Christ] yet must not touch" (Beauty 42).

Christ's resurrection means the slipping away of Christ's body and soul, or truth, from the earth. Beauty is defined as poetry's link to the absent truth, as the narrator, who is gazing at the painting of the resurrection scene, indicates: "I've tried to hear in that slippage what / beauty is" (Beauty 41). Christ cannot be touched after he is resurrected because he has just defeated death, and Magdalene has no reason to form a symbolic death of closure in her story by indicating Christ's nature. To touch means that Magdalene needs empirical proof of Christ's transformed identity. Instead, Magdalene accepts the body's knowledge that locates truth beyond empirical knowledge and beyond exposition. In the poem, death is

mysteriously conquered by Christ as closure is by Magdalene, yet their identities remain unexplained.

However, in the Bible Christ tells Thomas to touch in order to believe: “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe” (John 20.27 Metzger 157NT). Nonetheless, Christ asks Thomas: “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe” (John 20.29 Metzger 157NT). In contrast to Thomas, Magdalene embodies the freedom to surpass reality and one’s senses; therefore, it is Magdalene who spreads the gospel and makes people believe in Christ. By telling the story about Christ, Magdalene saves those who believe by the promise of their own resurrection. Death is conquered first by Christ and later also by his believers.

In contrast to the narrator Magdalene, who transforms the visible into the abstract and the present into the future, the angels who sit at Christ’s tomb symbolize language that transmits the message yet skips the story. The angels, who represent language that enters holiness, travel across the real and the human: “The small angelic scripts pressing up through the veils” (Beauty 40). The angels are indispensable because they “harrow” the tomb (“the fixities”), giving Magdalene the hope that there is an escape route to freedom: “You see the angels have come to sit on the delay / for a while, / they have come to harrow the fixities, the sharp edges / of this open / sepulcher,” which has transformed into a door to freedom (Beauty

40). Angels announce the news about resurrection earlier than Magdalene spreads it on the earth; therefore, figuratively speaking, language precedes the free form which Magdalene stands for; her “listening” to the angels’ message demonstrates a readiness to approach truth beyond language (Beauty 40).

For Graham, poetry is continually creating and beginning; for example, “the body” of Christ, which Magdalene is exhorted not to touch, is “composed / of the distance between” Magdalene and Christ, which signifies the interaction between poetic form and truth (Beauty 42). Creation deities, such as God and Christ, and figures whose action initiates a new phase of history, such as Eve and Columbus, permeate Graham’s poems.¹⁵⁴ The lyric moment “Noli Me Tangere” depicts is the delay of Christ’s ascension to heaven because truth resides in an in-between state in the dialectics and pursuit of the unknown. Graham’s narrator, such as Magdalene in “Noli Me Tangere,” often communicates with the other in search for beauty: “I’ve listened where the words and the minutes would touch, [and] / I’ve tried to hear in that slippage what / beauty is“ (Beauty 42). Like Magdalene, the red birds in this poem represent life in the present moment and negotiate with things, symbolized by the fence.

Graham’s view that the conscious self negotiates with the unconscious knowledge contained in things reflects a tendency since the 1980s to search for new criteria to measure knowledge and truth. For example, Ned Herrmann’s theories of brain dominance that

emerged in the 1980s advocate the use of both the left brain responsible for language, calculation, and analytical reasoning, and the right brain in charge of visual representation, music, art, and synthesis of concepts (75-77, 80, 82).¹⁵⁵ Hermann's idea that creativity, especially its application in life, must be "whole brained" concurs with Graham's view about border crossing (82).

"Holy Shroud"

In Graham's poem, "Holy Shroud," published in Region of Unlikeness (1991), the reader waits for the revelation of truth, yet the truth delays its emergence. With a childhood spent in Trastevere, Rome, "where there were more churches than shops," Graham's poetry exhibits a religious sensibility in analogies and imagery (Schiff 64). In the beginning of the poem, cardinals living in the stubble fields beyond the mall are flying to a Thornberry tree. The scent of the berries of the Thornberry tree is like "garments of signals and truth / winding itself among" people (Region 71). The narrator longs for truth to transpire just as these birds crave Thornberries ("such waiting / as these birds inhabit") (Region 71). Though this wish may not be granted, to the narrator, "a prayer that matter[s] / is praying, not really ever / perishing" into nothingness (Region 71). "[T]hread[ing] in and out of the discarded / photobooth" like a living "storyline, / [which is] down over the whole barrenness" of the booth, which represents technology, the cardinals lift up in the dusk in the shape of "a large cloth," reminding the narrator of the holy shroud, which was displayed in front of a church

(Region 72, 71). Just as this storyline takes form without the birds' calculated planning, Christ's face revealed itself unanticipatedly to Secondo Pia when he attempted in 1894 to develop the first photo of the Shroud of Turin, a strip of cloth reported to have enveloped Christ's body (Otterbein 187). In the poem, in contrast to Secondo Pia's experience, when people come to the church where the shroud is kept, attempting to make out the image of Christ on the shroud spread out in sunshine, they see "nothing" but "the delay" of truth's revelation (Region 74). Christ's image formed by connecting the dots on the cloth is "*almost*" there before their eyes to serve as the evidence to substantiate historically Christ's crucifixion (Region 74). Venerated in Turin, Italy since 1578 as Christ's burial cloth, the Shroud of Turin has a photo-negative image of a beaten and crucified man (Otterbein 187).

The lyric moment that "Holy Shroud" depicts is the time when thingness reveals itself to the narrator. The birds flying in a fleet like a piece of "cloth," the stain on the Shroud of Turin, and the storyline woven by the birds' movements in and out of the discarded photo booth are descriptions of emulsion, which allows active traffic between language and truth (Region 71). In contrast to these incidents, Secondo Pia had the feeling of being looked at by thingness ("A face looked out at Pia . . .") rather than looking at the cloth when he made the first photographic image of the shroud in 1894 (Region 73). Graham's notes reveal that Georges Didi-Huberman's monograph discussing the shroud provides facts about Secondo Pia's experience (Region 130). Didi-Huberman maintains that the viewers transform the

stain on the shroud into a piece of evidence (67). Didi-Huberman suggests that truth occurs “as a delirium of absolute translucidity” between sight and belief in these viewers (Their gaze “transcend[s] the scansion of seeing and of knowing.”) (67). To Didi-Huberman, the event of the shroud has been stirred up by “the historic impetus” to gain evidence to attest to the holiness of Christ’s crucifixion historically, and this impetus “rendered the shroud of Turin visible—or more precisely, figurative” (Didi-Huberman 65). Didi-Huberman compares the reading of the shroud to the developing of a negative: “Confronted with its formless stains, interpreters of the shroud imagined such a *transformation*, which photography would actually accomplish. A phantasm associating Christ’s passion with the medium of photography would *hallucinate* such a transformation” (Didi-Huberman 67). This transformation, Didi-Huberman says, effaces “all figuration” and renders the shroud and the photo authentic or, in other words, miraculous (67). The transformation, though prompted by a motive to historicize a spiritual event, instead authenticates or sanctifies the photo of the shroud. In other words, this transformation arises from people’s belief in the shroud without having historical evidence. The same idea applies to poetry. Thus “Holy Shroud” suggests that language is not made up of referential signs, as Ferdinand de Saussure would like us to believe, with signifiers pointing to the signified within the linguistic system. Graham and Didi-Huberman have the same view that language is incomplete in itself and remains connected to its other. Their view is close to Yan Yu’s notion that poetic language evokes

the quasi-religious feelings of mystic enlightenment. Thus, Didi-Huberman remarks: “The noniconic, nonmimetic nature of this stain [, like a sign in language,] guarantees its *indexical* [and thus holy] *value*” (68). Likewise, remarking about the indexical nature of language, Graham emphasizes that the state in not-knowing, of waiting before truth is attained, is a vital state in contemporary consciousness: “[N]ot acting, [but] waiting and listening, and a state of readiness but not readiness to spring” “might be a state that culturally we need to be more aware of now” (“Silverblatt”).

In contrast to photos that are images of incidents in the past, the flock of birds that folds down their wings to light on the Thornberry tree and Christ’s face floating up to the surface during the photo’s developing are in a volatile state or emulsion, which is associated with the present moment. In the next scene in the poem, Graham gives hints about her abandonment of the image for emulsion: “Sometimes I watch them [birds] / . . . threading in and out of the discarded / photobooth, necklacing it, trying / to nest in the plexi face-plate / someone kicked in / after maybe three thousand faces had leaned / their images upon it” (Region 72). By skittering in and out of (“necklacing”) the deserted photo booth and by nursing their young in the cubicle, the birds, which represent the present moment, bring new life into the empirical mode of representation the booth symbolizes (These birds “fold down again now, / down over the whole / barrenness” of the booth.), and in their motion, like poetic language in the form of emulsion, point to a certain truth (Region 72). However, for both

the narrator and the reader, the story in the poem delays its manifestation. Therefore, these birds constitute both the waiting and the delay of the truth for the reader, who must read the poetry closely. The suggested reading method for poetry is likened to praying in which the words' "readiness . . . is finally / heard" by the reader (Region 71).

My term emulsion finds further explanation in the notion of Prague-born Brazilian philosopher Vilém Flusser (1920-91) of the "posthistorical image" or "the techno-image" which "brings perceptions . . . back to experience" (126, 40, 127). Flusser maintains that before writing is invented, the world is perceived by "magical consciousness" in "prehistoric images" in the "scenic" mode (126). After writing is invented, writing gives rise to a historical consciousness because writing transforms images into concepts via linear narrative and presents the world as "irreversible, progressive, and dramatic" (Flusser 40). Flusser maintains that in the posthistorical age, the "belief in texts"—in explanations, in theories, [and] in ideologies—is lost" (40). The text has been superseded by the techno-image, for example, a photograph or a film, which possesses certain characteristics of printed texts, being "mechanically producible, reproducible, and distributable," yet unlike the text which explicates images into concepts, the techno-image presents concepts in a "scene" (Flusser 127, 40). Therefore, according to Flusser, people in the posthistorical age confront the task of "visualization" in converting concepts into images: "Thus, to be more exact in speaking about photographs, we should not say imagination, but rather visualization. For imagination

is the ability to step back from the environment and to create an image of it. In comparison, visualization refers to the ability to turn a swarm of possibilities into an image” (Flusser 129).

In my view, the techno-image arouses both temporal and atemporal feelings unlike writing, which generates temporal consciousness, because in a techno-image such as a photo or a film, the past has been preserved in a framed image, with the frame suggesting its form and design.

The form in lyric poetry, like the frame in the techno-image, is activated through a simultaneously immanent and transcendent self. Just as Vilém Flusser maintains that the value of the techno-image resides in the information this image contains rather than in the image per se, the value of Graham’s poems such as “Noli Me Tangere,” “Holy Shroud” and “The Dream of the Unified Field” resides in the collective information the poems present rather than the language of these poems. “Nothing can be singled out” from life’s flitting moments as another poem, “The Time Being” suggests (Never 44). “Holy Shroud” suggests that poetry’s significance resides beyond the signs of language in this moment’s complexity and richness: “[O]h—storyline, / down over the whole barrenness— / as when the face which is His [Christ’s] . . . emerged” (Region 72).

“The Dream of the Unified Field”

Graham’s narrator is often situated in a state among a complex amalgam of sensations and times, which I call emulsion. And it is usually in this state that her narrator with a readiness to hear or look at things closely apprehends thingness. This poem’s title later

became the title of Graham's Pulitzer Prize winning volume, and this poem represents one of Graham's culminating achievements in the 1990s. As the poem's title suggests, a "unified field" of the self and its world is at best a dream, and emulsion is the present condition of the human world. The narrator's impulse to interpret her world is imperialistic because like a colonizer, she attempts to take into "possession" the world and its otherness, which are not part of her self, by explicating them and forming a narrative (Materialism 85). "The Dream of the Unified Field" suggests that the form of poetry has simultaneously an impulse to propel toward an ending, which paints a prospect of and a dream about the future, and a historical impulse to salvage an ideal in the past preserved in the civilization's collective unconscious. It is the dream about the future and the ideal in the past that the narrator attempts to understand in things. For example, in the poem Columbus both desires to strike gold and longs to reach the earthly paradise. These two dreams converge on an object, the gold the Indian woman wears on her nose, which is evidence that Columbus has reached the realm of gold adjoining the earthly paradise and that the land abounds in gold, which can satisfy the material demands of both him and the Spanish monarchs. To Graham, poetry is the self's illusion in the present moment, a nostalgic dream founded on the memory and feelings of the old self and extending out to the self in the future: "Memory and desire are irrevocably linked to one another"; thus, Graham explains, a person's "wish to activate the past is part of an attempt to believe in the future" ("Interview" Snodgrass 154). In this poem,

Graham compares the beginning of writing to the onset of American colonial history when Columbus's dream of the "Great Heights," the realm of gold near the earthly paradise in the classics and the Bible, and other factors motivated him to undertake the journeys that eventually landed his crew and him in the New World and made him the great navigator who inaugurated American history (Materialism 86).

In the beginning of the poem, in a still "bright" "late afternoon," the narrator is walking toward a house with a black leotard for her daughter (Materialism 80). Halfway to the house, snow begins to fall. The snowing world with the narrator in it exemplifies the self's interaction with things, and is presented in a state of emulsion. The neutral snow also brings in things' indifference ("Nothing true or false in itself.") and randomness ("Just motion.") (Materialism 80).

Observing the snow ("I watched each gathering of leafy flakes / melt round my footfall. / I looked up into it. . . ."), whose thingness the narrator seeks to understand, the narrator realizes that poetry is motion and transition from one state to another: The "gathering and loosening" snow flakes "define, as a voice would, the passaging through from / the-other-than- / human" (Materialism 80). The snow's movement and brief existence tell the narrator that poetic description is achieved through a transmigration of spirit from the visible in a state of emulsion in which things mix with the self to an enlightened view about

thingness; Graham describes this process as progressing from “the visible” to “the partial real,” and finally to “the real imaginary, (a whole real)” (“Interview” Snodgrass 155).

In contrast to the snow, which connotes life’s finiteness, the road is infinity, which is “[i]n- / scribed with the present,” represented by the walking narrator (“The road with me on it going on through.”) (Materialism 80). The road symbolizes the infinite time, which intersects the narrator’s brief life. Among the three components in the emulsion, the road remains still, whereas both the snow and the narrator are changing and moving: “Me in it [the snow] / and yet / moving easily through it” (Materialism 80). The crossing of these three elements makes up the beautiful scenery in the poem; with snowflakes floating and circling around her, the narrator passes from one state of mind to another as she walks on a road that seems to extend endlessly before her.

Though snowflakes vanish the moment they reach the ground, they continue to flow and have their effects, however minimal, on the earth: “Gone as they hit the earth. But embellishing. / Flourishing” (Materialism 80). Watching the snow drifting, and walking, also never stopping, the narrator muses over this question: “As if it really / were possible to exist, and exist, never to be pulled back / in, given and given never to be received” (Materialism 80). What does the continuance of life in the present mean if life will end anyway? Despite her question, like the snow, which falls indifferently toward the ground, the narrator walks mechanically, and her life continues without her knowing the meaning of

her existence: “The music / of the footfalls doesn’t stop, doesn’t / mean” (Materialism 80).

The narrator hands her daughter the leotard, which, called a “tiny dream” earlier, turns out to be “*things*” (Materialism 80). After the walk along the road, the narrator has insidiously connected to things in the snowy world that have entered her thought: “*Here are your things,*” the narrator says to her daughter (Materialism 80).

Walking home, the narrator hears the starlings fluttering overhead, which, like the narrator, are passing “through the falling snow” (Materialism 81); their lives are crossing infinity, too. The narrator stops her mechanical walking because these birds reveal to her a possible explanation of life (“I heard . . . / the huge flock of starlings massed over our / neighborhood / . . . I stopped.”) (80-81); as usual, Graham uses hearing to transmit a readiness to understand thingness in the other. “[A]s though the austerity of a true, cold thing, a verity,” the formation of these black birds represents life’s delay in manifesting its meaning (81). The tree where these birds gather symbolizes “the world’s waiting” and “[o]f having waited a long time and / still having / to wait” for truth’s unfolding (81). Thingness reveals itself to the narrator in the aggregation of the starlings (“thousands of bodies swarming / then settling / overhead”) in a state of emulsion as in Graham’s poem “Holy Shroud” (Materialism 81). In unpredictable number and formations, the birds quickly disperse, gather on the tree, and scatter again, defying the narrator’s efforts to estimate them (“I tried to count— / then tried to estimate. . . .”) (81); they “scatter, blow away, scatter,

recollect— / undoing again and again the tree without it ever ceasing to be / full” in swift and “engulfed readjustments” within the flock (81).

While the birds are an example of emulsion, their weaving into the snow (“blackness redisappearing / into / downdrafts of snow”) and perching on the tree also form other instances of emulsion (81). The constant shifting shape of the tree with its absence of design implies thingness: The tree with the bevy of birds is “[o]f indifference” and “[o]f indifferent reappearings” (81). The indifference and inexplicableness of thingness are implied in these birds’ patternings. These birds in motion teach the narrator the postponement of reaching a decisive interpretation for the present moment.

Next, the tree in emulsion to and from which the flock of birds fly reminds the narrator of her daughter “twirling in the living room in the shiny leotard” (Materialism 81); this association gives the narrator a vague hint that though part of the emulsion, the self is distinct from the rest of the world. Suddenly, the narrator hears a crow cry, which wakes the narrator from her confused thought. The narrator watches the tree’s “head explode then recollect, explode, [and] recollect” (82). Then she hears “it, inside the swarm, the single cry / of the crow. One syllable—one—inside the screeching and the / skittering” (Materialism 82). This crow’s cry separates the crow from the rest of the emulsion. Like “the rips” in Graham’s “Le Manteau de Pascal” and Aunt Consuelo’s scream in Elizabeth Bishop’s “In the Waiting Room,” this crow’s cry demarcates the self from this world (The Errancy 67).¹⁵⁶

While the snow reveals to the narrator that poetry crosses from the visible over to the human realm, the crow's cry reminds the narrator that the self should be discrete from other beings and objects in the world. Just as the crow, black as the flock, is distinguishable from those starlings, a poet should have his or her own self in poetry. The daughter's dancing intensifies the impression of the self's distinctness, and the crow's cry underscores the self's individuality (82).

The crow still in the tree cried again. The narrator is plunged into contemplation by this cry ("a voice inside a head"), which is "filling" her "head" (82). The narrator stops walking mechanically, and her empty pocket now resembles an empty head receptive to a new interpretation of life: "See, my pocket is empty now. . . . / Two now, skull / and pocket / with their terrified inhabitants" (82). The narrator no longer has a mission in hand, nor does she still harbor the earlier thought that life has no meaning. Instead of continuing her walk, the narrator turns back to watch her daughter from outside the window.

On her way, the narrator draws nearer toward the crow and marvels at its bluish black feathers. The crow's blackness comprises "[s]tages of black but without / graduation," black colors all mingled in this emulsion of colors "as where hate and order touch—something that cannot / become known" because not one of these black shades can be precisely distinguished ("none of them / true") (Materialism 83); "[a]ll of this happened, yes. Then [the colors] disappeared / into the body of the crow" (83). The narrator sees "layers of

blacks” like a “chorus of meaning” all in the emulsion, the one bird (83); without losing their individuality, the colors meld into one crow.

While itself an example of emulsion of colors, the crow is also a component of another emulsion, the tree full of starlings, which look like the tree’s moving leaves: The crow “comes sheering in, / close to the trunk, to land—Is he now / *disappeared* again?” (Materialism 83). Like the colors of its feathers, which are independent shades within the emulsion of colors, the crow within the starlings preserves its individuality in its cry, “[o]ne syllable—one—inside the screeching and the / skittering” (82). Both the colors of the crow and the crow’s cry illustrate the self’s individuality among heterogeneous elements.

The poem flashes back to a splendidly decorated classroom in Stalingrad, Russia where the narrator is taking Madame Sakaroff’s dancing class. Once, arriving at the dancing classroom early, the narrator overhears Madame Sakaroff uttering a godless remark: “*No one must believe in God again*” (Materialism 84). Like her remark, Madame Sakaroff’s choreographic solo expresses the self’s complete independence from external associations. The narrator witnesses her teacher Madame Sakaroff dancing to and touching her own image in the mirror, which terrifies the narrator: “[T]he two of her like huge black hands— / clap once and once only and the signal is given” (84). Instead of communicating with things and beings outside her, as the narrator does, Madame Sakaroff rivets her gaze at her image in the mirror: “I saw / more suddenly / how her eyes eyed themselves: no wavering: / like a vast

silver page burning,” which is reminiscent of the developing of a photograph (84). This bold dance signifying self-idolatry is ominous since despite the touch (Her “body finally / touched / the image. . .”), the demarcation between the self and its image will not vanish (“[T]he silver film [the mirror] between them like something that would have / shed itself in nature now / but wouldn’t, couldn’t, here, on tight, / *between*, not thinning, not slipping off[.]”) (Materialism 85).

The colors of the crow’s feathers and Madam Sakaroff’s dance represent two interpretations of the self in the world. The crow’s colors represent the view that the self mixes with its world in a state of emulsion, whereas Madame Sakaroff’s dance suggests that the self and its image make up the closed system of an idol. For example, in contrast to Madame Sakaroff dressed in solid black, the crow is in shades of blue and black: “Close up, he’s blue—streaked iris blue, India-ink blue—and / black—an oily, firey set of blacks” (83).

The flock and the crow enlighten the narrator about emulsion, whereas Madame Sakaroff teaches the narrator the horror of self-absorption. Madame Sakaroff represents an idol, an independent sign with no information outside it: There is “no signal in it, [and] no information” other than the idol itself (Materialism 85). In Heidegger’s words, Madam Sakaroff’s dance embodies a self completely immersed in itself when “the will unites itself to itself, i.e., it unites itself to what it wills. This gathering itself together is itself [the] power’s assertion of power” (“Word” 78). Unlike the tree and the crow, Madame Sakaroff embodies

a self without communication with the world, likened to a “black hole” sucking all meanings into itself (Materialism 84).

The horror that the narrator feels arises from the absence of meaning in the touch: Though “the signal is given— / but to what? —regarding what?” are the narrator’s questions (Materialism 84). The delay of the meaning and the emerging image in this poem is perceived as a blessed human condition of emulsion in which the self’s freedom is defined in its interaction with the other. Likewise, the depiction of emulsion in “Noli Me Tangere” and in “Holy Shroud” connotes freedom and individualism.¹⁵⁷ Like a “black hole / expanding,” and “like a meaning coming up quick from inside that [‘silver’] page,” Madame Sakaroff’s mirror image is “coming up quick to seize the reading face” of the peering narrator (84). In photographic jargon, the tree and the crow remain in a state of emulsion, whereas Madame Sakaroff’s dance is a developed image. The narrator is devising ways to shield her daughter from falling into the same maelstrom of inexplicable, mysterious experiences. Inspired by the crow, the narrator realizes that the self can retain its individuality in the world.

The narrator adopts the role of a creator or a poet (in the word’s etymological meaning) to write a history that recounts her storming thought (Materialism 80). The approach the narrator has taken is colonization, which takes the emulsion into the mind to be part of the self, literally “limbed, shouldered, necked, [and] visaged”: “The storm: I close my eyes and, / standing in it, try to make it *mine*,” “[a]n inside / thing” (Materialism 85).

Unlike the snow flakes in the beginning of the poem that melt when they reach the ground, the stormy thought once possessed by the heart will not vanish: “It [the storm] settles, in my head, the wavering white / sleep, the instances—they stick, accrue, / grip up, connect, [and] they do not melt, / [and] I will not let them melt” (85). Her arranging of thoughts resembles the building of a civilization by colonization (These “instances” of the past “build, cloud and cloud . . . / [until] inside, [there is] a splinter colony, [a] new world, [which is] possession / gripping down to form, / [or] wilderness brought deep into my clearing”) (85).

Though the colony establishes itself on past episodes, dynasties and time (“Once I was. . . . once, once. / . . . [And] now the clouds coming in (don’t look up), / now the Age behind the clouds, The Great Heights, / all in there, reclining, eyes closed, huge, / centuries and centuries long and wide. . . .”), the colony is connected to the present moment (“out of the ooze of night”) and the narrator’s present existence: While “underneath [“the clouds”], barely attached but attached, / like a runner, [is] my body, my tiny piece of / the century—minutes, hours going by” (85-86).¹⁵⁸ This association connects “centuries” of history to the present moment which the narrator’s “body” inhabits, and as Vendler suggests, links the lyric with the epic (Materialism 86, “Fin-de-Siècle” 124). Present moments (“now and now”), which the narrator’s walking exemplifies, sustain the dream of a national, cultural past: “The Great Heights— / anchored by these footsteps, now and now, / the footstepping—now and now—carrying its vast / white sleeping geography” (86). This

“white geography” in an emulsion of public history and an individual past is finally “mapped” into part of the territory of the self as the narrator emphasizes that the mind’s act of colonization is “not a lease” but a “*possession*” (86).

Next, a modified passage excerpted from various sections in The Diario of Christopher Columbus’s First Voyage to America, 1492-93 bridges stanza 6 and 7. The lower-cased “new world” compares the narrator’s act of colonization of a space in her mind to Columbus’s colonization of America (Materialism 85). The narrator adapts Columbus’s diary taken during his first voyage to America to her thought, adding lines about the snowstorm to connect Columbus’s diary to her present existence. For example, after the time of Columbus’s diary (“[a]t the hour of vespers”), Graham adds time in the present (“in a sudden blinding snow”) (Diario 203, Materialism 86). As the whole process is now seen through the flying snow in the present, Columbus’s colonization of America is recounted in a hesitant tone: “In the white swirl [a phrase added by Graham], he [Columbus] placed a large cross at the western side of / the harbor, on a conspicuous height, / as a sign that Your Highness claim the land as / your own,” beginning the Christianization and colonization of America (Materialism 86).¹⁵⁹ Historical accounts pertaining to Columbus’s explorations appear to be more dubious because of the overlay of the snow: “After the cross was set up, / three sailors went into the bush (immediately erased / from sight by the fast snow) to see what kinds of / trees” (86-87).¹⁶⁰ Moreover, Graham alters the part about Indian captives;

instead of “one woman” in the diary, her poetry relates that Columbus’s crew captures “three very black Indian / women,” and in Graham’s poem, only one of these Indians pleads to return to the ship after being sent home (*Materialism* 87, *Diario* 219). Graham’s revision casts doubt on the representation of Native Americans and allows multiple native perspectives to enter. Columbus’s dreams are also seen through the snow of the present moment: “Inside it [the ‘wild’ snow], you could see / this woman was wearing a little piece of / gold on her nose, which was a sign [that] there was / gold / on that land” (87).¹⁶¹ The excerpts from Columbus’s diary, whose only extant version was abstracted by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, run across December 6, 7, and 12, 1492, while the poem presents these as continuous (*Diario* 203-221).

By adding snow and removing time from the diary, the narrator negotiates American history in the emulsion of the personal and the historical and of the lyric and the epic. “The Dream of the Unified Field” hints that emulsion is an indispensable part for both history and poetry because the self cannot ascertain the veracity of its subjective view, which the poem compares to a dream. In this poem, the historical document is Columbus’s abstracted diary; therefore, the boundaries between the personal and the historical, and between the objective and the subjective blur even more, and the quotations put around the adapted diary have satirical effects on the objective claim of all histories.

The drawing on the cover of Materialism where “The Dream of the Unified Field” was published links the religious implications in this poem to the western view that the past two millennia are quintessentially the epoch of Christ. The cover illustration portrays Christ in a back view descending into limbo to save the souls of the virtuous who died before Christ was born. Just like Christ who salvages the righteous who live in limbo, the female narrator in this poem redeems truth from emulsion. The poem also suggests that a poet is a Christ figure, who seeks to salvage the unified field, or “a *whole view*” (“the real imaginary”) in the emulsion (Gardner 224, “Interview” Snodgrass 155).

While the snow represents emulsion, the Great Heights symbolize the unified field, where Columbus’s dreams of paradise and of material success converge. The Great Heights in this poem do not represent “all space” as Vendler claims (Breaking 87).¹⁶² Columbus believed that during his third voyage he had reached the Great Heights or the realm of gold abutting the earthly paradise (Fernández-Armesto 129-130).¹⁶³ Instead of believing that he had discovered a new land, Columbus believed that he had found the land of gold that was close to the lost earthly paradise. Columbus was not just exploring an unknown world but also searching for the paradise western Christian culture had lost. The poem’s ending suggests that poetry is simultaneously looking forward to one’s future self and looking backward at the collective cultural self of the past, comprising both the lyric and the epic impulses. Hence the poem has both an elegiac and optimistic mood; for example, the

passage about the crow's cry is set in a dejected mood reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven," and the last diary adaptation about Columbus's voyage has both upbeat, progressive, and elegiac, retrospective connotations.

Though the self is the subject of lyric poetry, the poetry must strive to retain an open form, which is depicted in Graham's poetry as the state of emulsion. The adapted encounter with America may be less subjective than Columbus's diary as Graham uses statements to replace description, such as "he imagined he / could see" instead of "he admired," and adding "[h]e thought" to a description, yet it remains a monologue of a lone person confronting the world in emulsion represented by the snow ("in a sudden blinding snow," "[i]n the white swirl," "erased / from sight by the fast snow," and inside the "wild" snow) (Materialism 86-87, *Diario* 203, 207). However, Graham has also taken out the passage in which Columbus expresses a desire to communicate with the natives and to learn their language. From the diary dated December 7, 1492, Columbus "hoped in Our Lord that the Indians he brought would learn his language and he theirs, and that later he would return [during his second voyage] and would speak with those people" (*Diario* 207). Eventually Columbus and the narrator in the poem come to have a trait in common: the view of the self as interacting with others in a changing world. While striving to treat thingness as the other in poetry, Graham also realizes that writing is subjective and colonial in its rendering of the world.

NEW PHILOSOPHICAL POETRY

Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry published since the 1980s reflects the growing global and cosmic perspectives contemporary readers espouse. By expounding the voice's freedom, their poetry reassesses poetic subjectivity. I call this poetry **new philosophical poetry**, which portrays the self as having a **drift identity** and a consciousness of "**one among many.**"

One of Graham's major contributions to contemporary American poetry consists of the free self her poetry construes. The problems current American critics have with the lyric and its centrality in the scene of contemporary American poetry can be attributed to the lyric's voice. Christopher Beach maintains that the lyric "is . . . defined largely in terms of its adherence to . . . some version of a consistent, identifiable lyric voice and stance" (201). Taking a stance means fabricating a fictitious identity in the poetry from which the narrator speaks. However, the lyric's first-person narrator often elicits a conflation of the "I" in the poem with the "I" of the performer or of the silent reader of poetry, resulting in confused identities as Ron Silliman suggests in his comments on slam performance: "Unless the performer takes on an elaborate and identifiable persona—'I am a sunflower,' 'I am Aaron Burr'—the 'I' of the text and the 'I' of the person standing in front of the audience are peculiarly wedded" (362). Marjorie Perloff cried out against this identification with the

narrator and more broadly against the role of the poet as prophet for a race: “From our own vantage point, these claims for representativeness [of the ‘I’ in the poem for a universal ‘I’] may well be found specious” (Perloff “Response” 250).

The problem with the lyric voice for Perloff resides in the identity projected by its first-person narrator, while the troubling issue with the self in Taiwanese poetry derives from Taiwan’s and its people’s unresolved subjectivity. Subjectivity has persistently been a dominant theme in contemporary Taiwanese poetry because of Taiwan’s colonial past, immigrant history, and its indigenous and Taiwanese-speaking populations’ current demands for political rights and broader political participation. Lo Fu contributes to contemporary Taiwanese poetry by reinterpreting the subject as a self with infinite freedom and in sustained dialogue with the world. Cheng-chen Chien’s criticisms of poetry help expound the subjectivity Driftwood constructs. Chien suggests that “poetry is never the repetition of the self” (“Shi” 220). Chien maintains that poetry portrays a real self, which is produced in the self’s dialectical interaction with the world. The poet feels the pressure of the world on his existence as the other enters his consciousness (“Shi” 220). Moreover, the dovetailing of the epic and the lyric modes in Driftwood foregrounds the autotelic subject the poem portrays. The epic is a genre noticeably absent in classical Chinese poetry (Shou-yi Ch’en 23), and the closest genre to be found in contemporary Taiwanese verse is narrative poetry. While Driftwood is a narrative poem about the self’s adventures and transformations, it evokes more

the inner feelings within the self than the pathos of others; Driftwood principally recounts a story about a self in meditation, leaving and finding itself again. In Driftwood, the subject's individuality is implicated in the solitary nature of its journey and the pages devoted to the self's emotions, while the subject's freedom from a fixed identity is connoted in its involvement in the world.

The Poetics of the Lotus in Lo Fu's Driftwood and Graham's recent poetry restores the agency of voice, returning voice to its original function as the space where the reader enters the poem; as Helen Vendler puts it: "[A] lyric is a *role offered to a reader*; the reader is to be the voice speaking the poem. . . . [T]he poem is to be spoken in propria persona by anyone who reads it" ("Tintern" 184). In Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry, the self of the voice becomes the medium for freedom for both the subject in the poem and for the reader, and "the poet's voice . . . is the point from which the audience is conceived" as Timothy Bahti suggests (4).

The self in Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry eludes a fixed identity and espouses instead a drift identity, which is enmeshed in nature, histories, philosophies, various people's experiences and so on. While Perloff, analyzing Denise Levertov's poem "Crow Spring," criticizes the poem's disingenuous construction of "a relationship to nature that is nowhere convincingly rendered," Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry veritably carries this poetic license to its fullest potential by positing a voice with a self that transforms in an instant and crosses the

borders of traditionally fenced-up domains within the self (“Response” 253). Instead of portraying a self embedded in a single historical moment and with a social, historical, political, or racial stance, Lo Fu and Graham enable innumerable connections of the self to itself and to the other. The self in Lo Fu’s and Graham’s poetry attempts to build a community in its communication with the other, and the same communal impulse can be observed in the interdependent subject current Taiwanese and American ecological poetry portrays (Nielsen 128).

Lo Fu and Graham address the freedom and individuality of the self in an increasingly multicultural, globalized, and polyvocal world. Agreeing with this view of a both free and implicated self, Jerome Rothenberg in his introduction to Poems for the Millennium (1998) delineates the global intercultural trend as one of the prominent features of the “new art” in contemporary American poetry that the anthology is looking for: “a concurrent if contradictory move toward a new globalism, even nomadism—an intercultural poetics that could break across the very boundaries and definitions of self and nation that were a latent source of its creative powers” (12). The interpretation of the self in Lo Fu’s and Graham’s poetry and their art’s ascendancy in Taiwanese and American poetic circles undoubtedly have significant cultural bearings on the redefinitions of subjectivity in the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries.¹⁶⁴ The features of new philosophical poetry that Lo Fu and Graham write will be discussed in two sections, “Drift Identity” and “Out of One, Many.”

Drift Identity

I suggest that a person whose identity shifts and changes with the other, which is defined as things and beings other than the self, has a **drift identity**. The drifting self in Lo Fu's and in Graham's poetry possesses these qualities: cosmologicalism, border crossing, and impartial criticism toward one's culture. The drift identity in Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry goes beyond the conventional notion of a private and a national self. And a drift identity also contributes to the redefinitions of freedom and individualism in their poetry, and of the concept of democracy.

*Cosmologicalism*¹⁶⁵

People with cosmologicalism do not attach to reality and pursue spiritual truth outside of the self in the other. Therefore, they have an identity that drifts with the truth. For example, apathetic to institutional religions, Lo Fu and Graham are instead interested in communicating with objects in the universe and with a numinous presence. For both Lo Fu and Graham, cosmic principles are their interlocutors, and the universe instead of a country or a city is their cultural milieu.

Aesthetic Nature

In Lo Fu's poetry, cosmologicalism is expressed in two respects, aesthetic nature and an ambiguous cultural identity. Twice baptized, Lo Fu is not "a downright atheist," yet he is skeptical about ritualized religions: "I was alienated from religion probably mainly because of my aversion toward some churches and genuine reflection on life" (Tsai 40, Long 14).¹⁶⁶

According to Lo Fu, in his poetry, God stands for the order of the universe ("So-call God refers to ancient Greek pantheism. . . . He is what people have in their mind, and we can also understand Him as an order in nature.") (Tso 155).¹⁶⁷ As Danyuan Jin suggests that the artists "pull their distance from the world for the purpose of drawing nearer toward the original nature of the world," Driftwood presents a cosmological view of a unique and solitary selfhood, which opens an entrance to the nature of the universe (qtd. in Pan 40).¹⁶⁸

The driftwood would "cut off / the umbilical cord, its only connection with the land" to achieve a self in solitude in nature, which will facilitate the search for an ideal homeland (Driftwood 31).¹⁶⁹ Nature is the Chinese "aesthetic religion" as Minghui Peng suggests: "The aesthetic nature . . . is a silent and affectionate world beyond language, a world of pure beauty. . . . It is the foundation of all approaches and is indistinguishable from the lowest stratum of the soul" (qtd. in Hsu 83-84).¹⁷⁰ In its contact with nature, the self seeks to decipher the "mystic quality in which reasoning is invisible," a beauty akin to the order in nature (Moge 4).¹⁷¹

An Ambiguous Cultural Identity

Culture in Lo Fu's poetry, and sometimes in Graham's poetry, is redefined as the beau idéal in nature rather than human knowledge. Lo Fu's narrator often finds cultural belongingness in spiritual truth such as Tao and dharma rather than in a national culture. The driftwood distances itself from both nationalism and nativism. Driftwood disfavours recent Chinese nationalism's definition of cultural identity through blood relations and agrees instead with a cultural identity contained in language: "The genes of Yellow Soil grew from / Chinese words each as shiny as the other, / an eternal passing down of songs" (Driftwood 58).¹⁷² The driftwood suggests that Chinese culture is inherited through language, which can be traced back to the place of origin of the Chinese, the Yellow Soil Plateau. Therefore, Lo Fu says that "immigration [from Taiwan to Canada] is no different from moving into a new study" where he continues to write in Chinese, associates with mainly Chinese writers in Vancouver, and finds cultivation in the culture contained in language" (see figure 1) (Yeh and Sze 36). Having held calligraphy exhibitions in Taiwan, New York, Kuala Lumpur, China, and Canada, having released a CD on Driftwood in Canada, and having dwelled in China, Taiwan and Canada, Lo Fu likewise possesses a complex cultural identity (Yeh and Sze 36).¹⁷³

Lo Fu's poetry disfavours the self's attachment to either a concept such as nationalism or a reality such as a land. In art, nativism is expressed in the adoption of an indigenous

subject matter, the use of indigenous idioms, and a delight in creating art forms unique to the land, and so on. Nativism is eminently tenuous in Lo Fu's poetry because he observes Taiwan from a detached position instead of identifying fully with its indigenous culture. This cosmological cultural identity is portrayed in the last chapter of Driftwood; after the burdens of culture and reality are lifted, the narrator feels freedom of mind essential for self-transformation, and the self is portrayed as a butterfly having undergone a transformation in the universe: "Ever since that brick block was moved from my chest, / Dreams one after another floated up. / A caterpillar crawled out from the black hole of the universe" (Driftwood 211).¹⁷⁴

A Numinous Presence

Graham's cosmologicalism is expressed in her perception of a numinous presence in the universe. In agreement with Lo Fu, Graham does not like churches and clergy, she confesses that she has instead a "spiritual belief" and "couldn't live without the sensation of an immanent presence in the world," which she describes as "something numinous" and "something much more complicated and profound than anything the human mind can really, in the end, approach" ("Conver." 11).

Border Crossing

Lo Fu's and Graham's cosmologicalism facilitates not just the dialogue of the self with the other but also border crossing thoughts. Lo Fu's and Graham's thinking patterns often cross the boundaries of cognitive categories and of nations. Lo Fu crosses the border between humans and nature to find truth and crosses the border of China to search for the China in his own mind. To Lo Fu, cultural China is less a real entity than a notion akin to Tao and is tied closely with the self's continual transformation in consciousness. Graham crosses the border between the self and the other to explore thingness. For example, Graham's poem "High Tide" depicts the failure to find spiritual truth—love among people for the poem's narrator—in an imagined other. Graham explains that "how much language can carry of the outside world into the self and how much the self pushes back with memory, thinking, feeling, observation, language itself, [and] association that words make" are the ventures she takes in Never ("Time"). Crossing the boundaries between humans and gods, between humans and nature, and between subject and object, Graham's poetry attempts to describe things as they are and to carry thingness from the visible into poetry.

Objective Criticism

Lo Fu and Graham espouse cosmological truth, and their judgments transcend worldly standards. In Driftwood, Lo Fu excoriates Taiwanese and Chinese cultures, while quoting

Thomas Mann to justify his motivation: “A harmful truth is better than a useful lie [fair copy: Thomas Mann]” (*Driftwood* 56).¹⁷⁵ Like Lo Fu, Graham maintains that dissension and criticism are beneficial for a culture. Both the form and the content of her poetry reveal this critical impulse: “I believe that (or it’s not just poetry, it’s all forms of art) art is activist even when it is apparently merely personal” (“Time”).

Out of Many, One

Democratic Poetry

Lo Fu’s and Graham’s poetry focuses on the freedom of individual will as the poetic crisis. Their new philosophical poetry depicts the self as one out of many, redefining democracy in the trope of the self’s and the narrating voice’s relationship to the world. The democratic spirit is expressed in their poetry’s reinterpretation of “E pluribus unum” (“From many, one”), one of the United States’ national mottos (Clain-Stefanelli 162).¹⁷⁶ Historians often interpret this motto as many states united under one nation. For example, John Adams Wettergreen expounds it as federalism, a constitutional system that unites the states, and Forrest McDonald uses this motto to explain the nationalism which prevailed over independence of states when the United States was taking shape as a nation (Wettergreen 272, McDonald 371). In contrast, Lo Fu’s and Graham’s poetry interprets the democratic spirit

this motto represents as “out of many, one” or out of the populace, one self, and portrays a self preserving its freedom and individualism among many beings and things in the world.

The Liberated Voice

In the voice poem, voice is the organizing principle (Monroe 546). Perloff and others dislike lyric voice because it generates false identification. In Lo Fu’s and Graham’s poetry, the problem of voice’s identity is solved by postulating the self in poetry as a narrating voice with no identity and a self which is both immanent in this world and transcendent to other realms. Schützinger’s explanation of God as light elucidates this point.¹⁷⁷ Schützinger suggests that God symbolized in the form of natural light is both immanent and transcendent, entering everything “while remaining pure itself” (Schützinger 583). The immanent and transcendent self in continual transformation gives freedom to the voice in poetry.

New Individualism

In Lo Fu’s and Graham’s poetry, the self stands in the midst of a world which will manifest the meaning of existence to the self. The self and the world form an indefinite state I call emulsion. The self derives its freedom from the changes that occur within itself

as it communicates with the world. Moreover, the self transforms into a new self when it is mystically enlightened.

The Self's Departure

Before its transformation, the self first renounces the attachment to itself so as to enter a state of no-self in Buddhist terms. Lo Fu in Driftwood depicts this impulse as leaving one's home country so as to muse over one's past and future from a distance and beyond temporality. For example, early in the first chapter, the driftwood is at "the end of time" and "is neither what it is today, / nor what it was yesterday" (Driftwood 27-28).¹⁷⁸ Graham's poem "By the Way" depicts the self's departure as emptying the self so that "a clearing" appears in the mind (Never 86). For Graham, the self's transformation begins with a renunciation of the old idea of the self ("*Meanwhile* is one name for the clearing in- / side . . .") (Never 86). The clearing will soon be occupied by the nature of things that the self comprehends, which is depicted as "wilderness brought deep into" the "clearing" in one's mind in "The Dream of the Unified Field" (Materialism 85). In her new book Never, Graham uses the intertidal fringe as the metaphor for the self's transformation in time and the evolution of the human species in history. Likewise, her poem "Concerning the Right to Life" published in Materialism reflects on freedom and truth in poetry through the self's transformation. In the poem, the evolving of the new self is likened to pregnancy. The female body when bearing a new life is a self with the other in it, which provides a condition

for truth. Graham's question is whether the life within a pregnant woman is a self-evident truth that people must believe in, just as they must believe in Christ within Virgin Mary:

"What is it, the spot inside Mary, the punched-out spot of / blood which is *not her*?"

(Materialism 19). According to Samuel Sandmel, deists in the eighteenth century maintained that revealed religions, such as Christianity, need historical evidence to support its authenticity while natural religions do not (14); in their opinion, Christ is revealed but not proved. Borrowing this rationale, this poem hints that life cannot be taken as a priori truth or as a foundation on which to justify the public's possession of a woman's body, which, in the poem's terms, consists rather of the borders the truth crosses: A female body is not a "red idea" or "truth held *self- / evident— / through which the crowd can cross / and take possession / of the earth— / So she is a shore, a vulgar ocean which round the idea of / ocean / roils*" (Materialism 19). Graham's poetry wishes to achieve freedom by roiling up preconceived ideas as Graham told her interviewer: "I find myself very drawn to situations in which the problems with reference are roiled up" (Gardner 228). "Concerning the Right to Life" suggests that human consciousness is changing, and that the self is permanently in flux, swept by both the will and its interaction with the world. A new individualism in Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry describes self-perception as strengthened by leaving instead of returning to itself and as changing in the self's interaction with the world.

Demarcating the Self

Through sustained dialogues with the other and through the ensuing transformation, the self gains freedom, yet to maintain individuality, it must also demarcate itself from other beings and things in the universe. Moreover, to expound the truth, it is also essential to distinguish the self from the world where truth resides. Therefore, Graham's poem "By the Way" says: "*Meanwhile* is one name for the clearing in- / side . . . [, and] Distinction [,] another . . ." (Never 86-87). Graham describes voice in poetry as "the rips" or the force demarcating the subjective from the real (The Errancy 67). The entering of the voice inaugurates a new self, which Graham defines as a state of human consciousness in time:

I happened to be sort of being the emissary of the human consciousness of the pen and pencil and a piece of paper in the hand. I'm not sure that it is not just Jorie Graham the autobiographical or whatever that might be. I think it is the human being in history, the human in this moment of history, the human being under the pressure of consciousness, . . . aging, in a certain gender perhaps, a mother, a daughter [and so on]. . . . ("Time")

Responding to Marjorie Perloff's view that language is a public means of communication ("[T]he language used to 'express' one's own emotions can never be wholly distinct from the language others use in similar situations."), Graham maintains that poetry without a self in it describes "a *prior* version of the self," which does not describe the human

condition (“Toward” 207, “Intro.” Best xxi). Instead of distancing her poetry from a personal voice, Graham maintains that poetry seeks in history, in the senses, and in polyphony for richer resonance of the self; in other words, poetry needs a voice that is free. Helen Vendler suggests that Graham’s dashing endeavor to tackle big intellectual issues causes Graham’s poetry to surpass the poetry of the generation of confessional poets before her: Graham’s poetry “is less confessional than Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, or Adrienne Rich” because Graham is “writing a poem about the self without saying ‘I, me, my wife, my husband’—it’s writing in a completely objective way” (qtd. in Lambert 41). Unlike Perloff, who suggests that it would be better to obscure the self in language, Graham prescribes the antidote of making self-identity more whole, true and present:

I am just going to say that . . . the numbing of the press especially [during] the last nine months but in general in a culture that has devoted itself more and more to virtual reality, one of the things that we are doing is that we are just admitting that we don’t want to use our bodies any more. (“Time”)

Seeing the disappearance of the real self in contemporary life when the anonymity and substitute identities in the form of personae or avatars in virtual reality create identity crises as Briggs suggests, Graham would like the voice to be richer instead of disappearing and to bring the self back to people (35). For example, Graham relates that Americans

turned to poetry after September 11 because they needed to locate themselves in history so as to cope with the future or to bring the historical self back to the present self:

During the month following September 11 . . . why so many people were turning to poetry [?] The one that seems the truest to me has to do with our purchase on history. . . . We have the anxiety about . . . whether we have lived here long enough to have historical purchase of that amount of time. (“Time”)

In contemporary American letters, Graham is not alone in revering the self.

Graham’s view concerning the self corresponds to the underpinning idea of the Favorite Poem Project, which Robert Pinsky launched during his term as American Poet Laureate:

“Far from resisting this [personal] trend, I [Pinsky] want to consider the voice of poetry—emphasizing its literal or actual ‘voice’—within the culture of American democracy, amid the tensions of pluralism” (2). In this project, one of the most requested poems by the public is T. S. Eliot’s dramatic monologue “The Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (32). Inspired by this finding, Pinsky then argues that although poetry, an inner activity, is both social and private, the latter must be the center of its weight:¹⁷⁹

Poetry, then, has roots in the moment when a voice makes us alert to the presence of another or others. . . . Yet as a form of art it is deeply embedded in the single human voice, in the solitary state that hears the other and sometimes recreates that other. Poetry is a vocal imagining, ultimately social but

essentially individual and inward. . . . [T]he voice of poetry, though it may be social . . . ultimately begins as profoundly interior. (39, 43)

Pinsky's comment offers a nice interpretation for the Poetics of the Lotus, according to which the self is many selves in flux, and the self's freedom through transformation—in its union with nature and travels to spiritual worlds in Lo Fu's Driftwood, and in its evanescence in time in Graham's poetry—redeems Lo Fu's and Graham's poetic languages. Voice is an indelible technique in contemporary Taiwanese and American poetry, as Graham's poem "Covenant" deftly indicates: "I love you: . . . you are my first person: / let no one question this tirelessness of approach" (Never 75).

A Free Self: The Authors and Their Worlds

Both Graham's poetry and her life reveal her steadfastness toward freedom. Graham's youth was tinged with her developing advocacy of freedom; she was expelled from France for joining the student march in May, 1968, which nearly tumbled French president Charles de Gaulle (Schiff 64, Lambert 43); soon after she arrived in the United States, she participated in Students for a Democratic Society demonstrations while studying at New York University (Lambert 43). The White House cancelled a poetry symposium in February 2003.¹⁸⁰ One month later and two weeks after the U.S.-Iraq war broke out, Graham and other distinguished poets attended poetry readings and speeches held in Harvard's Loeb Drama Center, where Graham expressed that some poets were less against the war than the

discarding of truth the White House cancellation symbolizes: “Part of what people are reacting to is a sense of deceit creeping into the nature of our language” that “comes out of simplemindedness” facing the world’s complexity (qtd. in Thomson).

Paraphrasing Voltaire, Lo Fu explains that freedom and creativity in poetry arise from the poet’s spirit of revolt. According to Lo Fu, “all writers of original works innately have a rebellious nature” or a demon in their minds (Tso 156).¹⁸¹ “Some oppose tradition, others controvert models, and still others dispute idols. In order to create new things, he [a writer] must topple old things in the past or the idols taller than him, which is perhaps the manifestation of his demon” (Tso 156).¹⁸² A rebellious spirit accompanies freedom (“unrestrained abandon”) in Lo Fu’s poetry (Moge 149).¹⁸³

As another event reveals, the self’s freedom is founded on its transformation through continual interaction with the world. Also one month after the White House cancellation, fearing the rampage of SARS, Lo Fu in Vancouver, Canada cancelled his May 2003 trip to Taiwan where he planned to receive his award and to attend a poetry and calligraphy exhibition, and he also called off or postponed several other occasions to be held in China.¹⁸⁴ SARS, which caused 916 deaths and 8,422 infections worldwide, alerted people to the international and global nature of lives (“Summary”).

Employing the dualistic center vs. margins paradigm, Chi-yang Lin and Michelle Yeh maintain that Taiwanese poets occupy a marginalized position to challenge and to engage in critical dialogue with mainstream discourses (Lin 46, Yeh "Intro." xxiii, 1). However, just as P'eng-hsiang Ch'en suggests, as an increasingly multicultural and globalized society both in Taiwan and in the United States was formed near the end of the twentieth century, dualistic concepts such as mainstream/alternative and center/margins can be reexamined or modified (103). The clue to end the clash between center and margins, and between nationalism and globalism apparently reaches certain solutions in Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry. New philosophical poetry that portrays a drift identity and the self as one out of many indicate that there is no center, no margins, no identity and no non-identity because ideas and identity are changing as the self evolves. The Poetics of the Lotus suggests that the self by not holding onto an immutable identity achieves freedom in its transcendence to other realms and transmutation in time. The Poetics of the Lotus in Lo Fu's and Graham's poetry is defined by not just the self's freedom through transformations, but also by the self's acknowledgment of the simultaneous presence of multiple cultures, peoples, and histories. This poetics suggests a new paradigm of the self, which has an ardor for free will yet conceives itself as one out of many in the world. Though the self in this new interpretation may be carried off by the Zeitgeist of the moment, it remains in dialogue with the world and through self-transformations, retains individuality and achieves freedom.

Notes

¹ “一根先驗的木頭 / 由此岸浮到彼岸” and “神性的聲音”.

² 法華經: “若有女人，聞是經典[‘藥王菩薩本事品’]，如說修行，於此命終，即往安樂世界，……生蓮華中，寶座之上。” (Sheng-yen Quemiao 343). The English translation is modified from Watson 288. My modification indicates that the Lotus Sutra distinguishes between people’s salvation in general and a woman’s salvation. Some preceding lines in Chinese first discuss the rebirth of people in general and then expatiate on the rebirth of the female sex: “If a person hears this chapter on the Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King, this person will also receive countless and immense benefits. . . . After living this life as a woman, she will no longer be one.” (“若有人聞是藥王菩薩本事品者，亦得無量無邊功德。……盡是女身，後不復受……”) (Quemiao 343). While giving the blessing of salvation to both sexes, the Sutra stresses that women can receive the Law’s benefits. A Concise Encyclopedia of Buddhism explains padma or “lotus” as “a symbol of awakening (BODHI) in Buddhism. In Buddhist iconography . . . buddhas are often depicted sitting on huge lotus thrones” (Powers 157).

³ 六祖壇經: “但信佛無言，蓮華從口發。” (Jingang 125-26) The English translation is modified from Thomas Cleary’s translation in The Sutra of Hui-neng.

⁴ Genesis 28.12: “And he [Jacob] dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it” (Metzger 36 OT).

⁵ 法華經: “若菩薩摩訶薩……觀諸法如實相，亦不行、不分別” (Quemiao 200).

⁶ 金剛經: “應無所住[執著]而生其心[念]”。

⁷ See Master Taixu's exegesis (Sheng-yen Quemiao 204).

⁸ “詩人最大的企圖是要將語言降服……要想達到此一企圖，詩人首先必須把自身割成碎片，而後揉入一切事物之中，使個人的生命與天地的生命融為一體……在詩中，這顆心就是萬物之心”。

⁹ “「真我」，就是把自身化為一切存在的我”。

¹⁰ “「真我」，或許就是一個詩人終生孜孜矻矻，在意象的經營中，在跟語言的搏鬥中唯一追求的目標。”

¹¹ “由於我們對這個世界完全開放，我們也就完全不受這個世界的限制。”

¹² Driftwood was first published in a Taiwanese newspaper The Liberty Times in installments starting January 1, 2001 for more than two months (Yiqiu Xiang 2). Driftwood was published as a book by Unitas in 2001.

¹³ “離一切相，即一切法 / 一部新的文化史將從一撮寒灰中升起 / 從我們的遺忘中升起”。

¹⁴ “離形去智 / 還我一口箱子的絕對虛空 / 然後努力忘了自己”。 Zhuangzi recounts that Confucius commends Yan Hui's progress when Yan Hui says that he “has estranged from his body, demoted intellect, detached from bodily form, abandoned craftiness and stay in conformance with the Great Way, which is called sitting and forgetting everything” (“墮肢體，黜聰明，離形去知，同於大通，此謂坐忘。”) (1: 217).

¹⁵ “莊子與蝴蝶與大悲咒輪流開講 / 各說各話。”

¹⁶ For Graham's comment on silence's "foray into, possession of, speech," see page 164 of "Some Notes on Silence." Graham means that silence as the other frequently supplants language as the guiding impetus in the progression of lines and in narrative.

¹⁷ Postwar Taiwanese modernism in poetry started out as a blend of the modernism that already existed and influences from the Chinese modernist literature of the 1940s as Chi-yang Lin suggests (23). Huang Ch'un-hsiu maintains that imports of external Japanese and Chinese cultures resulted in the absence of nativism in Taiwanese culture, confronting the facts that external cultures entered Taiwan twice during the past century, once during the Japanese occupation from 1895 to 1949, banning the use of the Chinese language in 1937, and the other when the Nationalist Government entered Taiwan in 1949, setting Mandarin as the official language (Huang 206, Cheung 5). As Huang suggests, the issues of subjectivity and indigenusness loomed large in the early period of Taiwanese poetry.

¹⁸ The Modernist School and its poetry society called for even more imports of techniques and theories from western literatures as its manifesto drafted by Chi Hsien and published in 1956 requested "a horizontal transplant" from foreign literatures rather than "a vertical inheritance" of Chinese literature (Cheung 6-7, Yeh "Interviews" 34, Gu 107). The school also emphasized experimentations and intellectualism, which are characteristics of modernism (Lo Fu shilun 34, Gu 107-08).¹⁸

The Blue Star Poetry Society was founded in 1954 by the poet Tzuhao T'an as a "reactionary" to Chi Hsien's priority of thought over emotions as Kuang-chung Yü recalls: "In general, our gathering is 'reactionary' to Chi Hsien. . . . Chi Hsien wants to expel lyricism,

and to use cognition as a basic principle of creativity. Our style inclines toward the lyrical” (qtd. in Cheung 10). In addition to lyricism, the Blue Star Poetry Society supports a nonpartisan free creation of poetry (Gu 182).

Lo Fu, Mo Chang and Ya Hsien founded the Epoch Poetry Society in 1954 (Yeh 33, Lo Fu Xueluo 91). In the first issue of the Epoch Poetry Journal, this society advocated “a ‘national poetic form’”; however, the society engaged globalism, surrealism and originality as its major concerns in 1959 (Xueluo 91-92). This later development in the Epoch Poetry Society made it a joint promoter of Western techniques with the Modernist Poetry Society. According to Lo Fu, inflamed by “a higher ambition” toward modern poetry, the society gave up the parochial nativism, by which he means a nationalistic view of culture and poetry (Xueluo 93). Under this new goal, the Epoch Poetry Quarterly translated modern European and American poetry and compiled several poetry anthologies (Lo Fu shilun 37).

¹⁹ For example, in his poetry collection The Four Seasons on an agricultural theme, Hsiang Yang addresses his reader as “my dear,” who can toil and sweat with the narrator for Taiwan (70). In contrast to the diasporic narrator in Lo Fu’s Driftwood searching for his homeland, the narrator in The Four Season has already found the land, and its beauty possesses him, who “cannot repress but cry out ‘Ilhas Formosas,’” which means “Ah! The Beautiful Island” in Portuguese (Hsiang Yang 99-100). In 1545, a Portuguese sailor exclaimed this phrase while navigating past Taiwan, and Westerners have since adopted the praise as the name for the island (Hsiang Yang 100).

Most of the poets in the Bamboo Hat Poetry Society are early immigrants to Taiwan who are fluent in Japanese or Fukienese (Gu 357, Wen 638). According to one of the members, Hengtai Lin, the Bamboo Hat's major forum advocates for more treatment of nativism and native subjects in literature (Huang 652). Lo Fu suggests that some of the older members, the translingual generation, were educated in Japanese and did not learn how to write in Chinese till after 1945 (Yeh and Sze 34). Some members favor politics as the subject, and others write poetry in Fukienese (Yeh and Sze 34).

²⁰ “鄉土文學運動”。

²¹ Chi-yang Lin (Hsiang Yang) subsumes the linguistic mode under the community mode and suggests that all five types of poetry—political poetry, urban poetry, poetry written in Taiwanese, postmodern poetry and popular poetry—written during this period addressed the concerns of national identity and subjectivity (44). The linguistic mode finds examples in poetry displaying postmodernist techniques written by Hsia Yü, Yaote Lin and others (Gu 524). Hsianhao Liao maintains that the two most prominent lines in poetry in the 1980s are nativist poetry and postmodern poetry (Lin 44).

²² For example, in his acceptance speech, the 2002 winner of the National Literature and Art Achievement Award Chien-wu Ch'en criticized surrealist poets for paying little attention to the spirit of poetry, which he defined as nativism, while occupying their thoughts with forms and skills (“Ch'en Chien-wu”).

²³ “濫馴的夢” (Driftwood 246).

²⁴ “神性的聲音”。

²⁵ “詩之極致有一，曰入神。”

²⁶ “詩而入神 / 才能逼近宇宙的核心 / 找到自我在萬物中的定位”。

²⁷ “論詩如論禪……大抵禪道惟在妙悟，詩道亦在妙悟。”

²⁸ “所谓的‘妙悟’是什么？我们知道：禅宗的自性相当于老子的‘道’，宋明理学的‘理’”。

²⁹ “禅宗的自性是一种绝对的本体，是不可言说，不能以理性分析的。我们只能以直觉的方法，……与它合而为一，靠亲身的感受和体验，而不是站在外面去思考它、解说它。……如参造西方的现代美学来说，妙悟即是一种诉诸直觉的心灵感应”。

³⁰ Likewise, Master Sheng-yen suggests that Buddhist wisdom can be approached through experience and not by reason (Commentaries 15).

³¹ “所謂不涉理路，不落言筌者，上也。……羚羊掛角，無跡可求。……如空中之音，相中之色，水中之月，鏡中之象，言有盡而意無窮。”

³² “诗人另一不可或缺的先决条件是纯粹的审美能力。外在事物反映在诗人心灵上……这种感应乃产生于我们的直觉，而非知觉，所以我们的美感经验不受理性的干扰”。

³³ “西方人认为灵感是源于神的感召，而东方人则认为灵感是一种超自然的心灵感应，直到弗洛伊德的现代心理学问世，我们才知道灵感其实就是一种潜意识活动”。

³⁴ “妙悟，一種直覺的心靈感應，……一種語言外的妙趣”。

³⁵ “[‘这种感应’]和音乐中那种形而上的抒情状态相似，这也就是我们习称的‘心旷神怡’的忘我境界。”

³⁶ “纯粹经验，在于使时空的界限泯灭，万物融为一体。”

³⁷ “故其妙處透徹玲瓏，不可湊泊”。

³⁸ “詩本身是「無言」的，詩人是靠意象來「呈現」思維。”

³⁹ “為讀者提供一個無限大的想像空間”。

⁴⁰ “詩所創造的價值是什麼？我認為首先是境界的創造。……詩不在描述一個已知的世界，而是憑想像去創造一個未知的比現實更美好的意象世界。” Likewise, in a 2001 interview, Lo Fu said: “I think that writing poetry is not just an act of writing but also creation of values including the creation of realms, the creation of the meanings of life, and creation of language” (“我認為寫詩不只是一種寫作行為，而更是一種價值的創造，這包括境界的創造，生命內涵的創造，和語言的創造。”)(Tsai 39).

⁴¹ “而你們守護的孤獨 / 是最毒的那一株大花曼陀羅”。

⁴² “獨” and “毒”。

⁴³ Kuang-chung Yü called Lo Fu “a poet who sings with wounds” (“用傷口唱歌的詩人”)(Lo Fu Shijian 1). “楊梅大瘡裂嘴而笑”。

⁴⁴ “悲劇經驗的最高表現並不在於死亡與痛苦，而在「自我隔離」後所感到的「存在的絕望」(existential despair)”。

⁴⁵ “詩，是存在的神思。”

⁴⁶ “第一章〈漂木〉，即直接地表現了這首詩的主旋律，亦即本詩的最初構想。”

⁴⁷ In addition, one’s life is also preserved because unassertiveness obviates conflicts and arguments.

⁴⁸ “齊物論”：“欲是其所非而非其所是，則莫若以明。……是亦一無窮，非亦一

無窮也。故曰莫若以明” (1: 56, 61). The English translation is my own. See also

Watson’s translation (Complete 39-40).

⁴⁹ “詩人的靜觀……乃視宇宙萬物為一整體”.

⁵⁰ “Understanding” is a translation of “明”. On the attachment to the self (“我執”), see Commentaries 47-48.

⁵¹ For the twelve causalities, see Commentaries 42.

⁵² “無無明，亦無無明盡” (Commentaries 41).

⁵³ “死亡 / 距離下一次輪迴 / 總得好幾年吧”.

⁵⁴ Balcom’s “Introduction” to Death of a Stone Cell describes “an ‘exile’ mentality” among people who have retreated from China to Taiwan.

⁵⁵ “原鄉” and “埋在心的最深處”.

⁵⁶ “背夏浦而西思兮，哀故都以日遠”. Most editions of “A Lament of Ying” have “之” instead of “以”. See Ji Jiang Shandaige 119. The translation of the verse is my own.

⁵⁷ “被視為溝通的原始語言 / 只有千嚀以下的寂靜”.

⁵⁸ “這裡不聞鐘聲 / 風雨是唯一的語言”.

⁵⁹ “千嚀以下， / 諸神在側 / 守護著 / 海底滿艙的亡魂 / 那故事 / 早已全身長滿了牡蠣”.

⁶⁰ “木頭，與天涯的魚群，海鷗，水藻 / 同時心跳 / 從它們同一頻率的呼吸中 /

隱隱聽到深沉的 / 大海子宮內晚潮的湧動”。

⁶¹ “卻讓那高潔的月亮和語詞 / 仍懸在 / 故鄉失血的天空”。

⁶² “沒有任何時刻比現在更為嚴肅 / 落日 / 在海灘上 / 未留一句遺言 / 便與
天涯的一株向日葵[清稿：‘一曲輓歌’] / 雙雙偕亡 / 一塊木頭 / 被潮水沖到岸邊”。

The translation is my own.

⁶³ “荒涼的” and “時間的盡頭”。

⁶⁴ “佛曰： / 舍利子是諸法空相 / 不生不滅不垢不淨不增不減 / 是故空中無
色，無眼耳鼻舌身意 / 無色聲香味乃至無老死……”。 The translation is modified from
Conze’s translation (85-89). One of the Buddha’s major disciples, Śāriputra had listened to
many of the Buddha’s lectures. Conze maintains that dharmas are space, nirvana, form,
thought, mentals, and various (85).

⁶⁵ “中國古詩，詩中沒有時態，這表示詩人不是從某一特定的時間去觀察，而是
在永恆的觀照下呈現出大自然的真貌”。

⁶⁶ “亡”。

⁶⁷ “老教授” and “木頭逐漸逼近 / 緊緊頂住老教授的背脊 / 卡嚓！木頭嵌入他
的體內”。

⁶⁸ “很瘦的 / 形上學的權威” and “一根廣場上的旗桿”。

⁶⁹ “形而上的臉在風中 / 颯颯作響”。

⁷⁰ “哲學則有陽痿的趨勢,” “時間與蠹蟲,” “玄學著作,” and “都露出森森的白牙”.

⁷¹ “振臂高呼: / 棄—智 / 絕—聖”.

⁷² “相濡以沫 / 不如 / 相忘於 / 江湖”.

⁷³ “一個人唯有在大寂寞大失落中才能充分感受到人與大自然的和諧關係”.

⁷⁴ “多峰駝上”: “就這樣夢著, 醒著, 在多峰駝背上 / 回去中國, 回去, 啊, 終於回去 / 這樣的中國一人在海外, 客在江湖 / …… 取經人取回來怎樣的經?”.

⁷⁵ “漢文與革命與做愛, 與 / 精神分裂的關係 / 多少有點弔詭”.

⁷⁶ “悲情的” and “桀驁不馴的”.

⁷⁷ The winner of the Golden Lion Award (1989), “City of Sadness” (《悲情城市》) directed by Hou Hsiao-hsien comments on the February 28 Incident that occurred in 1947 during which numerous Taiwanese residents were killed in conflicts with the Nationalist government (Nornes, Spence 715). “四處張著宿命的破網”.

⁷⁸ 〈補破網〉歌中, “網”與“望”之台語同音 (“Mending”).

⁷⁹ “見著網目眶紅, 破甲這大孔。想欲補無半項, 誰人知阮若痛。今日若將這來放, 是永遠無希望。為著前途針活縫, 尋傢司補破網。手拿網頭就重, 悽慘阮一人。意中人走叨藏, 那無來鬥幫忙” (“Mending”). The second stanza is not translated in full.

⁸⁰ The third stanza goes: “魚入網好年冬, 歌詩滿漁港。阻風雨駛孤帆, 阮勞力無了工。雨過天晴魚滿港, 最快樂咱雙人。今日團圓心花春, 從今免補破網。” (“Mending”).

⁸¹ “宿命的破網”.

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- 82 “(補網的人和漏網的魚 / 同一命運, 各自表述)”
- 83 “一個中國, 各自表述” .
- 84 “鄰國相望, 雞犬之聲相聞, 民至老死, 不相往來。”
- 85 “雞犬相聞,” “人丁旺盛,” “稻香, 酒香, 體香” .
- 86 “颱風,” “頑固的癬瘡,” “一條剝皮的蟒蛇在扭動,” and “鳳梨。帶刺的亞熱帶風情” .
- 87 “痔瘡。久坐龍椅的後遺症 / …… [‘總統府’的] 廣場上傲視闊步的鴿子第幾代了?” .
- 88 “歷史博物館” and “老祖宗被一篇新的就職演說驚醒” .
- 89 “國會的拳頭。烏鴉從瞌睡中驚起” .
- 90 “遊行示威。鴨子如痴如狂地跳進水池” .
- 91 “盲腸發炎送到醫院剛好下班” and “一群肥碩的河馬橫街而過” .
- 92 “膽固醇” .
- 93 “一位虛胖的哲學家” and “一個醉漢抱著電線桿親吻”
- 94 “冷氣機, 冰箱, 錄影機, 傳真機, 電腦。滿城荒蕪 / 插入生命, 插入神經和夢。信用卡, 電話卡, 健保卡 / 醫院最近。教堂最遠 / 殯儀館最近。上帝最遠” .
- 95 “節慶的城邦。午夜的街燈一直維持微笑 / Pub 打烊。啤酒杯累得口吐白沫” .
- 96 “停電” and “嚼檳榔的聲音此起彼落” .
- 97 “打帶跑的地攤文化” .
- 98 “短線操作的股市文化,” “衛生麻將” and “最愉快的水深火熱” . The Nationalist government in Taiwan claimed that it would deliver people in China from their

lives “in deep water and scorching fire.” The narrator changes a political slogan into a satire on the materialistic lifestyle among the Taiwanese.

⁹⁹ “滿街史艷文”.

¹⁰⁰ “電視機爆炸 / 對岸有人大發脾氣”.

¹⁰¹ “摩天大樓”.

¹⁰² “虛無像一把黑傘 / 佔領了整座大廈 / 似乎沒有一個人醒來[清稿：‘(除了木頭)’] / 用鰓呼吸，且 / 除了水不再承認任何生命”.

¹⁰³ “蛆蟲滿坑”.

¹⁰⁴ “[清稿：‘世界’]末日，不見得比 / 旗桿上突然升上一條褲子更為嚇人” “有什麼比口袋裡混入一枚贗幣 / 更令人心驚膽跳”.

¹⁰⁵ “這裡曾是法租界 / 紅頭巡捕三五成群 / 沿街向法國梧桐收取保護費”.

¹⁰⁶ “青幫大爺躺在煙榻上 / 猛吸一口 / 冒煙的資本主義 / 庚子那年他死去時 / 手裡還握著一把缺嘴的茶壺 / 而黃浦江，帆如屍布 / 裹著一塊塊被切割的雲 / 飄然遠去 / 貿易風吹來一叢黑罌粟”. The most influential organization in Shanghai during the early Nationalist period, Green Gang profited from trafficking opium and running gambling houses and brothels (“Green” 123). The gang sided with the Nationalist government (“Green” 123).

¹⁰⁷ “一夜之間河山矮了幾寸”.

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- 108 “一群肥碩的耗子 / 倉皇躲進一頁空洞的歷史”。
- 109 “長征途中…… / 千萬小心 / 緊緊拴在褲帶上的那個要命的主義[清稿:‘民族主義’] / 一鬆弛便會爆炸”。
- 110 “那年，串聯進城去看北京的基督[清稿:‘毛主席’] / 還聽到一卡車一卡車的萬歲 / 滾落水溝的聲音 / ……一只腳踏在車廂邊沿 / 另一只懸在天安門[人民英雄]紀念碑的頂上 / 革命好玩極了”。
- 111 “十年浩劫。又一次上帝橫蠻[sic]地干預歷史”。
- 112 “糧票。飢餓。胃潰瘍。 / 傷寒。痢疾。毛語錄 / 旱澇。地震”。
- 113 “唯一的後現代工業產品” and “從煉鋼爐升起的黑太陽”。
- 114 “時間的絞肉機 / 割裂著街上盲亂的靈魂 / …… 紅綠燈的錯亂是否緣於情慾的衝動很難判斷 / …… 南京路通向何處這已不是地理問題”。
- 115 “法國梧桐下好像站著馬克斯 / 中國工商銀行門口放置一具 / 資產階級用慣的飲水機 / …… 黨書記兼總經理。一把鑰匙天堂與地獄共用”。
- 116 “摩天大樓。五十層以上讀<<資本論>>兩腿發軟”。
- 117 “鄉鎮企業,” “一個飛上太空卻以為到了天國的僧侶 / ……廣場上。絕食的雪人一個個被太陽逮走 / 螳臂擋坦克” and “魯智深式的超現實主義”。

118 “黃鶴樓。崔顥早就知道天堂還遠得很”。

119 “心中的原鄉” and “形而上的漂泊”。

120 “持續以雪水澆頭 / 以極度清醒的 / 超越訓詁學的方式,” “銅質的,” and “神性的”。

121 “鉋開自己木質的軀體然後 / 用鑷子仔細夾起 / 一個個金光閃爍的字 / (漢代的或更遠的) , 然後 / 塞進大動脈的血管 / 流入久已荒無的頭顱, 以及 / 和番茄醬攪拌得 / 黏黏糊糊的 / 意識形態”。

122 “島上, 雲蒸霧籠 / 道, 一盞燈 / 或高山的鼓點子 / 都已被酸性濃烈的意識形態 / 腐蝕為過重的塵緣”。

123 “秋日的天空 / 太高, 太藍 [清稿此行: ‘有時高得驚人。藍得令人不知所措’] / 以致大地成了一個極其龐雜的象徵[清稿: ‘隱喻’] / 詮釋似無必要 / 空虛有時也是一種充盈”。

124 “現又回到這個舊的磁場 / 院子裡滿地的白雲 / 依然無人打掃”。

125 “紅塵, 由煙霧編織的神話 / 流傳於國會與棒球之間 / 總統府與菜市場之間 / 科學園區與麥當勞之間 / 檳榔與半導體 / 綁票與慈濟功德會 / 寶斗里夜市與文建會 / 楊麗花與覃子豪 / 一大早捷運系統 / 就會有系統地把抗議群眾和市長候選

人 / 一一送進了歷史的某章某節 / 電視裡議員們以拳頭發言 / 電視外議員們與黑道
角頭杯酒交歡”。

126 “關於,” “生與死,” “火,” and “風, 一片沒有家的落葉”。

127 “明天內層將升起更深的寒意” and “流言”。

128 “危樓” and “一水之隔的廢墟”。

129 “一朵貧血的殘陽”。

130 “漸漸隱退的上帝,” “非慾念不足以聞道 / 非滿缸的雪水不足以鎮壓肉身的
沸騰,” and “自己的一小撮磷”。

131 “鮭, 垂死的逼視”。

132 “我們看到的乃是一場生命的悲劇。……有些驚悚、有些悲憫, 但更多的是感
受生命的悲涼與無奈, 以及無與倫比的尊嚴。”

133 “石室之死亡”

134 “浮瓶中的書札”。

135 “透過詩來解除生命的悲苦”。 According to Lo Fu, this is the poet's mission.

136 “詩, 是存在的神思。”

137 “表現「真我」, 首先必須把自己割成碎片, 而後揉入一切事物之中, 因而個

人生命與天地生命密不可分”。

¹³⁸ “故其妙處透徹玲瓏，不可湊泊”

¹³⁹ “我低頭向自己內部的深處窺探 / 果然是那預期的樣子 / 片瓦無存”。

¹⁴⁰ “淪為廢墟” and “我很滿意我井裡滴水不剩的現狀”。

¹⁴¹ “秋水時至，百川灌河，涇流之大，兩涘渚崖之間不辯牛馬。於是焉河伯欣然自喜，以天下之美為盡在己。……北海若曰：「井竈不可以語於海者，居於墟也」”。 The English translation is modified from Watson's (Complete 175).

¹⁴² “「向紅鯧致敬」(Salute to Sockeye)!”。

¹⁴³ “第四章〈向廢墟致敬〉……針對因漂泊而導致精神不安，使人類整體文化趨於衰頹，甚至淪為廢墟，而提出質疑與批判。”

¹⁴⁴ Number 28.1 special issue of the Critical Inquiry (2001) offers extensive discussions on thingness.

¹⁴⁵ Graham sees the monument in Elizabeth Bishop's poem “The Monument” as an example of things' resistance to poetic description: “By it—the monument—I take her [Bishop] to mean what resists” (Snodgrass 153). Bishop's final line in “The Monument” bids a poet to “[w]atch it [the monument which is poetry] closely” (25).

¹⁴⁶ “[T]he organizers wrote to every living author whose work was included in the Milberg collection and asked for a submission of an unpublished work. . . . The result is a 392-page double issue with 27 original essays and short stories and 46 original poems written by and about

Jewish-American writers” (Altmann). See Altmann’s article for an elaborate account of the collection and events. See also Princeton University Library Chronicle issue 63.1 & 2 (2001-2002).

¹⁴⁷ In Lo Fu’s epic Driftwood, these two impulses appear respectively as the wood’s voyages on the sea in harmony with the universe, and as the wood’s dreams about or its experiences on the shores.

¹⁴⁸ Joanna Klink also finds the pressure of the secular world upon the self in Graham’s poetry (199).

¹⁴⁹ Milk with fat disbursed in water is an example of emulsion (“Emulsion” Brit.).

¹⁵⁰ “I [Graham] take my poem to be conversation with such notion of the gods—and of how history transforms them” (Never 111).

¹⁵¹ Both the brackets and words in brackets are Graham’s.

¹⁵² Brackets and words within them are Graham’s.

¹⁵³ “Hunger” describes these as “interruption, wall, disease, [and] rot” (Never 43).

¹⁵⁴ Schiff argues that Eve launches human history the moment she hands the apple to Adam: “The ‘action’ that begins there is what Graham calls ‘history’—the movement of Adam and Eve from the animal purity of Eden into something terribly human” (66).

¹⁵⁵ Herrmann teaches left-brained people to use their right brain by drawing (84). Graham also draws to keep her perceptive ability less abstract and more physical. For her, it is a good way to “try to keep the act of looking physical” (Schiff 67).

¹⁵⁶ “What took me / completely by surprise / was that it was *me*: my [the narrator’s] voice” (Bishop 160).

¹⁵⁷ The image of the shroud delays revealing to the gathering crowd. Likewise, in the poem “Noli Me Tangere,” Christ’s remonstrance against touch delays Mary’s verification

of the nature of His identity.

¹⁵⁸ The last stanza is adapted from Columbus's diary of his first voyage, while his journal from the third voyage contains a description of the Great Heights (Fernández-Armesto 129-30).

¹⁵⁹ In Columbus's diary, the line continues after a comma: "and chiefly as a sign of Jesus Christ Our Lord and in honor of Christianity" (*Diario* 219).

¹⁶⁰ Graham adds the phrase in the parenthesis.

¹⁶¹ Phrases before "this woman" were added by Graham.

¹⁶² "Graham compares this constant human desire for aesthetic possession of all space and time (the Great Heights, the long and wide centuries) to Columbus' desire to possess the New World" (*Breaking* 87). I suggest instead that the Great Heights in "The Dream of the Unified Field" is used as a religious analogy for an ideal in the history of a civilization.

¹⁶³ A combination of religious and scientific factors made Columbus conclude that he had arrived at the earthly paradise. Seeing the towering mountains and the river Orinoco flowing into the Gulf of Paria, a scene that matches the descriptions of the paradise in the Bible, Columbus wrote in his journal: "I am completely persuaded . . . that the Terrestrial Paradise in the place I have described" (Morison 287). Too much confidence in empirical data also led Columbus to misidentify the land; erroneous "readings of the position of the Polar Star" made Columbus believe that his ship was climbing upward toward heaven (Fernández-Armesto 129-30).

¹⁶⁴ While one strain of Taiwanese poetry is the personal lyrics of Lo Fu, another important type is poetry which focuses on language itself. This latter strain of verse has the female poet Hsia Yü as its proponent; her poetry decenters the subject and deconstructs the voice in collagism and other experimentations with language. The publication of Lo Fu's *Driftwood* in 2001 proves that the self is still a viable subject matter for poetry. Graham,

whom The New Yorker described as “the closest thing American poetry has to a rock star,” won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1996 (qtd. in Thomson).

¹⁶⁵ Pang-yuan Chi suggests that in the 1980s, Taiwanese poets have acquired the spirit of “cosmopolitanism,” becoming literally citizens of the world, whose thoughts transcend the boundaries of nation and of race (“Mellowing” 52). The term cosmopolitanism explains these poets’ welcoming attitude toward other cultures, while cosmologicalism refers to a surge in enthusiasm for a world of ideas amid these poets.

¹⁶⁶ “今天我并不算一个彻头彻尾的无神论者……我疏离宗教，恐怕主要是因为我对某些教会的厌恶，以及我对生命真切的反省。”

¹⁶⁷ “我所謂的神是古希臘的那種泛神。……祂是人人心中具有的，我們也可理解祂是自然中的一種秩序(order)。”

¹⁶⁸ 金丹元：藝術家“把自己同世界的距離拉遠了，拉遠的目的，則是為了與世界的本元靠得更攏……”

¹⁶⁹ “切斷 / 那根唯一連繫大地的臍帶……”

¹⁷⁰ 彭明輝：“美學性宗教” and “形上美學上的自然……它就是……一個超乎語言之默默而深情的純美世界。……它不但是一切方法的基礎，更與心靈之最底層和同而無分。”

¹⁷¹ “無理而妙。” This statement appeared in Lo Fu’s own preface to the republished Moge or Mārā Songs.

¹⁷² “黃土的基因 長自 / 一顆顆發光的漢字 / 永遠的傳唱……” Lo Fu was born Yüntuan Mo (莫運端) in Hunan province in 1928 (Chi “Lo Fu” 75, Mo Chang Meng 7).

¹⁷³ Lo Fu still “lived within the large circle of Chinese culture,” feeling “a little

embarrassed” about his ambiguous cultural identity; this and other information comes from both correspondence with and a visit to Lo Fu in 2003.

¹⁷⁴ “自那塊磚頭從我的胸口移走之後 / 夢，一個個浮了起來 / 一條毛蟲從宇宙的黑洞爬出……” This last chapter delineates Lo Fu’s own transformation. After he immigrated to Canada in 1996, Lo Fu feels relieved from the constriction of nationalism and nativism: “After I emigrated to Canada, the greatest relief is the lifting of these two pressures [‘nationalism’ and ‘nativism’]. Therefore, instantly I feel transcendence in spirit” (“我移民加拿大之後，最大的輕鬆是由於這兩種壓力[‘民族主義’和‘鄉土主義’]的紓解，因而頓時感到一種精神的超越。”) (Xuelou 157-58). Information about the year 1996 is from Tsai page 38. A late immigrant to Taiwan, Lo Fu moved from China to Taiwan with Nationalist troops when Chinese communists established the PRC.

¹⁷⁵ “一個有害的真理 / 遠勝過一個有益的謊言 [清稿：托馬斯 曼] ……”

¹⁷⁶ This motto first appeared on copper coins in 1786 and is inscribed on all of American coins today (Clain-Stefanelli 162).

¹⁷⁷ In the Bible, God’s presence on the earth was portrayed as light shining through clouds or as fire. For example, God appeared “in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them [the Israelites] along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light” on their way out of Egypt (Ex. 13.21 Metzger 86 OT).

¹⁷⁸ “時間的盡頭” and “已非今日之是 / 亦非昨日之非……”

¹⁷⁹ Lo Fu shares Pinsky’s opinion that poetry is personal. Lo Fu said in an interview that Driftwood is “a personal epic” (Yeh and Sze 36). Like the driftwood who gains freedom in a lonely journey, Lo Fu, immigrating to Canada, “feel[s] like the great Peng bird from Zhuangzi’s ‘Free and Easy Wandering’”; he “enjoy[s] the freedom” but feels “lonely too” (Yeh and Sze 36).

¹⁸⁰ The White House cancelled its poetry symposium scheduled on February 12, 2003, which was scheduled one month before the war broke out, learning that some poets would air their political opinions, especially opposition to the war on Iraq, at the occasion (Thomson). The U. S.-Iraq war broke out on March 19, 2003 (“U.S. Begins” C13)

¹⁸¹ “所有的原創作家，天生都有背叛性。”

¹⁸² “有的反傳統，有的反典型，有的反偶像。為了創造新的東西，他[作家]必須把過去舊的東西，比他更高大的偶像推翻掉，這也許就是魔的表現。”

¹⁸³ “狂放不羈”。 Lo Fu explains the demon in his poetry as the rebellion against tradition: “I once published a poem entitled ‘Six Mārā Songs’ in number 32 of the Epoch Poetry Quarterly, . . . which I borrowed for my book’s title. There are two meanings in naming this collection Mārā Songs. First, it refers to the demon. Second, it means magic (“詩集命名為「魔歌」，其義有二，一為魔鬼之「魔」，一為魔法之「魔」”。) . . . Professor Yuanshu Yan once said that affected by surrealism, I have ‘gone demonic in my pursuit for excellence.’ Poetry that has turned demonic is no orthodox verse in Chinese literary tradition. If Han Yu was born in modern times, I would certainly be castigated. When I write poetry, I never burn the incense and shower first, nor do I sit straight and pull a long face to expound orthodox theories and ethics” (Moge 149). Lo Fu’s poetry does not inherit the orthodox morality represented by Han Yu and other poets but does follow the rebellious nature in self- and national formations from late Qing dynasty to early Nationalist China. The struggle between traditional cultures and modernity is expressed in the works of Yu Dafu, Lu Xun and other modern Chinese writers who had studied abroad and witnessed the dramatic changes in modern thoughts and political reforms. Lu Xun’s essay “On the Power

of Mārā Poetry” anticipates the rebellious spirit in Lo Fu’s poetry.

¹⁸⁴ The information is acquired from a conversation with Lo Fu in 2003.

CHAPTER 2

INTERSOMATIC: INBODIED GIRLISM

Chapter One offers an analysis of boundary crossing among selves by way of spirit.

Chapter Two presents an analysis of the presence of the body in third wave feminism and

American poetry to discuss the permeable borders between the body, criticism, and poetry.

My concern in this chapter is the question of what is the embodied femininity we call “she.”

As suggested in the title of Elizabeth Grosz’s Volatile Bodies, femininity can be flexibly and multiply embodied by people who consider themselves female.

Critics have attempted to answer this question in various ways. I respond to the question by drawing upon three entries, all coined words, from my critical lexicon: 1) Intersomatic: of qualities between bodies. 2) Inbodied: within the body as different from embodied, representing what is outside the body. 3) Girlism: critical theories that deal with girls’ culture or employ the symbolism of girls. In this chapter, I argue that the evolution of Cathy Song’s poetry presents one of the expressions of **inbodied girlism** critical to third wave feminism’s demarcation from preceding feminisms; the term inbodied girlism suggests that a girl’s body constitutes an expression of feminism positioned in the girl’s body. I coined the term inbodied girlism in an attempt to describe the broadening of the reference to the female body by including preadolescent girls, the deepening of feminist concerns with the

personal, and the ramifications of feminism to serve its diverse population since the 1980s.¹

The same spirit of e pluribus unum, “out of many, one,” discussed in the first chapter, likewise permeates current feminist studies, which redefine femininity by differences not just from masculinity but also from within itself.

In establishing my theory, I have drawn on and connected theories of the body, theories on female psychology, and studies of popular girls’ culture. While my theory encompasses issues already addressed by these scholars concerning gender, body images, and beauty ideals, my theory makes contributions to both feminist theories and theories of poetry by indicating the link between body and gender—how the body as well as discourse construct gender. By connecting theories of the body and the girlist vogue and by emphasizing the physicality of gender, my theory proposes a corporeal constructivism of gender and diverges from Michel Foucault’s and Judith Butler’s cultural constructivisms. To the future of feminism, girls symbolize the intensification in feminism of the personal trend, which has supported a female’s claims to empowerment, to self-determination, and to culture in general. Rather than narrowing feminism to the cultures specific to Generations X and Y, embodied girlism as a direction in third wave American feminism reopens the polemics of the female right to self-definition.²

INBODIED GIRLISM IN THIRD WAVE FEMINISM

Inbodied Girlism

The theory of inbodied girlism came to me through a reading of Song's poem, "Blueroses," which includes an epigraph from Emily Hancock's The Girl Within, which led me to other writings on third wave American feminism. While poring through these literary, theoretical and cultural texts, I found the energy that emanated from the independence and autonomy of a girlish identity, and I named my theory inbodied girlism to distinguish it from feminism and Alice Walker's womanism. Girlism as I conceive it can apply to the female gender regardless of age, race, and other categorical distinctions. Girlism uncovers a phase in which a female feels her independence, autonomy, and a sense of owning herself in both body and thought. The poetically rendered gradual emergence of the girl in Song's poems reminded me of the glaring absence of treatments of girlhood in contemporary feminist theories and spurred me to raise the question about woman, a concept that lies at the root of feminism, and about a possible essentialism in the feminist critique of the body.³ A girlist theory has long been wanting as feminist criticism has been unable to delve beneath the woman to find the girl. In my view, an inbodied girlism pervades American women's poetry,

third wave grassroots feminism, and academic American feminism, and also has efficacy in other domains if scholars will only wake the girl from her slumber.⁴

I will first make the point that femininity is defined by the body and its cultural productions as well as and not just by discourse. This argument proposes to emphasize, not to efface, the sociopolitical, cultural, and theoretical inscriptions on a female body. While I recognize that a body is bonded in layers by discourse, by invisible webs of representations of the body, by mores, and by the commands of laws, I argue that femininity, the core of feminism, is defined by each female body, which articulates feminism by its presence and actions. I am thus calling attention to the permeation between the body and culture, which includes texts, and to the fact that the body's omissions from theory is also a disservice to culture, which is lived by bodies. One cannot not see the bodies marching down the streets requesting rights, teeming in squares both to hear speeches and to have their voices heard, or simply living on the earth's surface.

Critics of body theories like Judith Butler, Josephine Chuen-juei Ho, Elizabeth Grosz, Joan Jacobs Brumberg, Carol Bigwood, and Susan Bordo have raised the issue about the body's position in relation to language and to culture.⁵ For example, in Gender Trouble (1990) and Bodies That Matter (1993), more than adopting Foucault's matrix of ubiquitous power, which regulates sexuality by discourse, Butler bridges the gaps between the body and

discourse by bringing to the fore the fact that the lesbian population has been forced to reject the non-heterosexual feminine body. Both Grosz and Veronica Vasterling suggest that having placed body in relation to culture, Butler practices a modified constructivism (Grosz 17-18, Vasterling 18). Distinguishing biological sex from “culturally constructed” gender, Butler first “make[s] gender trouble” by criticizing the view that gender has “support[ed] masculine hegemony and heterosexist power,” and next in Bodies That Matter proposes empowerment through performing a gender role (Gender 34). Establishing a theory of gender “construction as constitutive constraint,” Butler maintains that the status quo of gender for the gay community is performativity within the confines of heterosexual norms (Bodies xi).

Taiwanese feminist Ho also maintains that bodily self-determination is critical to establishing feminine subjectivity; in The Gallant Woman (1994), Ho calls for “sexual human rights” and wishes to construct an empowered female subject through sexual liberation (Contestations 36). Ho’s view represents the awakening in recent feminism of the primacy of women’s bodies in the feminist agenda; other Taiwanese feminists have modified Ho’s notion into “sexual autonomy” (Contestations 23). Like Butler and Ho, likening the body to “a Möbius strip, the inverted three-dimensional figure eight,” a Lacanian metaphor for the subject, Grosz in Volatile Bodies (1994) explores various ways in which the body defies

dualistic and ahistorical definitions and remains in negotiations with the mind and culture

(xii). Also exploring the interplay between the body and culture, Brumberg in The Body Project (1997) maintains that girls in contemporary American society “make the body into an all-consuming project in ways young women of the past did not” by revering the body as “a primary expression of their individual identity” (xvii, xxi). Echoing Butler and others, in an article first published in 1999 in Hypatia, Bigwood calls for the efforts “to ‘renaturalize’ the body, truly releasing it from a dichotomized nature and culture,” and she suggests reclaiming a “phenomenological body” “in deep communion with its environment” through acute sensual perceptions as a solution (103-04). While in my view, a higher perceptive sensitivity may not be the final remedy, Bigwood’s opinion indicates a direction in feminist theories in replacing body image with body schema. Shaun Gallagher and Jonathan Cole suggest that body schema is “a system of preconscious, subpersonal processes that play a dynamic role in governing posture and movement,” and maintain that body image usually refers to a “mental representation” of the body (131). The pendulum can swing back from mere ideas to all the experiences women and girls have. Just as Bordo in “Bringing Body to Theory” suggests, feminism can accommodate both ends, transcendence and difference, of the spectrum of issues. As Bordo says: “Drawing on Ann Snitow’s satirical but telling distinction between ‘red bloomer’ feminists (who emphasize, even revel in, sexed specificity)

and ‘transcenders’ (who want to deconstruct gender, even sex), I argue that each of these poles is ‘necessary to feminist struggle and change’ ” (91).

Continuing the ideas in Asian American and other minority feminists’ writings, I suggest that currently there is a trend to incorporate writings on the body and personal lives into theories.⁶ To depict this trend, my theory connects Hancock’s concept of the inner girl with theories of the body and argues that the lives, action, bodies, and cultural productions of actual living girls are the foundations on which the symbolism of the girl or girlism is established. I coined the phrase inbodied girlism to refer to theories and studies treating girls’ culture or employing girls or girls’ culture as symbolism and presented in expressions about the body. First, inbodied girlism creates a separate space for girls, girls’ culture, and girlhood in discussion and attention because this attitude sees girlhood as a transition phase between childhood and womanhood and suggests that girls and young women have different problems and feminist issues (Wald 587).⁷ Second, inheriting punk’s “DIY ethic,” inbodied girlism suggests that changes be made now in girls’ and women’s lives by girls and young women themselves (Garrison 154).⁸ Girls and young women reclaim their rights in forming their views about their identities, images of the female body, and plans in life. These girls and young women contend that they cannot wait till adulthood to solve these problems and advocate for respect for their voices.

Moreover, American feminists both in academia and within the Riot Grrrl movement seek to reinterpret feminism with their lives and bodies rather than letting theories do it.

The fourth trait of embodied girlism consists of girls' breaking silence about themselves and girlhood. Girl psychology and girl studies in academics as well as the music and writing of young girls in grassroots movements give expression to girls' thoughts, emotions, and lives.⁹

Academic feminists have published books, and young girls have formed bands, published zines, and held Riot Grrrl conventions to voice their ideas and feelings. Fifth, unlike the second wave feminists, the third wavers deliver their messages candidly in narratives and lyrics about their lives in an in-your-face and take-it-or-leave-it way. Third wave scholars claim their rights to define feminism, and young girls in the subculture define femininity with their body and lives. Finally, academic as well as Riot Grrrl third wavers reject the stereotype of women as victims. Rather than focusing their research and attention on the operations of power within culture, this generation's feminists invent ways to empower themselves. Girls affirm their own values as being feminine in what I call **the restoring to normalcy** in which third wavers gain power and confidence so that they can define girlhood, themselves, and their lives.

These six traits are concerns shared among academic feminists and young girls in the alternative culture. Next, I will examine embodied girlism in American girls' subculture

while adding cross-references to Taiwanese popular culture as a measure to offer global and intercultural perspectives. Then, I will explore embodied girlism within academic feminism.

Third Wave American Feminisms

First wave American feminism was launched around the time of the 1848 Seneca Falls Conference and ended in 1920 with the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment when women won suffrage (Bailey 18, Dicker and Piepmeier 8-9). Surging with the civil rights movement in the 1960s, second wave American feminism demanded equality in jobs and education, abortion rights, childcare, elimination of violence toward women, and the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (Dick and Piepmeier 9). There has been much disagreement over the definition of third wave American feminism, which is also called third-wave feminism or simply the third wave. What cannot be ignored in all definitions is a distinction from the second wave feminism implied in the name.

Catherine M. Orr suggests that the term came from the title of an anthology planned in the 1980s, The Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives on Racism (30). The term also gained currency from the name of the group The Third Wave Foundation formed in 1992 to organize young feminists to action (Shugart 132).¹⁰ In “Becoming the Third Wave” (1992), Rebecca

Walker announces the emergence of a new form of feminism and defines the third wave as a way of living feminism. Walker maintains: “To be a feminist is to integrate an ideology of equality and female empowerment into the very fiber of my life. . . . I am the Third Wave” (41).

Heywood and Drake in Third Wave Agenda (1997) maintain that third wave feminism originates from women of color’s critique of white feminism in the 1980s (8). The idea of difference has been broached by Chela Sandoval in her report at the 1981 National Women’s Studies Association Conference, in which Sandoval called for a “new subjectivity” that founds women’s coalition on their differences: “What U. S. third world feminists are calling for is a new subjectivity, a political revision that denies any one perspective as the only answer, but instead posits a shifting tactical and strategic subjectivity. . . . And what third wave feminists seek and find in the writing of hooks, . . . Maxine Hong Kingston, . . . Toni Morrison, and so many others, is language and images that account for multiplicity and difference, that . . . give voice to a politics of hybridity and coalition” (qtd. in Heywood and Drake 9).

The controversial naming of third wave American feminism has persisted in recent years. Some critics do not see the third wave as a branch of feminism. The one consensus among American feminists about third wave feminism in the United States is the list of books

about the third wave. Amanda D. Lotz sees third wave feminism as a social movement and explains it, in Chela Snadoyal's term, as a "differential consciousness" that provides a tactic whereby activism's focuses may be shifted according to situations (Lotz 6). A number of feminists see the third wave as the young generation's ungrateful attitude toward the second wave feminists' achievements. They condemn young feminists for tending to develop their own opinions without placing their criticism in the history of feminist scholarship and for criticizing the second wave's definition of women as victims. Young feminists fight back and maintain that the second wave creates a problem of casting women into feminist types that do not portray the real life of the younger generation.

I argue that there are two coexisting third wave feminisms, the Riot Grrrl grassroots feminism and academic feminism, in the United States. I suggest that these two forms of feminism reinforce each other and together have consolidated third wave feminism as a unique development of American feminism. Grassroots feminism, the Riot Grrrl movement, took form in the 1990s among a group of mostly white and middle- and upper-class teenage girls and young women (Rosenberg and Garofalo 811). The media's interest in Riot Grrrl bands, topped between 1992 and 1993, popularized girlism and drew people's attention from the second wave feminism to the feminism of Generation X (Wald 598). Scholarly enthusiasm for girls' psychological development and culture, which Gayle Wald calls "girl

studies,” increased at roughly the same time when the Riot Grrrl movement took place (587). In academics, studies of girl psychology and culture herald a full-fledged third wave feminist criticism. Emily Hancock’s The Girl Within was written in the late 1970s and published in 1989. Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan’s study of adolescent psychological crises was conducted from 1986 to 1990 and published in 1992. Mary Pipher’s Reviving Ophelia, on pre- and post-puberty girls’ psychological development in a malignant cultural environment, saw print in 1994. Raising Their Voices, Brown’s book on girls’ resistance to culture’s indoctrination of the feminine role, came out in 1998.

Meanwhile, the theoretical foundation of academic third wave feminism was laid in the 1980s by women of colors, women from the lower class, and lesbian critics who question the efficacy of representing all women in the experiences, culture and lives of white women and the applicability of white feminist theories to all women (Dicker and Piepmeier 9). Yet not until the 1990s were a large number of books on girls’ psychology, culture and feminist theories published, and only then had a paradigm shift really occurred.

The Riot Grrrl Movement

The term Grrrl originated from a lengthened articulation of the word girl to denote verbal encouragement, which was used in the 1980s among African American women as in the phrase, “You go, *guuurlll!*” (Gilbert and Kile 5). The term Riot Grrrl was coined by

Kathleen Hanna, the lead vocalist of the punk rock band Bikini Kill during an interview with the media (Juno 9). The Riot Grrrl movement, which in its genesis was associated with girls' dissatisfaction with sexism in punk rock, comprises two prominent elements, Riot Grrrl bands and girls' zines.

Riot Grrrl Punk Bands

The Riot Grrrl Movement, or simply Riot Grrrl, took form during the International Pop Underground Festival in 1991 held by K. Records of Olympia (Rosenberg and Garofalo 809). During this music festival, a group of girls playing in punk rock bands published a manifesto in which they called for a "Revolution Girl-Style Now" to change the misogynist and homophobic contents of traditional punk music (Wald 594). To create a girls' space in punk music, these girls in bands such as Bikini Kill, Babes in Toyland, Bratmobile, Hole and other bands wrote lyrics about girls' lives, and during their performances parodied girlhood in a patriarchal culture (Wald 594-95, Driscoll 178).¹¹ For example, among the trio of Babes in Toyland, Kat Bjelland customarily donned a baby-doll dress, Maureen Herman wore a housedress of the fifties, and Lori Barbero rocked around in her dreadlocks and tattoos (Karlen 280). As Wald has noted, these band players appropriated and parodied popular stereotypes of girlhood to clear a space for female expression within chauvinist punk music (607).

The Riot Grrrl movement expanded into an alternative girls' culture whose supporting network consists primarily of rock bands, zines, Riot Grrrl conventions, mailing lists, arts and radio programs, and web sites; all of these were organized by and for girls (Rosenberg and Garofalo 810, Garrison 141). The media's coverage of Riot Grrrl emphasized the anger expressed in all-girl bands' screamed out music; an article in the New York Times points out that the name "grrrl" invokes the anger of a growl.¹² However, the movement's primary agenda more positively hinges on assisting these girls in dealing with problems like sexual orientation, sex abuse, mental illness, self-mutilation, eating disorders, rape, racial discrimination, and other issues in their lives (Rosenberg and Garofalo 810).

Girl Zines

Zine is the short form of fanzine, which is itself an abbreviation of fan magazine (Friedman 9-10). The first American fanzine, The Comet, on science and science fiction, later named Cosmology, appeared in 1930 (Wertham 38, Friedman 10). The early fanzines feature subjects such as science fiction, "fantasy and adventure fiction," and comics (Wertham 44). Some later fanzines reported the lives of celebrities in Hollywood (Sabin 12). Since the 1970s, zines have diversified in subject and form into every imaginable low-budget and noncommercial magazine targeted at a small audience (Sabin 12). Currently there are prozines on particular topics of interest, per-zines about personal life,

e-zines published on the Internet, metazines that review zines, and others in variegated formats and genres (Sabin 13, 8, 5). People producing zines are called zinesters in general or zinestresses if they are female (Sabin 12, Green Guide xi). These zines purged of the excessive editing of mainstream magazines are “spontaneous,” personal, “more opinionated,” and sincere in tone (Werthem 35, Friedman 8). The most salient feature of zine articles is the desire to be heard, as the compiler of The Factsheet Five Zine Reader, R. Seth Friedman, maintains (8).¹³

In Karen Green and Tristan Taormino’s definition, girl zines, also called “rags” by the girls in the Riot Grrrl movement, are “do-it-yourself publications made primarily by and for girls and women” (Alfonso and Trigilio 13, Green and Taormino xi). Originating during the Riot Grrrl movement of the 1990s, most girl zines have a circulation of under 1000 copies, many under 500, and have combined “personal stories, fiction, rants, poetry, essays, [comics,] and journalism” in the genre (Green and Taormino xiii, xi). At least 300 girl zines were in circulation in the late 1990s in this “girl zine movement” (Green and Taormino xii). Girl zines have four major features, as browsing through articles in A Girl’s Guide to Taking Over the World suggests. Girl zines are published for self-expression, and these articles are written “from the heart” because these girls write to “discover and create the truth about themselves and their lives” (Green and Taormino xiii). Just as music becomes a medium of

self-expression for Riot Grrrl band players, this new form of **writing life**, not just writing about life, has continued and ameliorated the lives of girl zine writers. For example, Kennedy Pagan said that she published her per-zine, the Pagan's Head, between the age of twenty-five and thirty-one because she felt “shy” and “frustrated” (1-2). That was “[a] time when art could still save my life,” Pagan said (2). As Green and Taormino maintain, girl zines are “sites for . . . revolution, celebration, and self-expression”; they are “cathartic” and “therapeutic” for girls having personal problems (xiv).

Though their primary publishing motivation is to express themselves, these zinestresses are also looking for a community in which to share their stories without being censored so that they may voice their opinions “below [the mainstream’s] critical radar,” as Roger Sabin and Teal Triggs suggest (Green and Taormino xiii).¹⁴ This sharing has been “inspiring” and “enlightening” to these girls, who in a phenomenon I call the restoring to normalcy, come to see themselves as normal human beings (Green and Taormino xiv). Through this zine community, these girls understand that many girls of their age are also confronting the same problems they have. They then perceive themselves less as deviants and more as persons worthy of being noticed and assisted. As Green and Taormino suggest, girls in the Riot Grrrl movement need “to be taken seriously, to be esteemed and valued, even to be worshipped, for the powerful creatures” they are (xiii). The girls’ call for equality for

everyone, one of their major slogans, implies that the restoring to normalcy should apply to everyone, and that people should all be treated with respect despite their personal issues. Moreover, their efforts in restoring to normalcy through community building also lead to self-empowerment. Called “resisterhood” (from resistance and sisterhood) by Evelyn McDonnell, one of the girls, girl zines are also “sites for communication, education, [and] community” (Green and Taormino 179, xiv).

Besides being means for self-expression and self-normalizing, girl zines are avant-garde in form and often manual in production. Most girls paste up their zines in a collage style and find pleasure in producing their zines (Green and Taormino xiv). The very personal and manual manufacturing of these zines constitutes a declaration of these girls’ desire and rights to live, making girl zines in paper irreplaceable by e-zines. Emelye from the zine Cupsized maintains that these photocopied zines make a personal statement that e-zines do not: “We can’t make this switch from [a] patriarchal society to [a] colorless, sexless society of the Internet democracy” (Green and Taormino 143).

Like Riot Grrrl bands, girl zines distinguish the grassroots Riot Grrrl movement from second wave feminism by creating a girls’ space beside the mainstream culture. This girls’ space has been reflected in the very personal and genuine voice of writings in zines. This space has sprung from print into life in a zine article documenting the conversation between a

girl Sabrina Sandata and Tribe 8's Leslie Mah. The reader is enlightened about the girls' space Sandata wishes to convey when descriptions about a hand dryer appear, and the writing continues: "Yes, we're still in the bathroom" (127). A girl zine publisher Avia Midons recapitulates this girls' space that distinguishes the grassroots third wave and second wave feminism:

I am a feminist. . . . I do not like being handed a tray of dictates that are just as restricting as the patriarchal role structure that feminism supposedly desires to *smash* or *subvert*. . . . Feminism, if it is to have any viable meaning at all, must mean that women make their own choices, live their lives according to their own definitions. That is the only path to "freedom," power, or self-determination. . . . Let's just say we're seeking to *live*. . . . These [second wave] debates are important, but we are allowing them, or the media's attention to them, to rob value from *the here, the now, the what-must-be-done*, the day-to-day lives of women. (175-76)

As Midons argues, the central concerns of these girl zines are problems in these girls' daily existence rather than adult women's issues. These girls' concerns, condensed in the advertising descriptions of one hundred and twenty-one American girl zines in Green and Taormino's *A Girl's Guide to Taking Over the World*, range from lesbianism, mental illnesses,

obesity or “fat hatred,” to just stories of their lives (Green and Taormino 210, 212). The writers of these zines are determined to carve out a girls’ instead of women’s space as only seven girl zines include the word “feminist,” nine the word “women,” one the phrase “the feminine voice,” one the word “not ‘feminist,’ ” and twenty-six words like “girl,” “girls” and “grrrl” (210-21). Oozing out of the pages are the genuine, regular human feelings and desires, which belie the girls’ problems and appeal to the reader’s sympathy.

The Riot Grrrl movement is a loosely affiliated group of young girls who gathered in the 1990s to learn from each other in confronting girls’ issues (Rosenberg and Garofalo 816). Because girls in this movement have different personal issues, they also perceive the movement differently. Yet these girls all acknowledge the changes Riot Grrrl has made in their lives. As one of the girls, Lailah Hanit Bragin, suggests, Riot Grrrl has brought forth an inner revolution, changing these girls’ self-perceptions and to some extent the world’s views of them. Bragin gives her own experience as testimony: “Riot Grrrl has changed core things about me, [and] allowed me to change things around me. We’ve learned a lot from each other. . . . Riot Grrrl has been successful in making girls have revolutions within their lives” (Rosenberg and Garofalo 841). I suggest that the movement has produced changes in four major areas in these girls’ lives--construction of a self through self-determination and self-empowerment, establishment of the urgency of girls’ problems, creation of a girls’ space,

and the call for equality for all. Published in Signs (Spring 1998), the girls' own words can best elucidate this movement's effects on them:

Jamie E. Rubin: [W]omen can do whatever they want to do. (Rosenberg and Garofalo 816) [self-determination]

Bragin: Riot Grrrl is about Riot Grrrls getting girls to do it for ourselves, [and] changing the stuff going on in our lives. (Rosenberg and Garofalo 817-18) [self-determination]

Madhu Krishnan: It has changed who I am and my opinions. It gave me the ability to say "I'm not going to kill myself. I'm not a victim." . . . I'm Indian; . . . Before I was uncomfortable being nonwhite in a 95 percent white suburb. (Rosenberg and Garofalo 840) [self-empowerment]

Bragin: It's not like we're going to wait until we're older. . . because they ["girls who are young"] need help now. (Rosenberg and Garofalo 839) [urgency]

Rubin: At conventions, during bands, boys can watch. But during the sex abuse workshop, I wouldn't be as comfortable talking if boys were there. (Rosenberg and Garofalo 834) [girls' space]

Tamara Spivey: [A] girls-only space is necessary for women's health.

(Rosenberg and Garofalo 834) [girls' space]

Kim M. Garcia: The goal of Riot Grrrl is for everyone to be equal. (817)

[equality]

Is the Riot Grrrl movement still a dynamic force in girls' lives? According to Bragin, Riot Grrrl has many chapters and is still evolving (Rosenberg and Garofalo 818); it has not died out.

Girlism in Popular Cultures Elsewhere

Girlism has been a peculiar phenomenon in American and British cultures since the 1990s. Compared to girlism in the American Riot Grrrl movement, girlism in British popular culture has a vague feminist stance. The most notable example of girlism in British popular culture is the Spice Girls whose popularity peaked in the mid and late 1990s (Budgeon 115). Organized in 1994, the band issued its first album in 1996 and has sold more than twenty-five million singles and thirty-five million albums worldwide ("The Spice"). The lyrics of the band boost girls' self-esteem, challenge conventions, and use "girl power" as a slogan. The Spice Girls' songs suggest that girls should speak out about "what they really, really want" (Budgeon 115). However, the message in this slogan is so vague that some of their listeners do not understand what girl power really means. Shelley

Budgeon in her study of British girls and Dafna Lemish in her study of Israeli girls suggest that the Spice Girls are sites where girls test diverse gender roles by either identifying with or resisting the female traits the Spice Girls embody (Lemish 164). The British girls whom Budgeon interviewed resist the female images the Spice Girls produce. Many of these girls, Shayne for example, suggest that the Spice Girls are projecting ideal images rather than posing as real people:

Shelley: Do you think that kind of Spice Girls' "girl power" is real power?

Shayne: No. I don't agree with it because it's portraying them as thin,

beautiful, [and] talented. (137)

Likewise, the Israeli girls in Lemish's study of this "westernized subculture" criticize the Spice Girls for dressing like whores (145, 157). Though many of the girls Lemish interviewed define girl power in terms of the characteristics of independent girls ("independence, strength, success, and sense of self-worth"), some younger girls in this study confuse girl power with physical strength rather than associating it with mental power (153).

The Spice Girls did not evoke the same girlism in Taiwan; these band members have swept the Taiwanese media without their girl power. Record sellers have chosen to promote their albums with the corporeal attractions of their youth rather than with their slogan girl power, and they translated the band's name as "Hot Sisters." Moreover, all-girl bands were

not trendy in Taiwan in the 1990s. The show business group that could be linked to girls is the pair of sisters, “Big S” and “Small S.” Big S and Small S have gained popularity by recounting sisterly trivia and personal stories in their own variety shows and books. The duo discusses their bickering, their falling into or out of love, tattooing, and other similar incidents.

While girlism has not been a global trend, it has been extensively discussed and treated in American academic feminism just as it has been important to the lives of American girls in the Riot Grrrl community. Academic feminism has produced arguments very similar to those in girls’ psychology, girls’ studies, and the grassroots Riot Grrrl movement. Moreover, mainstream culture has continued to co-opt the grassroots girl culture. For example, St. Martin’s Griffin Press has published both Pagan Kennedy’s Zine (1995) and A Girl’s Guide to Taking Over the World: Writings from the Girl Zine Revolution (1997).

Likewise, Hancock founded and edited a magazine Moxie, in much the same style of zines, to help young “college women . . . make the choices they must take to launch a life that works” (Intricate 360). While girl zines tend to focus on alternative issues, Moxie points out what works in young women’s lives. For example, the January 2004 online issue cover normative topics including human relations, puberty, poverty, dating, obesity, aging, makeup, adoption, the media, breast cancer, stalking, strippers, and so forth. The magazine calls for

submission of writings with “a moxie experience—one that involved courage, guts, and grit” (“What”).¹⁵

Academic Feminism

Academic feminism in the United States from the 1980s to the 2000s has flourished in studies of girl psychology, girl culture, and girlist feminism. The last two decades witnessed the growth of third wave feminism with interlocking issues encompassing the fields of psychology, cultural studies, and feminism. The situation over the past twenty years has made it impossible to detach feminism from other studies related to gender or to isolate adult women from other stages of life as the sole subject of feminist studies. For example, Sherrie A. Inness, critic of girl culture, suggests that the understanding of girls’ culture is essential to comprehending gender in American culture (*Delinquents* 12). Therefore, the discussion of academic feminism in this section will include girl psychology, girl studies, and girlism in current feminist theories.

I will discuss the studies on female and girl psychology published in the 1980s and 1990s by Emily Hancock, Lyn Mikel Brown, Carol Gilligan and Mary Pipher. Both the Riot Grrrl movement and Hancock’s study emphasize girls’ “feminine strengths” for self-determination, inner growth, and empowerment, diverging from traditional psychology

and from Brown's, Gilligan's, and Pipher's studies that underscore girls' struggle under cultural and societal constraints (Hancock Girl 189). As Amal Treacher argues, psychologists differ from feminists in seeing the adverse rather than the positive aspects of girls' and women's lives and in thus holding a more pessimistic view toward social changes (132).

Emily Hancock's The Girl Within

American psychotherapist and developmentalist Emily Hancock in The Girl Within (1989) maintains that women establish their adult identity by getting into contact with their girlhood identity formed during the ages of eight to ten ("Growing" 149, Girl x, 172, 12, 193). Hancock maintains that adult women can reclaim their true selves, in a process Hancock calls "creative self-ownership," by reconnecting with their girlhood identities ("Touchstone" 57). In Hancock's portrayal, this girl within bears the traits of independence, competence, autonomy, energy and playfulness ("the spirited, playful, self-contained child, [and] the independent, competent, [and] purposeful girl") (Girls 34). Hancock reaffirms this view in an essay published in 1997, "Growing Up Female," and emphasizes "initiative" (purposefulness) and ambition as well as independence (148-49). Hancock explains that girls of this age possess these qualities because they have gained enough skills to explore the world ("Growing" 149). In an essay published in 1990, Hancock underscores the existence of "womanly strengths" stored within this girl ("Touchstone" 56). Hancock thus

characterizes the psychological development into a woman as a process of self-possession, loss, and restoration. Hancock also suggests that while conformity to social norms of femininity marks the mental development of teenage girls, this girl has the advantage of taking form in a phase of a woman's life when patriarchal culture has not exerted its full influence, or in Hancock's words, "before she got all cluttered up" (1). Using puberty as the watershed for a woman's psychological development, Hancock suggests that after puberty, a woman is ushered into "a world divided by sex" and is compelled to choose between adulthood and womanhood because society has conflicting standards for these two categories (Girl 12, "Growing" 150-51). In Hancock's view, this girl, who defies cultural dichotomies between work and care, and between independence and dependence, provides clues about possible compatibility between adulthood and womanhood because the girl within "reconciles elements of human nature instead of splitting them apart" ("Touchstone" 62).

Describing this girl as the "authentic" "true self," Hancock suggests that the selfhood preserved in girlhood memories empowers a grownup woman during crises and can assist her in establishing a wholesome adult identity (Girl 201, 1, 194, 4). By jettisoning stereotypical images of women as nurturers in their roles as wives and mothers who are often idealized in terms of perfect altruism, a woman examines herself in her own eyes when she regains the self she loses while becoming a woman. Hancock argues that traditional, male constructed

developmental models have disregarded the loss and regain of the girl identity by treating a woman's growth as a linear progression.

The discovery of the girl within came as a surprise to Hancock during her interviews of twenty mostly middle-class Caucasian American women between the age of thirty and seventy-five (Girl 194, 196, 198). Hancock asked all her interviewees to define their adulthood by opening their conversations with this question: "If we were writing your biography, how would you describe your adult life?" (Girl 197). From these women's narratives, Hancock has discovered an underlying common experience of the girl within through whom these women reclaim their true identities. As Hancock maintains that theories on female development must be founded on women's actual life experiences, it is worthwhile to first devote a few words to the narratives in Hancock's book. The Girl Within comprises twelve chapters in which the stories of the interviewees are introduced. The first chapter, "Rediscovering the Girl Within," summarizes Hancock's research project to discuss "women's loss and rediscovery of the 'true self' " in girlhood, which to Hancock holds the key to women's identity (Girl 1). Hancock bolsters her argument with the Broverman report, which discovers that a woman is caught between a dilemma of choosing either adulthood or womanhood because these two roles as defined by social stereotypes contain contradictory qualities (52). For example, men and women in Broverman's study ascribe "independence,

rationality, and self-direction” to male and “warmth, emotional expressiveness, and relatedness” to female (52). As some of the features attributed to male overlap with those of adults, women experience the risk of adopting masculine traits while growing into adults. Chapter Two, “Men’s Theories, Women’s Lives,” criticizes the American national ideal of “individual autonomy” that valorizes separation over connection (23). Hancock suggests that the linear model provided by Erik Erikson of “an independent and continuous sense of the self” does not apply to women (25). Hancock emphasizes that a theory for female identity must be founded on findings about the lives of women (35).

Chapters three through ten offer the women’s narratives and Hancock’s analyses including Hancock’s own story in chapter ten. These women lose their true self in marriage, motherhood, womanhood, or other circumstances. Some of these women are still developing their own identities. For example, Hancock suggests that Katherine “negates her adult identity” and refuses to ascribe the name “adults” to other older women (53). To Katherine, who defines adulthood by the standard of independence, her father, an orphan, is “the only person” who appears to her as an adult because her father “didn’t really have any parents” (51). Katherine refuses to classify her mother and grandmother as adults. Some of these women married or became a mother to build their adult identities but found that marriage and motherhood do not lead them to adulthood. Others connect to their girl selves

and redefine femininity in their own terms. During crises such as loss of a family member, a divorce, a suicide attempt, or mother-daughter conflicts, some of these women reconstruct their adult selves by circling back to the girlhood feminine self and by recalling experiences showing independence and strength such as walking on a fence, fishing alone, and typing a letter (85-86, 110, 180). Some women are able to reestablish equal relationships with their husbands, family, and mothers. Crucial to some women's adult identity is the transformation of the mother-daughter bond, which Hancock calls "reckoning" or reexamining while adjusting the relationship (164). While presenting these narratives about the girl within, Hancock suggests that the girl cannot be found by conscious efforts but appears without calling (177).

Hancock sees the acceptance of both love and independence in adulthood as the pivotal point of adult womanhood. Chapter Eleven suggests that a mature feminine self is born when girlhood completeness, which Hancock defines as possessing culturally ascribed masculine, feminine and neutral qualities, is joined with womanhood fecundity (193). The twelfth chapter explains Hancock's methodology and selection criteria. Hancock maintains that she selects these women based on their ability to engage in inner reflection and on their advanced level of psychological development (195). Finally, Hancock suggests that her

study proposes a normative model of the growth of a woman who tends to hide a “real” self under the guise of a “false” self constructed in conformity with feminine ideals (200).

Though Hancock maintains that her study aims at diverse social strata, the majority of her subjects are middle-class Caucasian American women. While Marguerite Mroz and other reviewers of The Girl Within welcome Hancock’s theory as an addition to the studies of women’s psychology, some scholars of women’s or girls’ psychology, for example, Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan, maintain that Hancock portrays an idealized girlhood that adult women want to remember rather than a true portrait of a phase of struggles and frustrations.¹⁶

Studies of Girl Psychology

The Girl Within is based on the research Hancock pursued while she was a student at Harvard, where she graduated in 1981 with an Ed. D. in human development (Intricate 360, “Girl” 55). While Hancock focuses on preadolescent autonomy constructed in women’s recollection, other Harvard scholars who study girls’ psychology devote their attention to crises girls confront when they enter adolescence. As part of the Harvard Project on Women’s Psychology and Girls’ Development, between the years 1986 and 1990 Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan studied nearly a hundred girls aged seven to eighteen in the Laurel School for girls located in Cleveland, Ohio (5). A footnote in Meeting at the Crossroads

(1992), where Brown and Gilligan published their results, confirms the existence of the resistance Hancock suggests yet also points out that this girl may be a fantasy version of the real situation (242). Brown and Gilligan maintain that women tend to idealize their girlhood while recalling the past, and that the life of girls is replete with feelings of powerlessness as well as of joy. This footnote suggests that Meeting at the Crossroads includes both positive and negative experiences of girls, whereas The Girl Within does not (242).¹⁷ Brown and Gilligan argue that the girls they studied risk losing their relationships to themselves—their voices, identities and bodies—by seeking to maintain harmonious relationships with other people (2-3, 216). Unlike The Girl Within, which carries the theme of female empowerment through girlhood memories, Meeting at the Crossroads underscores crises in relationships girls confront before and after puberty. Notwithstanding, Brown alone published another book, Raising Their Voices, in 1998, in which Brown documents a small group of girls in the previous study who resist society's and culture's attempts to silence them while shaping them from girls into women. Brown draws the conclusion that “girls actively *resist* dominant cultural notions of femininity, particularly at the edge of adolescence” (vii). Brown suggests that these girls' resistance is supported by their ability to “express strong feelings, particularly anger,” disrupting society's expectations of them as women (viii).

While Meeting at Crossroads and Raising Their Voices discuss the resistance of some girls while denying resistance as full-scale and normative occurrences among all girls, American psychotherapist Mary Pipher, in her book Reviving Ophelia (1994), affirms Hancock's argument of preadolescent girls' autonomy and of the divided false and true selves of older girls. Pipher compares girls in their adolescence to Shakespeare's Ophelia, who "loses herself" to the manipulations of her father and Hamlet after puberty (20). Pipher suggests that society's pressure compels girls to shelve "their authentic selves" and to conform to the given feminine role (22). As a result of her clinical experience, Pipher suggests that there is a marked difference between younger and adolescent girls' psychological conditions. Observing that few girls aged seven through eleven visit her clinic whereas many older girls receive treatments for troubles and pressure, Pipher concludes that preadolescent girls "have a brief respite from the female role" society assigns (18). Calling American culture "girl-destroying" and suppressive to girls' true selves, Pipher advocates changes in American culture (44). Though faulted by Brown and Gilligan as women's fantasy, Hancock's notion of the girl who is linked to women's true self has contributed substantially to and generated interesting repercussions. In addition to making contributions to female psychology, Hancock's theory also echoes some prevailing girlist concerns in third wave feminism.

Femininity: Women and Girls

My purpose in this section is to discuss the impact of Hancock's theory on feminism. In my view, Hancock's theory questions the idea of femininity and helps position third wave feminism's focus on girls' culture and girlism. I will discuss Hancock's theory in the context of "woman," the foundations on which feminist theories are built.

What is femininity? Are infants, girls, and old women as equally feminine, feminist, and womanist as grownup women are? Hancock in The Girl Within suggests that there is a false feminine facade. To Hancock, the feminine self cannot be deeply social or cultural if it is to be truly feminine. Hancock contrasts the girlhood true self with the "false self" constructed later in life, which will be dismantled when the woman rediscovers this girl during crises (35). Hancock suggests that instead of a smooth, upward development toward womanhood, a woman circles back to an earlier phase of girlhood, a pre-construction phase where culture has not set in, to find her true self. Hancock also argues that a woman suffers from a detachment from the girl instead of a separation from the mother, as Julia Kristeva maintains. Instead of claiming either paternal or maternal origin as a woman's source of strength and power, Hancock argues that a woman's strength resides within herself in defining adulthood and womanhood. Hancock thus wrests from the hands of both the father and the mother the right to name the woman. Hancock suggests that in the course of

developing one's femininity, it is important first to stay outside human relationships and find strength within oneself. A woman can next reconnect to society and position her self in her relationships with other people, whose symbiosis leads to a satisfactory adult life. Like critics of girl culture, Hancock stresses the agency, or the ability to act and to express emotions and give opinions, of girls and women in adjusting to their worlds. I thus turn my discussion to girlism in third wave feminism, which I see as connected to studies in female psychology of Hancock and others.

Current American Feminist Theories

Current academic feminism focuses more on girls' and women's bodies than on feminist theories, and values girls' and women's concerns in life more than collective feminist issues. I call this trend that has emerged since the 1990s embodied girlism. Books on third wave academic feminism were all published starting in the 1990s; these include Naomi Wolf's The Beauty Myth (1990) and Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change the 21st Century (1993), Katie Poiphe's The Morning After: Sex, Fear and Feminism (1993), To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism (1995) edited by Alice Walker's daughter Rebecca Walker, Barbara Findlen's Listen UP: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation (1995), and Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism (1997) edited by Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake. In 1997 the journal

Hypatia released a special issue on third wave feminism in an attempt to clarify and define the emerging field. Numerous journal articles on both third wave academic feminism and Riot Grrrl culture, Baumgardner and Richards's Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future (2000), and Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century (2003) edited by Rory Dicker and Alison Peipmeier were published in the twenty-first century.

Among these works, Roiphe's, Wolf's and Walker's writings are called power feminism because they argue for women's power and responsibility and refuse to adopt the old victim paradigm.¹⁸ Christina Hoff Sommers has given power feminists another name, "equity feminists," as opposed to "gender feminists" who assert that of the two genders, women are mostly the victims (Heywood and Drake 3). Another term for power feminists is Do Me's, which Richards gives to Wolf, Roiphe and others, though Richards suggests that right-wing activists like Phyllis Schlafly and Beverly LaHaye do more harm to feminism than these writers can (258). In general, among the power feminists, Walker is not considered a backlash feminist, whereas Roiphe and Wolf are sometimes criticized as anti-feminist and associated with the term post-feminists. Roiphe in The Morning After discredits feminist efforts in establishing the legal accountability of date rapes and of sexual harassment and Wolf in Fire with Fire abnegates the feminist claim of body autonomy and provokes instead women's guilt about abortions. Roiphe in The Morning After propagates the division of

good and bad feminism in her questioning of date rapes and sexual harassment statistics: “It is out of the deep belief that some feminisms are better than others that I have written this book” (7). For Roiphe, feminists have exaggerated the threat of rapes: “The Take Back the Night marches and the sexual harassment peer-counseling groups were alien, and even sometimes at odds with what I thought feminism was” (5). Wolf in The Beauty Myth maintains that society and the female images created by the media incur girls’ and women’s self-hatred of their bodies.

Both Roiphe and Wolf question the boundary of female sexuality by suggesting that female sexuality remains ambiguous because it is defined not just by women, but also by men and social decorum. Roiphe chooses to forget the history and facts that women’s sexual autonomy has long been compromised by male violence and social control. In an act of extreme individualism, Roiphe conflates all women’s experience with her own personal experience, which is logically erroneous. With regard to the 1985 date rape statistics Roiphe mistrusts, cross-cultural statistical evidence can clear these doubts (Roiphe 51); the electronic Taiwanese newspaper China Times dated February 13, 2004 reported that according to data released by the Modern Women’s Foundation in Taiwan, date and acquaintance rapes occupy 65% of all sexual assaults (“Qinglang”); based on the statistics released by the Taipei City Police Department and by the Sexual Assault Prevention Center in

Taiwan, of all acquaintance rapes, which constitute 70% of all sexual infringements, 40% occurred between boyfriends and girlfriends (“Qinglang”). Like Roiphe, Wolf would like to reclaim “the value of female sexuality” even at the risk of women’s rights to their bodies and sexuality (“Brideland” 40). Calling academic second wave feminism “club feminism” and “insider feminism,” Wolf argues that second wave feminism cannot relate theories to the experience of girls and women (qtd. in Siegel “Reading” 69). Like Roiphe and Wolf, Walker suggests that she does not like “to be bound by a feminist ideal” and pursues instead feminism of “the real” defined by personal lives: “My requirement [in To Be Real] was that the pieces be personal, honest, and record a transformative journey taken. . . . I believe that our lives are the best basis for feminist theory. . . . I hope the journeys in this collection encourage you to create feminist space in which you can be real” (“Being Real” xxxiv, xxxvii, xl). Like Walker, Gina Dent names the feminist ideal “missionary feminism” and echoes power feminist sentiment in supporting changes and evolution within feminism so as to win more people to feminist causes: “The current practice of confession instead works to establish the bounds of what I think of as ‘missionary feminism,’ a feminism that puts forward its program so stridently, guards its borders so closely, and legislates its behavior so fervently that many are afraid to declare its name” (64).

In addition to the topic of power versus victims, many feminists, like Dent and Deborah L. Siegel, maintain that difference is a prominent issue for third wave feminism (Siegel “Legacy” 69). In her introduction to Listen Up, Barbara Findlen argues that everyone has a different take on feminism based on diverse personal experiences (xv). Heywood and Drake in Third Wave Agenda claim that “[a] definitive aspect of third wave feminist movement, then, is negotiating multicultural and antiracist standpoints amid the ongoing tensions between borrowing and appropriating” (9-10). Ophira Edut in Adiós, Barbie connects the assertions of power feminism and of difference feminism by calling for body and identity harmony: “When our bodies and identities are in tune, they reflect each other. This beautiful synchronicity . . . changes the culture” (xxiv). Extended from Edut’s idea is the notion that different bodies create different identities, which is part of the rationale on which my theory inbodied girlism is founded.

Though Dicker and Piepmeier argue in the epigraph of their introduction to Catching a Wave that “*the third wave is just the second wave with more lip gloss,*” I would like to suggest that simply reclaiming feminism as Dicker and Piepmeier did cannot be the main issue for third wave feminism, and that difference is not its defining characteristic (3). The “Dialogue” in Feminist Review (Spring 2000) portrays these feminists as “[a] relatively young, largely white and fiercely articulate generation of writers” (113). As “Dialogue” and

some articles suggest, criticism associated with the third wave is written mostly by Caucasian American feminists on issues of middle-class American life. How different and diversified can the third wave claim to be?

I suggest that embodied girlism calling for self-empowerment and for a space of femininity and sexuality using the girl as symbolism is the crucial feature of American third wave grassroots and academic feminisms. “Girlie” feminism discussed in Richards’s introduction to Manifesta is close to my idea of embodied girlism (xx). Similar to the voter registration she engaged in for Freedom Summer ’92, the activism Richards promotes is one aimed at recruiting young feminists by giving young women their rights to prioritize issues in life and to define feminism.¹⁹ In their “Third Wave MANIFESTA,” Baumgardner and Richards suggest a similar voter registration for young girls and women, the first agenda being “[t]o out unacknowledged feminists, specifically those who are younger” (278).

Richards suggests that feminism can be more inclusive for the Generation X: “Unfortunately, most of the books that have been published about feminism in this generation have tried to convince readers that young women are somehow lacking in activism and are even antagonistic to the feminists who came before them. . . . I hope the existence of this book will lead to similar conversations in your own life—and to making feminism your own” (xxvii, xxx). Richard and Baumgardner suggest that feminism can be more flexibly defined

by each girl or woman who embodies feminism: “feminism is out there—manifesting itself in individual people’s lives, and often in the lives of people who don’t even know they’re living it. . . . In reality, feminism wants you to be whoever you are—but with a political consciousness” (xxvii, 56-57). Richards argues that young women should have the choice to direct their lives and approach feminism.

Though not totally agreeing with the arguments of power feminists, Baumgardner affirms feminine interests, pleasure, and desires that “Girlie feminists” advocate: “I consciously brought ‘Why suffer?’ into my personal manifesto because the cult of martyrdom is sold to girls” by the second wave (xx). Richards and Baumgardner define Girlie feminists as young academic feminists who have confidence, feel their entitlement to femininity and their bodies, and establish the concept of a girl: “These Girlies are women in their late twenties and early thirties and are not the same as the girls in the girls’ movement. . . . *[G]irl’ is increasingly rehabilitated as a term of relaxed familiarity, comfy confidence, the female analogue to ‘guy’—and not a way of belittling adult women*” (49, 52).

The girlist trend in Asian American feminism can be detected in the publishing of Yell-oh Girls! (2001). While Asian American feminists also employ the wave metaphor, as the titles Making Waves (1989) and Making More Waves (1997) suggest, these writers do not make a distinction between the second and the third wave as mainstream feminists do. The

last two decades witnessed a profusion of Asian American feminist writings, yet owing to the focus and limit of this dissertation, this significant growth has to be reserved for future research.²⁰ However, relevant criticism will be interwoven into my reading of Song's poems.

Neither embodied girlism nor the nomenclature associated with waves has been prominent in Taiwan, where modern feminism bloomed with the publication of New Feminism (1974) written by the now incumbent Vice President of Taiwan Hsiu-lien Lu, who advocates in her book that one should be a person first, and a woman or a man second (155). Taiwanese feminist Hsiao-hung Chang suggests that the third wave took form in 1975 when around the world women's studies centers were founded to fight for women's rights and conduct research on issues related to women ("Funu" 452).²¹

INBODIED GIRLISM IN POETRY

Through a reading of Song's poems on the body, I examine the permeation of poetry and the body to raise larger theoretical questions about both the material situations of Asian American women in contemporary society and the ways their existence has fostered a reconsideration of theoretical approaches to the body, to feminism, and to women's writings.

Song's poems offer examples of the nondualism between writing and life, which I call "writing life"; while this writing appears most conspicuously in current works by women of color, it also proves to be contagious in style across the gamut of contemporary American literature. The emergence of the girl in Song's poems also corresponds with the rise of Hawaiian Native and Local consciousness. Before embarking on a close reading of her poems "Ikebana," "The Youngest Daughter," "Pa-ke," and "The Girl Can Run," I will offer a brief sketch of Song's life.

The middle child among three, Cathy Song was born Cathy-Lynn Song in 1955 in Wahiawa, a sugar and pineapple plantation town in Oahua, Hawaii (Schultz 267, Gall 353). Seven years later, the Song family moved to the Waialae Kahala neighborhood of Honolulu (Schultz 267). One of the first wave of Korean laborers to arrive in Hawaii, Song's paternal grandfather married a picture bride from Korea (Gall 354, Schultz 269).²² Song's father, Andrew Song, a pilot, also married a picture bride, her mother Ella Song from China, who later worked as a seamstress (Gall 353, "Cathy Song" Poetry 330). Song had studied for two years at the University of Hawaii at Manoa before attending Wellesley College and receiving a B. A. in English Literature in 1977 (Schultz 267). Song received an M. F. A. in Creative Writing in 1981 from Boston University and, while in Boston, married Dr. Douglas McHarg Davenport, then a medical student (Gall 354). The publication of Picture Bride

(1983) in the Yale Series of Younger Poets greatly enhanced Song's visibility among mainland readers. Song wrote her second book, Frameless Windows, Squares of Light (1988) in Denver, Colorado while her husband completed his residency there from 1984 to 1987 (Gall 354). In 1987, the couple moved to Honolulu and raised two sons and a daughter (Schultz 267). Song has taught at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and other universities on the U. S. mainland, worked for the Bamboo Ridge Press, and taught children poetry through the "Poets in the Schools" program (Gall 355, Schultz 267). Song toured Korea and Hong Kong the year her third book, School Figures (1994), was published, and she published her fourth collection, The Land of Bliss, in 2001 (Gall 355). The many awards Song has garnered include the Hawai'i Award for Literature, for which she is the youngest recipient, and the Shelley Memorial Award, both received in 1993 (Gall 355). Song is the first writer born and raised in Hawaii to have attained national stature and readership (Schultz 267).

The Poetic Body

"The Body's Faith"

Asian American feminist Trinh T. Minh-ha, in Woman, Native, Other (1989), maintains that the procreative functions of the womb make a difference not only in physical

economy but also in language. Minh-ha agrees with Anaïs Nin that “woman’s creation far from being like man’s must be exactly like her creation of children, that is[,] it must come out of her own blood, englobed by her womb, [and] nourished by her own milk. It must be a human creation, of flesh, [and] it must be different from man’s abstractions” (qtd. in Minh-ha 37). Minh-ha calls this writing “[w]riting the body” or “linguistic flesh” that resists the separation of writing from the body (44, 38).

To tame the body, to contain it within a certain space, and to assign it a position in explanation, American society and academics have replaced the body with abstract nomenclature, for example, nature, desires, gender, and the other. A literary and linguistic hysterectomy, a denial of the womb’s role in creation, has disconnected writing from the body. Likewise, through a reductio ad absurdum, feminine emotions, modes of expressions, and subjects such as the body are spurned as irrational, nonintellectual, and uninteresting. The body is a territory of secrecy, taboo, and alterity that society and critics intend to represent but refrain from discussing. As Song suggests in her poem “The Body’s Faith,” a female body, here signifying the body in general, “remains hidden, hushed, the way your mother’s / reticence told you hers did” (School 24). In contrast, Song’s poetry presents the body as tangible, visible, and non-abstract.

“There was no stopping [of] the body’s faith” (School 24). Despite societal effacement and injunctions from knowing it, the female body, a “miraculous invention, endlessly resourceful” and a trope for human bodies in general, faithfully pursues its course in becoming productive (School 23). A woman in her forties, the narrator of “The Body’s Faith” contemplates the joy in witnessing her body’s maturation into fecundity: The narrator’s body “faithful so far, for how long, carries / itself into the middle of its fourth / decades of attention and neglect” (School 23). The permeability between the poetry and the body is shown when the body in “The Body’s Faith” diffuses into Asian American culture, American landscape, and American life; the economics of laundry businesses owned by Asian immigrants, the community, the history of Asian railroad laborers, the American dream of having a family are written in the body of the growing girl: Her “skin stretched taut / like laundered sheets, clean and fragrant,” her teeth “crammed into” a “mouth like a farmyard fence,” and the “worm” of hunger in her “belly gnawed a tunnel / through the crinkling of late-night snacks” (School 23). Finally, “one, two, three, textbook perfect: labor and delivery” out come “[t]hree good fat babies” (School 25). Poetry, the body, landscape, and future become one when the nursing mother is portrayed as literally “the land of milk and honey”: “There was more milk than you knew / what to do with. . . / [So] you coil an ace bandage / . . . and bind your breasts / . . . to wean the last / drop of it from you, / the

overwhelming fecundity of it all” (School 24-25). “The Body’s Faith” delineates the poetic body and boundary crossing between the body and the poetry. Other poems—“Ikebana,” “The Youngest Daughter,” “Pa-ke,” and “The Girl Can Run”—limn the emergence of embodied girlism in Song’s poetry, which corresponds to an intensification of growing Hawaiian Native and Local consciousness.

The Translucent Perfection

“Ikebana”

The interchangeability between the body and art is emphatically articulated in the poem “Ikebana,” which describes the similarities between the female narrator’s body and her floral arrangement.²³ The permeability of the body, poetry and flowers in Song’s poetry makes Richard Hugo comment in his foreword to Picture Bride that “Song’s poems are flowers” (ix). The resemblance between the woman’s body and the flowers are strengthened by images that create associations between the woman and the flowers. For example, the narrator likens her fair skin to “the skin of lilies,” relates that she eats white parts of flowers to enhance her fairness (“the veins of the young iris”), links her look to “a handful of crushed chysanthemums,” picks “lilacs” to adorn her hair, which she holds like an “arrangement,” and

says that her floral arrangement is “curving like a fan” used by a woman (School 42). The transubstantiation regimen, suggesting that there are connections between one’s skin color and the food one eats as well as the soap one bathes with, creates paradigmatic relationships in the poem, establishing a closer link between the narrator and her surroundings, and between the narrator’s body and the poetry about it.

Situated between two poems on the art of the nineteenth-century Japanese printmaker Kitagawa Utamaro and one poem on the paintings of American artist Georgia O’Keeffe, in the metaphor of women as flowers, “Ikebana” comments on women’s roles implied in both the art of the male printmaker Utamaro and the female painter O’Keeffe (Hugo ix). Judging from her floral arrangement and from the ways the female narrator prepares her body like “a perfumed gift” for men, the reader can see that the narrator, a woman in the floating world, who “hand-picked [the] flower / set in the front alcove” to represent her aesthetic, has internalized patriarchal culture and grown accustomed to her roles of being manipulated by men (Picture 41-42). Both her body and the ikebana or Japanese floral arrangement are crafted with the standard “to appear like a spontaneous accident” (42). The narrator endeavors to make the pretense that her body and her floral art are naturally given rather than culturally conditioned.

As if to remind herself of the beauty regimen she must follow, the female narrator lists measures to carry out her body project—cultivating fair skin, appearing in delicate dresses, and styling her hair in an imitation of nature. Just as the culturally endorsed beauty standard induces sickly pale (“bruised white”) skin and unhealthy weight (“weighing no more / than a handful of crushed chrysanthemums”) in the narrator, the established aesthetic for ikebana inhibits (“so skillfully wired into place”) her artistic expression in flower arrangements (Picture 41-42). The poem implies that the narrator has been coerced by culture and her conditions to take on this body project. The narrator accepts thoughtlessly the beauty criteria of “the translucent perfection” of the body (Picture 41). Comparing the narrator’s hair to “a complicated shrine,” this poem suggests, as does the poem “Sunworshippers,” that by consecrating the body as nature untainted by culture and by representing it as natural despite the contrary, a culture harms the body even more by erasing the trace of cultural mediations on the body and declaring its innocence in shaping the body (Picture 42).

The narrator’s half-awareness of her manipulability in “Ikebana” is contrasted with the artist’s full awareness of her freedom in “Blue and White Lines after O’Keeffe,” which condenses Picture Bride’s structure of flowers that appear in O’Keeffe’s paintings. In this poem, an important line spoken in the voice of O’Keeffe’s mother to her daughter strengthens

the connection between women and flowers: “Women are like flowers” (Picture 46). In contrast to the delicate “lilies” the narrator in “Ikebana” uses as a model for her body, the bold, large and sensuous flowers in O’Keeffe’s paintings are true artistic expressions.

Just as “Blue and White Lines after O’Keeffe” portrays O’Keeffe as a traveling young artist, Song has said that traveling with her family evoked her interest in writing (Between). In this poem, blue is a thematic color that signifies a woman artist’s freedom to have her own expressions. Blue is also the first color aside from black and white O’Keeffe dabbed on her canvas when she found her own self in art. O’Keeffe recounts in her biography that in 1915 she found her own expression as an artist, and the first successful painting that was painted after her awakening and “seemed right” to her is Blues Lines (1):

I decided to start anew—to strip away what I had been taught—to accept as true my own thinking. . . . I began with charcoal and paper and decided not to use any color until it was impossible to do what I wanted to do in black and white. I believe it was June before I needed blue. “Blue Lines” was first done with charcoal. Then there were probably five or six paintings of it with black watercolor before I got to this painting with blue watercolor that seemed right. (1)

Song has said that O’Keeffe’s biography had a great influence on her as an artist (Fujita-Sato 55). I suggest that the sections of flowers in Picture Bride has a deeper feminist perspective than most critics have thought, and that Picture Bride is a volume in which Song attempts to articulate her own voice as a woman poet.

“Ikebana” also has significance in the living experience of Asian American girls and women by depicting the two frames, invisibility and stereotypes, Asian American women are compelled to fit in. Mitsuye Yamada in “Invisibility Is an Unnatural Disaster” argues that Asian American women “were born into a ready-made world into which we must fit ourselves” (39); many women adjust to this world so well that they abstain from raising serious, political questions or from holding people making inappropriate remarks accountable, making themselves and their opinions invisible (39). However, the body remains the site of resistance for Asian Americans to defy these two frames because physical features can neither be assimilated nor homogenized. For example, a 1988 study conducted in England suggests that racial teasing, the ridiculing of people’s appearances associated with race, is “the most prevalent form of teasing among 10- to 17-year-olds” studied and is found to link to the development of mental disturbances such as “aggressiveness, depression, low self-esteem, eating problems and body image dissatisfaction” (“Racial” 4). Among 122 South Asian American undergraduate women surveyed in the United States, 86 percent experienced racial

teasing, which is associated with “disturbed eating behavior and body image dissatisfaction” (“Racial” 5).

The second frame is stereotypes. As Linda Trinh Võ, Marian Sciachitano, Renee E. Tajima and Venny Villapando maintain, stereotypes of Asian American women involve historical and legal factors. Võ and Sciachitano suggest that American military presence in Asia, imperialism, and global capitalism have all contributed to various stereotypes of Asian American women, for example, mail-order brides and cheap labor for garment, electronic and service industries (2-5). Tajima argues that there are two traditional stereotypes, the submissive “Lotus Blossom” and the dangerous “Dragon Lady” (309). Both Tajima and Villapando raise the concerns that many American men continue the Lotus Blossom stereotypes by seeking Filipina mail-order brides to fulfill their dreams of pre-feminist, docile wives (Villapando 325). Beverley Encarguez Perez reports that the Filipina bride business has thrived through agencies like Cherry Blossoms with a mailbox in Hawaii, Filipina.com, and Filipino Girls Tours (221, 223). The Philippine government had declared the trade illegal with the passing of the Republic Act of the Philippines No. 6955 or the Mail-Order Bride Law (232).

Just as Riot Grrrl band players perform the inadequacy of culturally constructed girlish innocence by scribbling “slut” on their bodies, two anthologies of Asian American

literature, Making Waves (1989) and Making More Waves (1997) intend to dispel the stereotype of Asian American women as silent and without an opinion. The preface of Making Waves avows: “Contrary to the erroneous stereotype that Asian American women are passive and submissive, this anthology shows that we are not afraid to rock the boat. Making waves. This is what Asian American women have done and will continue to do” (xi).

Likewise, Adrienne L. McCormick maintains that Song’s persona poems often speak “as the self and/or the other in complex challenges to the notion of” a fixed identity. Sharon S. Suzuki-Martinez also suggests, borrowing Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s concept of “double vision,” that Asian American poets often present subjects in both their own and the dominant culture’s views. Song’s “Ikebana” nuancedly expresses the concerns of an artist’s own voice and Asian American women’s historical conditions through the half-consciousness of the narrator about her culturally configured body project.

Another poem “Sunworshippers” agrees with “Ikebana” that the dualism that separates the body from culture has generated the phenomenon that for many people, “[t]he body is a temple we worship / secretly in the traveling revivalist tent of our clothes” (School 26). Like “Ikebana,” “Sunworshippers” tells how different an Asian American woman’s poem on the body can be from poems written by Caucasian women. In “Sunworshippers,”

the mother forbids her daughter to get tanned under the sun like other American girls do because her daughter already has a yellow skin tone; therefore, this Asian American girl takes on another body project of dieting to shape her body, which to her is a form of self-expression: Asian American girls “were not allowed to love ourselves too much” by tanning their skins (School 26). So she “ate less, and less, and less” until her efforts “to weave one’s self, [and] one’s breath” turn into “a way of shining / out of this world” (School 26-27).

“The Youngest Daughter”

Susan Schultz, Rosaly Demaios Raffman and Lee Kyhan all note that escape is a dominant theme in many poems in Picture Bride (Schultz 270, Raffman 909, Kyhan 29). I argue that “Ikebana” and “The Youngest Daughter” express a poet’s flight from an aesthetic founded on the preciousness of language, purity, and lucidity. Both “Ikebana” and “The Youngest Daughter” use pellucid, thin slices of “pickled turnip” to represent an aesthetic built on constraints, which these poems suggest hamper artistic integrity and growth. The narrators in both poems suggest an alternative aesthetic that appreciates beauty on the borders between manifold experiences acutely perceived by the body. This aesthetic that Song prefers stresses the interplay between the body and its surroundings.

In “Ikebana” and “The Youngest Daughter,” the heavy use of expressions that suggest transubstantiation between the aesthetic, food and the body generates poetry that engages and mimics life. In “Ikebana,” the narrator compares poetry displaying a minimalist aesthetic to “the translucent perfection” of “the sliced shavings / of a pickled turnip” and to the narrator’s carefully maintained white body (Picture 41). Likewise, the narrator in “The Youngest Daughter” associates the craft of carving food with regimens in maintaining fair skin, admitting that she sees the “slice of pickled turnip” as “a token for” her “white body” (6).

This aesthetic of inbodiment, which presents experiences as felt and perceived by the body, is also symbolically expressed in the narrator’s mediation between American and Asian cultures, culminating in her indecision to leave or to remain home. Therefore, “The Youngest Daughter” registers the double themes of escaping to the outside world in the American spirit of independence, adventurousness, and freedom and staying at home in observance of the Asian virtue and custom of filial piety at the transitional time when a girl, her youth implied in the descriptive “the youngest,” is turning into a woman. The poem begins with the daughter describing an empathetic feeling of the dryness of skin between her and her mother. The narrator recalls her mother toiling in the plantation fields in Hawaii and enduring the heat of the scorching sun: “My skin . . . feels the way / mother’s used to before the drying sun / parched it out there in the fields” (Picture 5). This empathy felt through the

body continues in the next two stanzas in a mutual physical relationship; the mother massages the daughter's face during the migraines that erupt often in the evenings, and the daughter in the morning pushes her mother into the bathroom in a wheelchair and bathes her: "Mother / has been massaging the left side of my face / especially in the evenings / This morning / . . . I wheeled her into the bath" (Picture 5). Again here, the daughter divulges her sympathy for her mother "with a sour taste" in her mouth, moaning that her mother's body has labored and suffered for the family as the narrator recollects that the "six children and an old man / have sucked from these brown nipples" (Picture 5). Remembering this history of the body, the daughter is careful when scrubbing "the blue bruises" where insulin was injected (Picture 6).

The physical empathy the daughter feels on her skin next extends to the communion through food in the last stanza, circling back to the theme of transubstantiation between food and the body in the first stanza in which the daughter's skin is compared to the food-wrapping "rice paper" (Picture 5). In the second and third stanzas, the mother-daughter bodily contacts continue to sneak into the thoughts of both women in their afternoon routine of refreshments that include tea and Asian delicacies like "a shred of gingered fish, / a slice of pickled turnip" and rice (Picture 6). The sliced turnip served during the afternoon tea reminds the daughter of her "white body" in contrast to the mother's

aging body with “flaccid” breasts and marks of insulin injections, a body that has been inscribed with the history of their family and of Hawaii (Picture 5-6).

Though the mother and the daughter eat “in the familiar silence,” they both feel the threat of an insecure future (Picture 6). The mother knows that the daughter is “not to be trusted” in caring for her for long, and sensing this, the daughter toasts her mother’s health with the tea the mother “has poured” for her, underscoring their common experience and fate by sharing the food and tea (Picture 6). Yet when the daughter is making this toast, “a thousand cranes” on the window curtain “fly up in a sudden breeze” as if to signify the daughter’s desire to flee from her duties, belying the daughter’s gesture (Picture 6).

Through poetic imagination, the visual eruption of imagery on the curtain transforms the daughter’s thoughts of independence and freedom into action, reversing the course of the poem heretofore about the daughter’s remembrance and appreciation of her mother’s contributions to their family. The visual outbreak connotes both the daughter’s intention to escape from her duty in nursing her mother and her desire to disengage the aesthetic that she associates with Asian food and customs. Both the narrators in “Ikebana” and “The Youngest Daughter” suggest that the appreciation of gossamery grace in thinly sliced food tends to endorse frailty, and that the prizing of restraints hinders artistic freedom and innovations.

However, the imagery of cranes also has another cultural connotation of the blessing of longevity, as Stephen H. Sumida maintains (53). “The Youngest Daughter” describes the nourishing surrounding offered by the Asian American community and Asian culture and customs by highlighting the transubstantiation between Asian food and the body and by encrypting the cultural allusion of cranes.

Rejection and Loss

“Pa-ke”

“Pa-ke” presents the ironic ambivalence of a heart torn between rejection and loss as Elizabeth Bishop’s poem “One Art” suggests: “The art of losing isn’t hard to master” (178).²⁴ Like “Ikebana” and “The Youngest Daughter,” “Pa-ke” mediates between the racial Asian past and the narrator’s life and lends greater complexity of the emotions to Song’s poetry. Elaine Kim and Lee Kyhan have noted that reconciliation with the past is a major theme in Song’s poems (Kyhan 29). I maintain that “Pa-ke” brings to the reader of American letters the embarrassment of confronting an enduring presence of a past that can neither be dismissed nor connected.

“Pa-ke” means “Chinese” or “China” in Hawaiian, a language that belongs to the East Polynesian group of the Malayo-Polynesian or Oceanic language family (Barrow ix, Alexander 7).²⁵ The poem evolves around the embarrassment the narrator feels about her Chinese cultural heritage. This cultural root persists in the Hawaiian economy, landscape, and the narrator’s aesthetic. However, with the passing away of relatives, the culture is discontinued. To the narrator, this culture belonging specifically to Chinese immigrants in Hawaii is commensurate with her mother’s “aunt and uncle,” called “my great ancestors” by the narrator (Land 14).

Memories about the granduncle linger in Hawaii a decade after his death: “Pa-ke smells like my Uncle Sonny Boy’s / breath ten years after his death” (Land 14). Almost piously, the narrator’s grandaunt Siu Ching still annually serves up offerings to commemorate her husband on the day of his demise, stacking up a “pyramid of tangerines [that] spirals / like ancient temples,” burning “banners of incense,” and piling up “doughnuts” and “a peach can” to feed the uncle’s ghost (Land 14). However, it is the narrator, her two hands “greasy” after regaling herself with the food, and not the great-uncle, who in reality feasts on food offerings (Land 14). The narrator maintains: “Pa-ke” is like “the jai [vegetarian dishes] I stuffed into my mouth” (Land 14).

Yet the narrator says that Chinese food and customs bring her indigestion and discomfort (“made me queasy”) (Land 14). Based on a folk and Buddhist belief, the grandaunt serves vegetarian food to court blessing and good fortune for her family. The narrator who does not comprehend her grandaunt’s intention only experiences the bland and hard-to-digest food that she tastes. And, to express her mockery and recalcitrance against the food, the narrator plays with the jai (“pulling the fungus threads / through my teeth like floss”) when her mother “wasn’t looking” (Land 15). Likewise, Song plays with the “f” and “th” sounds across the line break, and readers try the “th” sounds across their teeth.

Nevertheless, as suggested in Wallace Stevens’s poem “Le Monocle de Mon Oncle,” the teasing of traditional values and culture in sounds presents a challenge to a poet seeking an innovative mind: “And so I mocked her [“Mother in heaven”] in magnificent measure. / Or was it that I mocked myself alone?” (10). Borrowing Stevens’s words, I maintain that the narrator in “Pa-ke” is “[I]like a dull scholar” who “behold[s], in love, / [a]n ancient aspect touching a new mind” as she witnesses an old past and the new language battling “[I]like the clashed edges of two words that kill” (13). If as Stevens said in his letters, the rabbi scholar in “Le Monocle de Mon Oncle” is a person “devoted in the extreme to scholarship and at the same time to making some use of it for human purposes,” the narrator in Song’s “Pa-ke” is a female scholar studying the significance of immigrant Chinese culture in contemporary

Hawaiian life and literature (786). Song is deliberately commenting on the differences between Chinese culture and lore in China and immigrant Chinese culture and customs in Hawaii as she employs “Pa-ke” in Hawaiian instead of “Chinese” in English and enlists other words such as “gau,” “mu’u” and “jai” from the Hawaiian language to underscore her intention (Land 14). The double-stressed “Pa-ke” (Chinese) is redolent of its homonym with a single stress on the second syllable, “pa-ke,” “[a] variety of sugar cane” (Pukui and Elbert). Therefore, the smell in the first line connotes both the living presence of the granduncle and of the history of Chinese laborers in Hawaii who worked in sugar cane plantations.

The immigrant life and culture of Uncle Sonny Boy and his generation of Chinese immigrants have dispersed and suffused into sundry ethnic neighborhoods in Hawaii. The Kaka’ako area in Honolulu, a waterfront district adjacent to downtown Honolulu that used to be an ethnic enclave of stores, churches, residence and schools, is now clustered with warehouses, auto repair shops and industrial enterprises (“Kaka’ako”). The poem links the past, the present, and the time before immigration; for example, granduncle’s “apartment, jammed with canned goods / [is] like a warehouse in Kaka’ako / as if for preparation for another communist invasion,” a refugee mentality (Land 15).

It is no coincidence that the poem begins with a process of converting people to place and landscape. The narrator “walk[s] up the stairs” of the great-uncle’s “second-floor apartment,” which overlooks a Chinese ethnic community, vividly portrayed as the narrator sees “old men play checkers / and spit caramel coins of sputum, / sticky as gau” (Land 14). The lingering smell of her granduncle, his cluttered apartment, the old men engaging in a leisurely, old-timer’s game, and the vacuous yellow phlegm suggesting the gau or Chinese rice cake conjure up childhood memories of the ethnic community in already transformed Kaka’ako.

The narrator rejects this distant past of her ethnic roots that cannot be fully grasped but that still float up in her mind and in the Honolulu landscape. Yet as her self-ridicule in presenting half-known customs and ethnic allusions suggests, the narrator also feels embarrassed and perplexed in losing contact with this past in her life and with Hawaiian history. Therefore, in a quite startling break from the descriptions of her granduncle and aunt, near the closing of the poem comes the sudden epiphany of a female artist about artistic freedom and innovation: “Not even their [Chinese] stylized beauty, / perfect as the fragrant paper-whites / promising prosperity, / could make ma Pa-ke” (Land 15). The old paradigm that the narrator jettisons is significantly represented by the pretty “Narcissus Queens” in a calendar that has been hanging “[o]n the walls” of her great-uncle’s apartment for “a decade”

(Land 15). The narrator symbolically is rejecting the historical model of a Chinese aesthetic embodied in the pure, innocent and almost holy beauty of the girl (“modern beatific Kuan Yin” or the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy) wrapped in a traditional fine-cut costume (“in Peking Opera fuchsia cheongsams”) that shows her figure (Land 15). Narcissus flowers are displayed in the houses of Chinese families during Chinese New Year, the time the bulbs bloom into flowers, to invite luck and wealth.

In the last few lines of the poem, the narrator again resists this cultural preference for red and reddish colors which the Chinese think will invite fortune by repudiating “fuchsia” as one of the few right colors (Land 15). While a child, the narrator is requested by her mother to wear “red” before their visit to the granduncle and grandaunt (Land 14). Yet the narrator exhibits an “[u]ncooperative” attitude in climbing slowly up the stairs to the apartment, and while climbing up, she jokes in her mind that her mother’s “lips [are] flaming like an azalea” (Land 14). The poem in the end turns from a remembrance of the great-uncle to a proclamation of a female poet’s own independence in art.

The Girl's Body: My Own Voice

Hancock's idea of the girl is important to the themes of female empowerment and self-determination of several poems including "Blueroses" in Song's latest collection, The Land of Bliss. Hancock uses Artemis as a metaphor for the girl before her entrance into a sexually divided world at puberty. To Hancock, Artemis embodies "feminine strengths" (Girl 189). Hancock maintains that "in real life, we do grow up and [, after adolescence,] make our lives with and among man. If, however, we can carry the virginal girl into the womanly realm and honor ourselves as subjects of our own experience, we can draw on the feminine strengths that this girl harbors and provides, for she is certainly the Artemis in each of us" (189). Song apparently appreciates Hancock's notion of "an independent Artemis, a girl who can manage the forest and all of nature [of the inner secret garden] on her own" because Song cites several lines from The Girl Within as an epigraph for her poem "Blueroses." Hancock's idea of the girl within who serves as a touchstone for the development of the self of an adult woman also rings true in Song's life; Song told her interviewer that her determination to write was made when she was nine years old: "Our family travels started my writing. I guess I was around nine years old when I decided I wanted to be the family chronicler" (Gall 354). As a little girl Song wrote copiously and

made her own magazines and books so that her father had to buy “target paper” from the army to keep up the stationery supply (Gall 354).

Song’s poem “Blueroses” compares the art of writing to the regressing into memories to retrieve the identity a woman had as a girl. “I disappeared into myself, / the solitary act of entering / a work of art” (Land 65). The poem’s epigraph, taken from Hancock’s The Girl Within, also suggests modeling feminine strength on a prepubescent girl: “Nine is the age at which girls left their mothers and entered the service of Artemis, the virgin huntress who resembled a boy in her strength and wildness” (Land 64).

In “Blueroses,” a nine-year-old girl sneaks out alone at midnight to swim in the lake. The situation in which the girl gains a sense of freedom and independence invokes a womb that the narrator reenters as a woman. The girl falls into “a crevice,” “[a] state of mind” in which no one notices her but herself, of “the blue body of water” of the lake she swims in at the dark “midnight” (Land 64). This adventure provides a circumstance in which the adult narrator, a poet, finds the freedom and confidence in her own voice: The poet is “left to” her “own devices” (Land 64).

The recurring color motif of blue that has appeared in “Blueroses,” “Ikebana” and other poems symbolizes artistic freedom in individual expression and often corresponds with episodes about the narrator’s strength and independence. The roses are symbolic of the

poetry the narrator is writing while she, recalling her girlhood experience, reenters her body and regains her own independent, adventurous spirit as a girl: “Blueroses . . . pulled me into the blue body of water / where my body, intact, solitary unto itself, / awakened on a sea of blue-stitched roses,” the words the poet writes in blue ink on paper (Land 64). This art is a registry of women’s lives, “a petal pressed between the torn years” (Land 66). The roses grow when female poets have the liberty to develop their own craft and skills: “Left to our own devices, / we flourished” (Land 65).

Song attempting to gain in her poetry the artistic freedom of a female Asian American poet. In his preface to Breaking Silence (1983), Joseph Bruchac announces that Asian American poets will break “both silence and stereotypes with the affirmation of new songs” (xv). And in the editor’s afterword to Premonitions (2000), Walter K. Lew declares that the new anthology of Asian American and Asian Canadian poetry will complement the absence and critical neglect of voices, forming “a premonition of how poetry might occur once such barriers [raised by personal factors or ‘editorial aversion’] are removed” (576). I argue that in her poems that manifest inbodied girlism, Song is breaking preconceptions about female artists and Asian American poets in Hawaii through the symbolism of the girl’s body. As the poem “The Girl Can Run” fully exemplifies, Song offers a writing that intends

to break the boundary between writing and the body, and that writes the body rather than writing about it.

“The Girl Can Run”

“The Girl Can Run” is primarily concerned with the self-empowerment of a female writer and is presented in a symbolism constructed upon and pertaining to the girl’s body. I call this symbolism embodied girlism. “The Girl Can Run” can be considered an ars poetica for literature produced by women, Asian American poetry, and the writings of the Bamboo Ridge Group. I will examine “The Girl Can Run” closely while referencing other poems, including “Pokanini Girl” and “Stink Eye,” wherever relevant.

Enargeia or verbal reproduction of an image, in this case an image of a girl’s body, is an important feature of “The Girl Can Run.” Just as in “Ikebana,” “The Youngest Daughter” and “Pa-ke,” in “The Girl Can Run” writing is conflated with a female body. Moreover, in these poems, the body is likened to food or associated with dining. The transubstantiation between food and the body is a metaphor of self-empowerment for a female writer, who grows strong on Asian food and within Asian American culture in Hawaii. As “The Girl Can Run” unfolds, a connection between the dinner and the after-dinner chat is gradually established. In the conclusion, the narrator expresses her pride and confidence in her art in

the imagery of the Asian custom of picking one's teeth after meals. The narrator suggests that she completes her works with relative ease like flicking off the food scraps with a toothpick after a sumptuous meal: Her writings are like "[l]ate nights, / after dinner, / feasted and content, / what-flies-off-the-toothpick- / loose-and-careless / chatter" (Land 10).

"The girl can run," the poem's first line proclaims. Yet it is her tongue and words that scurry far: "We marvel / at her tongue" (Land 7). These two lines constitute a refrain throughout the poem. First, a praise of the girl's physical strength lands on this young child's "little / legs" that can carry her out of the bounds of her community ("up over the hill / and out of the town") (Land 7). The girl's mobility is a projection of Song's wide popularity and her national status with readership and influences reaching outside Hawaii. Song is the first Asian American poet and also the first poet who grew up in Hawaii to receive the Yale Series of Young Poets prize (Schultz 267).

Next, the girl is compared to a frog "in the bathhouse" nimbly "lapping up the flies" (Land 7). This imagery refers to a favorite entertainment of the Japanese, that of soaking themselves in a hot spa at home or in bathhouses, which connotes a naked togetherness. The frog with its mouth opening and closing as it dines on flies invites the association of a person with a full tummy yawning intermittently in satisfaction. This animal imagery

establishes the link between the speed of the girls' legs and her tongue, and between her physical and intellectual agility.

The girl's capability to run far indicates a female writer's lofty dreams. The distance of her run also alludes to the higher standards literary critics often hold for a woman's works: "Same little girl who shouted / see me see that star? / She's damned if / she doesn't / make it that far" (Land 7). However, words protect the girl like a suit of armor: "She's hoarded words, / stuffed and stitched / her own tough hide" (Land 7). The poem suggests that a female writer empowers herself with her own writings rather than others' reviews.

A critic who gives bad reviews of the narrator's works is portrayed as an old man who treats her writings as valueless because he cannot understand her writings through his own experiences: "Old man on the porch swing / doesn't give a shit" because he has his "own / noise" or writings to take care of (Land 7-8). Nevertheless, the poem suggests that a female writer grows strong in an adverse environment and creates a literature close to life, depicted in the imagery of a little girl riding a damaged unicycle adroitly: "Little legs, plump and flea-bitten, / pump on the sputter / of heart's broken wheel" (Land 8). The poem's musicality is also expressed in the symbolism of the girl's body and actions; the girl's little legs and "the short / cut" she takes reflect the dominant pattern of short lines. The poem's robust rhythm is constructed by lines that start with a trochaic foot, lines that are stressed and

monosyllabic, and assonance between words about running, speaking and panting including “run,” “tough,” “tongue,” “cut,” and onomatopoeic words “sputter” and “puff” (Land 7-8).

The old man’s criticism hurts the girl’s heart, and thereafter the girl pants while running. Next, the girl scampers (“dance”) past the clotheslines on which an array of her bed-wetting sheets is hung (Land 8). Annoyed by her history of excessive poetic license in presenting them and her ethnic heritage, her family and community air the girl’s dirty laundry too: The girl runs past the sheets and her community: “Mother / screaming fists into sheets. / There! / on the clothesline-- / so shame!-- / everybody can see / all the brown stains” (Land 8). Yet the wayward girl continues to criticize her family, saying that her sister is as dumb as a doll: “Nothing to see inside / her head” (Land 8). And the old man’s scoff returns to her mind, but the girl keeps on running while breathing heavily.

After running out of the town, the girl is now racing back into the township (Land 9). The girl maintains that her words are fabricated stories about her community and suggests that she, full of lies, can be likened to a frog with a belly full of flies, a word that the girl suggests is shortened from “fiction” and “lies”: The girl is like a frog that “bloats immense on flies. / . . . At the heart is the fiction[;] / it’s only flies” (Land 9). Moreover, the girl discloses that her intention is to register in her writings the genuine feelings of her family and culture. The town folks see the girl bolting down the path toward them to get their stories:

“She’ll run us over, / peel the skin of the darkest / berries to steal / the darkest stories” (Land 9). The girl takes the stories of her community into her body and turns these into verse: The girl “[g]obble[s] us up into crumbs and chatter,” people in the town report (Land 10). The narrator’s writings reach the heart of the community, and people are astonished by her works, physically knocked down by the running girl: “We are struck by the marvel of her tongue” (Land 10). Though the girl may have been speaking untruthfully, she has appealed to the heart, driving home her point: “Badly, has she said it?-- / she wants to come home” (Land 9). And the girl requests her reader and community to receive her works now that they are published: “Now it’s spoken-- / has she said it?-- badly, / she wants to come home” (Land 9).

“The Girl Can Run” suggests that art and life contain each other. In this poem, life is compared to dark matter or invisible matter in the cosmos, whose presence scientists deduce from the gravitational pull this matter exerts on light rays, which appear to bend while traveling toward earth (Turner 46). In “The Girl Can Run,” dark matter symbolizes the familial, ethnic, and political histories and cultures that have been propelling the narrator to write: “Invisible matter / carries its own / noise inside / her head,” “gobbling her up” (Land 9). Another poem, “Points of Reference,” also evokes these invisible forces, portraying a woman who attempts to connect herself to the lost segments of cultural history during her star gaze. The narrator of “The Girl Can Run” is a storyteller who is determined to get stories from her

community in her “writing life” presented in the theme of dining. The girl suggests that her words nourish her community in turn: Her writing is “turning stones to bread crumbs” (Land 9). “The Girl Can Run” reflects the tendency in third wave feminism to construct a girlist identity and to use the girl’s body to represent writing. This poem also has a profound bearing on the history of Hawaii, its relationship with the U. S. mainland, the genesis of a local consciousness, and the founding of the Bamboo Ridge Press, and is related to establishing in literature a body that has roots in Hawaii.

Not That White Body: The Massie Case

The term local distinguishes long-time inhabitants of Hawaii from new arrivers, such as tourists and U. S. military personnel, who have less understanding of and identification with Hawaii and its culture. Local is thus a political term, which Hawaiian inhabitants employ to form solidarity among themselves. As Jeff Chang suggests, local is also a word that Asian immigrants use to celebrate pluralism under colonization: “The local defined itself by opposition to America, but could not exist without colonial presence” (8).²⁶ As John P. Rosa points out, this term is a political term settlers use to collapse the differences between themselves and Native Hawaiians, thus obscuring Native Hawaiians’ demands for their rights to the land, water and governance of Hawaii (94).

It is generally agreed, following Hawaiian sociologist Andrew Lind's opinion, that local consciousness took form after the Massie Case from 1931 to 1932 (Rosa 94). In 1931, five youths were accused of raping a white woman, Thalia Massie, who was the wife of a naval officer dispatched to Pearl Harbor (Rosa 95). Owing to conflicting statements and insufficient evidence, the trial ended in a mistrial (Rosa 95). However, the mother and husband of Massie and two naval men kidnapped and killed one of the youths, a Native Hawaiian who had the darkest skin (Rosa 96, 93). Though the jury found the kidnappers guilty of manslaughter, Judge Charles Davis passed down the sentence of ten years of hard labor (Rosa 96). Later, Governor Lawrence Judd converted the punishment to one day, and after serving their one-day terms, the four people absconded to the U. S. mainland (Rosa 96). The Massie Case contributed to the formation of a local consciousness in Hawaii that originated from historical controversies over the privileging of a white body. Song's poems on the body remind her reader of this historical context about the body. Song also criticizes the colonial legacy in Hawaiian academics in Finding a Voice: "Nationally, I don't feel I've come across any obstacles. . . . Ironically, it is locally that the obstacles exist. And I am talking about the small arena of the universities, academic orders, which sometimes I feel is the last bastion of postcolonialism [with] the attitude . . . that if it's mainland and white, it's standard and good, and if it's local and nonwhite, it is substandard and bad."

Likewise, in the poems “Pokanini Girl” and “Stink Eye,” a writer’s recognition of the value of her work is represented by a girl accepting her body. Dedicated to Bamboo Ridge Press’s editors Eric Chok and Darrell Lum and written in Pidgin English, a creole language spoken by non-white residents in Hawaii, “Pokanini Girl” encourages them and affiliated writers to have faith in their writings and not to be afraid of criticism: “Don’t be scared, Pokanini girl. / Nobody going hurt you” (123, 4). “Pokanini Girl” refutes criticisms about the group’s writing quality (“frail”), publishing quantity (“skinny”), assimilationist tendency (“so white”) and clubbishness (“Always in da corner, / stay daydream.”) (Land 3). And the poem affirms the achievement of the Bamboo Ridge Press to publish writings that have “a distinct sensitivity to ethnicity, the environment . . . , a sense of personal lineage and family history, and the use of the sound, the languages, and the vocabulary of island people” (Lum 4).

Written for Tamara Wong Morrison and Song’s daughter Rachel Davenport, “Stink Eye” tells girls to recognize the beauty of their bodies and tells writers to keep writing despite criticism (Land 123). Stink eye, literally a dirty or mean look, refers to people who bully and mistreat others without any sound reasons. In the poem, the mother asks the girls to “wake up” to their own worth: “Stink Eye just no can stand to see / you look so cool. / . . . Stink Eye always looking for more-- / as much as you willing to give” (Land 12, 13). In this

poem, a girl “with the mustache” and “big fat lips” steals the girl’s lipstick because she is jealous of the girl being “cute” and “skinny” (Land 11). “Stink Eye” continues the theme of courage and self-empowerment, invoking the imagery of the Sitting Ghost in Kingston’s The Woman Warrior: “Stink Eye [has] been waiting to sit on your chest, / pounce on your flesh, / [and] squeeze the living air right out of you” (Land 12). The “white” and “skinny” body of the girl in “Pokanini Girl” and “Stink Eye” is a self-determined body and a distinctive revision of the paradigm of the passive, object-like female body one usually encounters in literature (Land 3). Song in “The Girl Can Run,” “Pokanini Girl,” and “Stink Eye” offers another interpretation of the body, literature, and criticism.

In this chapter I have attempted to offer a transnational and intercultural view of the development of feminism and have avoided subsuming diversity under solidarity or under the name of woman. My research on current developments in third wave grassroots and academic American feminism and my reading of Song’s poems on the body have substantiated my argument of the girlist trend in contemporary psychology, third wave American feminist criticism, and contemporary American poetry. In closing, I will return to the issue I raised at the beginning of this chapter, namely, that embodied feminism indicates a deepening of the personal trend in giving more freedom to individual expression. The reading of Song’s poetry I have offered so far points to an important feature of an aesthetic

that values artistic freedom. In these poems, a mixture of Asian, Asian American, and Hawaiian ethos and cultures expressed through a symbolism of the girl's body operates at all three levels--style, language, and context--of the ethnopoetics proposed by Shirley Geok-lin Lim. Nevertheless, despite these communal and ethnic elements, Song's desire to articulate her own voice and to achieve her value as a poet looms large as she presents her own voice through the symbolism of the girl's body seeking self-determination and empowerment (53-55).

Notes

¹ As Helene Shugart says: “For third-wavers, it seems, the political is highly—perhaps entirely—personal” (150).

² Generation X got its name from the title of Douglas Coupland’s 1991 novel and refers to people born after 1960, while Generation Y to the next younger generation (“Generation X”).

³ I am not the only woman asking whether there are people other than women at issue in scholarship on femininity. For example, a forthcoming anthology, What Makes a Man (2004), edited by Rebecca Walker, attempts to bring feminist men, those who have accepted feminism and its tenets, into the scene (“Biography”). However, the girl first made her debut in feminism in the 1990s to contest woman’s status as the sole object of feminist studies.

⁴ In this and in all other chapters, I have wished to write for the future about a new path.

⁵ See Donn Welton’s “Affectivity, Eros and the Body” in Body and Flesh: “Rather[,] the body is an *actional* yet *relational* nexus of constitution with a certain morphology and with certain pathetic intensities and values at play that is not reducible to the field of socially constructed meanings and significance” (201).

⁶ Likewise, Bordo suggests that “theory needn’t be the object of analysis in order for a discussion to qualify as theoretical” while noting that “[w]ork that theorizes about the body through the situation of women, particularly if it makes use of personal experience, has rarely been accorded the privileged status of ‘theory’ ” (86).

⁷ A girl in the Riot Grrrl movement, Lailah talked about establishing girlhood as a separate phase in life: “A lot of times as women or female people, we’re expected to go from

this state of babyhood [directly to womanhood]. We're not really given an in-between. . . . We define it ["the word girl"] and call ourselves what we want for as long as we want" (Rosenberg and Garofalo 839).

⁸ Jessica Rosenberg and Gitana Garofalo explain that DIY ethic is "self-empowerment and independence from authority" (809).

⁹ Gayle Wald defines girl studies, her coined phrase, as "a subgenre of recent academic feminist scholarship that constructs girlhood as a separate, exceptional, and/or pivotal phase in female identity formation" (587)

¹⁰ The innocent verdict in the 1992 Rodney King trial angered a group of young people in their twenties, who formed the Third Wave Foundation activist group to tour around the United States the same year to advocate for voter registration among the lower class (Richards xxiv). According to Amanda D. Lotz, another term, postfeminism, refers more broadly to feminist studies and theories emerging after the second wave but does not indicate the appearance of a trend (4).

¹¹ Other bands include Cold Cold Hearts, Sleater-Kinney, The Third Sex, 7 Year Bitch, and the Macrobiotic Boat (Driscoll 179).

¹² Ann Japenga wrote in The New York Times on November 15, 1992: "And the rise of groups like Bratmobile, Heavens to Betsy, Mecca Normal and Bikini Kill has inspired a larger movement of feminists in their teens and early 20's who call themselves Riot Grrrls. That's girl with an angry 'grrrrowl' " (30).

¹³ Friedmand observes that "the desire to write and publish ideas" and "passion for communication" are within all zine publishers (8).

¹⁴ Sabin and Triggs name their book about fanzines Below Critical Radar.

¹⁵ Moxie had both paper and electronic versions up until February 2001. Interested readers please log onto www.moxiemag.com for latest articles. Writer's Digest has named

Moxie one of the top 25 web sites for writers.

¹⁶ See Marguerite Mroz's review of The Girl Within in Library Journal 114.18 (11/1/1989): 104. See also reviews of the book in Harvard Educational Review 60.3 (Aug. 1990): 385 and in Publishers Weekly 237.36 (9/7/1990): 82.

¹⁷ "However, our studies with young girls reveal the underside of girls' relational experiences" (Meeting 242).

¹⁸ Deborah L. Siegel calls the feminism of Roiphe, Denfeld and Wolf "power feminism," "babe feminism" and "feminism for the majority" (Third 64).

¹⁹ Richards and other people organized Freedom Summer '92 after they heard the Rodney King verdict and thought that something must be done to make their generation "more accountable politically and socially" (xxiv). In August, 1992, 120 young people including Richards traveled across the United States on three buses to register voters (xxiv).

²⁰ Many excellent works on Asian American feminism were published in the 1980s and 1990s. These include but are not limited to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics (1988), Making Waves (1989), Lisa Lowe's Immigrant Acts (1996), Making More Waves (1997), Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire (1997), Yen Le Espiritu's Asian American Women and Men: Labor, Laws, and Love (1997), and Philipa Kafka's (Un)doing the Missionary Position: Gender Asymmetry in Contemporary Asian American Women's Writing (1997).

²¹ Many good books on postcolonial feminism, women's rights and other feminist issues have been published in Taiwan in the 1990s. Limited by the space and the subject of this chapter, I will enumerate a few of these works. Yu-hsiou Huang argues for a new autonomous gender role for women in democratic society (187). Ho faults second wave western academic feminism for producing feminist criticism that has no real effect on changing institutions and prescribes activism rather than literary criticism for Taiwanese

feminism (“Nuxing” 94). Yuan-chen Lee and many others have been working on Taiwanese feminist poetics. Other feminists such as Kuei-fen Chiu research problems of internal colonization, harassment cases with Filipina housemaids, and family disunion caused by investments in China.

²² The biographical information provided in Yobo records that Song’s paternal grandfather Suk Soon Song “arrived in Hawai’i from Chungson on the *American Maru* in 1904,” and her paternal grandmother Bak Pil Chun, a picture bride, came to Hawaii eighteen years later (375).

²³ Anne-Elizabeth Green (page 323) and other critics have pointed out this correlation as well.

²⁴ Part of “One Art” is quoted as an epigraph for School Figures.

²⁵ According to W. D. Alexander, the Malayo-Polynesian family stretches “from Madagascar to the Hawaiian Islands, and from New Zealand to Formosa” (7).

²⁶ This term’s ambivalent attitude toward assimilation is expressed in Sumida’s preface to And the View from the Shore (1991) in which Sumida maintains that the term local is “inherently pluralistic in concept—it abhors assimilation even though there is plenty of evidence of assimilation too in Hawai’i” (xvii).

CHAPTER 3

INTERPOLITICAL: POETICS OF POLITICAL ACTION

W. H. Auden raises the question of the efficacy of the politics of W. B. Yeats's poetry when he addresses the deceased poet: "[M]ad Ireland hurt you into poetry. / Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still, / For poetry makes nothing happen" (248). Auden's "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" suggests that Yeats's "gift survived it all," like the weather of Ireland, but the poem does not directly address the question of whether Yeats's politics matters (248). In the United States, a great deal of critical attention has been accorded to politics in poetry and political poetry in the second half of the twentieth century. Literary formalism in the 1920s and McCarthyism in the late 1940s and 1950s decoupled American poetry and politics; as a consequence, "[p]oetry could no longer successfully address the political" (Thurston 7). However, a greater amount of poetry with political consciousness began to be written in the 1960s by minority poets and poets with a feminist agenda (Thurston 7); since then, poetry has been attributed more agency and influence in life. This chapter will attempt to respond to the hypothesis that "poetry makes nothing happen" in life by examining Puerto Rican American poet Martín Espada's poetics (Auden 248).

While the two previous chapters have explored the agency of the self and the body respectively in boundary crossing, this chapter will study poetry's agency in straddling the borders between art and politics in a poetic theory I named the Poetics of Political Action. I argue that poetry with high political consciousness is an action of cognition that creates a future. Poetry of political action stresses direct action taken by poetry on the page rather than action taken by people in response to the published poems.¹ Poets of political action on the page are neither priests nor prophets but activists in verse who write to the future. Their poetry conveys the belief that poetry has agency in initiating change and reform. Yet this poetics is not necessarily related to a particular political position or ideology. While some poets whose works show signs of this poetics may make use of Marxist social criticism, others do not. Poetry published by Poets Against the War group to protest the war against Iraq can be as highly political as the poetry released by another group, Poets for the War.

My theory, Poetics of Political Action, describes poetry that is political action which creates a future in cognition. This type of poetry exhibits a faith in verse's ability to forge a future for social, cultural or political reforms, a possibility the poetry often describes as already happening. This poetry that "find[s] new ways to make something happen" is the very sort of verse Dana Gioia, now Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, is looking for (Thurston 221). In Can Poetry Matter?: Essays on Poetry and American Culture (1992), Gioia points out that poetry should grow out of the conflicts and bustle of daily life

rather than within creative writing classrooms: “It is time . . . to leave the well-ordered but stuffy classroom, [and] time to restore a vulgar vitality to poetry” (24). Gioia maintains as well that poetry criticism must “speak to and for the general culture,” which the Poetics of Political Action attempts to do: “But if literature is to continue as an important force in American culture, then to reinvent a public idiom capable of serious criticism is a necessary enterprise” (6, xii). To explore the validity of the Poetics of Political Action in contemporary American poetry, first I will explain my theory in the next section and then introduce some globalization theories that I will also employ to analyze Espada’s poetry. After I present Espada’s poetics and its relation to the Nuyorican and Latino poetry tradition, I will treat some of Espada’s political poems using my own and globalization theories to elaborate on their status as modes of political action.

POETICS OF POLITICAL ACTION

Poetry is political in form and is itself a politics, as Michael Davidson suggests: “[W]hat makes poetry is what makes poetry ideological” (qtd. in Thurston 27). My theory, the Poetics of Political Action, suggests that while poetry is itself political, some poems more than others are a cognitive action of creating a political vision, which looks into the future like a time machine by virtue of a political imagination. Poetry of political action is not

coterminous with verse advocating poetic justice, which alludes to an aesthetic rendering of righteousness and equality with no practical effects. More than prophets, which in etymology refers to those who “say before” or predict what will happen, poets writing political action poetry are activists on the page, creating and authoring a future rather than mediating a blueprint already there.

Therefore, poetry of political action transcends the boundaries of time and makes what has not been there occur. Moreover, this global/local poetry surpasses the borders of nations and limits of vast expanse and can be likened to music, an abstract art that can be conjured up at any time and at any place (Espada often relates this poetry to salsa music, drums, trumpets or the radio.). This poetry is an express train in time and a globalization of politics in verse. Just as it is not poetic justice, this political action in poetry is different from global capitalism. As Espada maintains, a political poem “is the poem as an act of political imagination” created by a poet who is a “visionary” (Zapata’s 11). This emphasis on poetry’s impact on life leads us to the next section on the permeation of literature and life in a global society.

GLOBALIZATION THEORIES AND LITERATURE

Most literary critics interpret globalization in its economic, cultural, and political dimensions. For example, Giles Gunn in “Introduction: Globalizing Literary Studies” maintains: “As now used, *globalization* conjures up in many minds a spectacle of instantaneous electronic financial transfers, the depredations of free-market capitalism, the homogenization of culture, and the expansion of Western, by which is usually meant American, political hegemony” (19). Likewise, in his introduction to the special issue of Comparative Literature (Fall 2001), David Leiwei Li points out three domains of globalization: “In economic terms, it can be understood as the worldwide domination of free-market capitalism and its local accommodations and resistances. In political terms, it speaks to the changing nature of the nation-state and the emergence of non-governmental organizations. . . . In cultural terms, it signals an individual’s inevitable mediation with the hegemonic regime of commodification and consumption that either universalizes desires or particularizes traditions” (275). Allison M. Jaggar articulates as well three aspects of globalization in “Is Globalization Good For Women?": “The term ‘globalization’ is currently used to refer to the rapidly accelerating integration of many local and national economies into a single global market, regulated by the World Trade Organization, and to the political and cultural corollaries of this process” (298).

The fourth dimension of globalization is globality as an illusive construct (Jameson “Notes” 54). For instance, without judging globalization as good or evil, Robert Eric Livingston interprets globalization as a “planetary consciousness,” the feelings of proximity on the global scale (145). However, R. Radhakrishnan sees globalization as a pernicious concept which “takes the form of the dismantling of subaltern nationalisms by developed nationalisms” (316). Conversely, sociologist Stephen Castles and Professor of Citizenship Studies Alastair Davidson maintain that globalization can be interpreted as “a common set of values and standards of the Good” founded on human rights and democratic principles (4). With regard to the obvious consequences of globalization, David Harvey proposes the notion of “time-space compression” (Harvey 240); Livingston notes the transformation of “the sense of place” by mediation, and Saskia Sassen propounds “a new geography of centrality [of capital] and marginality” of labor in international financial centers (Livingston 147, Sassen Discontents xxvi).

For decades economists and sociologists have written about and contested globalization, but treatments of globality and globalization theories in literary criticism flourished primarily in the late 1990s. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake published an anthology on global and local mutual reinscription, Global/Local : Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary, in 1996. The Cultures of Globalization, edited by Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, and Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation,

coedited by Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, both appeared in 1998. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's Empire was published in 2000. A special issue of the PMLA, Globalizing Literary Studies, was published in January 2001. A special issue of Comparative Literature, Globalization and the Humanities, was published in Fall 2001. American Quarterly featured an essay by Heinz Ickstadt, "American Studies in an Age of Globalization," in its December 2002 issue.

While these books and articles all offer important insights, I find the "*global/local*" nondualistic notion proposed by Wilson and Dissanayake's edited anthology Global/Local most valuable for understanding the geopolitics and geoculture in Espada's poetry (3). I will discuss as well two sociological books on globalization; these are Saskia Sassen's Globalization and Its Discontents (1998), whose concept of "the global city" I find very useful in understanding Espada's poetry, and Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson's Citizenship and Migration: Globalization and the Politics of Belonging (2000) (Discontents xxix). First, I will discuss these theories, and then I will explore the global/local connections in Espada's poetry in the context of Puerto Rican and American histories and politics.

Global/local Border Crossing

In their introduction to Global/Local, Wilson and Dissanayake maintain: “The nation-state . . . is being undone by this fast imploding heteroglossic interface of the global with the local: what we would here [in this anthology] diversely theorize as the *global/local* nexus” or connections “at the neo-capitalist border” (3, 5). Wilson and Dissanayake see global and local relationships as mutually reinforcing trends: “[C]ultural production and national representation” are “simultaneously becoming more *globalized* (unified around dynamics of capital logic moving across borders) and more *localized* (fragmented into contestatory enclaves of difference, coalition, and resistance) in everyday texture and composition” (1). In Wilson and Dissanayake’s view, the essays in their volume offer narratives about global/local encounters, tracking “the *transnational imaginary*” of the “global/local synergy” (2).

While Wilson and Dissanayake still follow Immanuel Wallerstein’s idea of the “world system” or the “untotalizable totality” in Jameson’s terms, critical attention in their anthology has shifted from the illusory totality to imagined transnational border crossing (Wilson and Dissanayake 5, Cultures xii). Propagating the latest conceptual mode, the anthology seeks to abrogate the power of postmodern and postcolonial criticism: This global/local cognitive horizon “enlivens . . . the textures of everyday life and spaces of subjectivity and reshapes

those contemporary structures of feeling some culture critics all too commonly banalize as ‘postmodern’ or hypertextually consecrate as ‘postcolonial’ resistance” (2). Though still following the “one versus the other” postcolonial construct, critics in the Global/Local anthology direct their attention toward the “*both/and*” condition and the asymmetrical, uneven characteristics of global development: “Global/Local, aims to unsettle the hybridity discourse normative to postcolonial analysis with trenchantly situated readings that stress enduring asymmetries of domination, injustice, racism, class dynamics, and uneven spatial development” (5, 8). While it has been a shared opinion among critics that globalization involves intensified localization as a response to transnational capitalism, culture and politics, Wilson and Dissanayake’s term, the “global/local,” clarifies this critical consensus.

The critics in the Global/Local anthology express the same view as Wilson and Dissanayake do in the introduction. For example, Arif Dirlik suggests that capitalism “is no longer a narrative of the history of Europe” and argues that it has functioned as a global mode that invokes “multiculturalism” or cultural diversification and fragmentation across the globe, affecting not just Europe and the United States but also Asia and other continents (30).

Dirlik uses “Confucian revival” in East Asian countries as an example of a local pragmatic conversion and reconfiguration of traditional values for capitalist aims (30). Dirlik also invokes Percy Barnevik’s phrase “Think globally, act locally” to emphasize local reactions to global capitalism (31).

Echoing the sentiments in the introduction, Mike Featherstone calls attention to “third cultures,” “sets of practices, bodies of knowledge, conventions, and lifestyles which have developed in ways . . . increasingly independent of nation-states,” while reminding people that transnational corporations of the developed countries initiate and control the exchange (60). Featherstone suggests, just as Anthony King says, “globalizing theories are self-representations of the dominant particular” (69). Like Featherstone, Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto and Dana Polan alert the reader to the reinterpretations of spatiality in global/local contexts. Yoshimoto contends that “transnational capitalism has paradoxically given rise to an increasing obsession with place or specific site,” whereas Polan advocates the concept of “globalism’s localism,” which suggests that “each and every local case is readable as” responses to globality (Yoshimoto 107, Polan 259). Addressing the subject more specifically than the previous critics, Ping-hui Liao calls attention to the writers and readers in the global/local interactions, who write and read between worlds: “As hybrid spaces are being created by exiles, migrations, and nomadisms, regions now override national borders and give rise to new forms of transcultural public sphere in which bilingual or diasporic intellectuals move about and write from one world to another” (337).

Denizens of Global Cities

Continuing Lisa Lowe's project in Immigrant Acts (1996) of examining the connections between people, their occupations, and their relationships with laws, Sassen, Castles, and Davidson argue that the cultural and political effects of globalization evolve around the issues of humans as labor and as citizens. Sassen proposes the idea of global cities in an earlier book, The Global City (1991, revised edition 2001), in which she scrutinizes local consequences of global capitalism in cities which emerge as global capital and financial centers: "The global city network is the operational scaffolding of that other fuzzy notion, the global economy" (348). In these global cities, headquarters of TNCs (transnational corporations) manage the flow of capital, conduct financial transactions on a global scale, and execute daily business decisions in the global market. The dispersal of economic activities gives rise to the need for more centralized management and coordination: "[T]he territorial dispersal of current economic activity creates a need for expanded central control and management," Sassen maintains (Global 4). Networking is essential to the eminence of a global city, which forms a financial network with other global cities and acquires its importance from the interrelatedness: "There is no such entity as a single global city" (Global xxi).

Sassen defines a global city in its capabilities of serving the global economy: "The key indicator of global city status is whether a city contains the capacities for servicing,

managing, and financing the global operations of firms and markets” (Global 359). A major indicator of a global city is therefore the number of transnational corporate headquarters within its municipal confines: “[T]he number of headquarters is what specifies a global city” (Global xx-xxi). To serve these headquarters, there has been a concomitant growth in producer services in legal, accounting, financial, managerial consulting, and banking sectors and firms (Global 8, 332). In contrast to the headquarters and producer services, Sassen suggests that there also exist a growing number of low-wage jobs in restaurants, laundry shops, boutiques, hotels, and other stores of luxuries to attend to the daily lives of professionals working in the global cities (Global 9). An enlarging polarization in income inside the global cities, and a decline of manufacturing industries in other cities that are not chosen as global commanding centers, accompany the rise of these global cities. Sassen’s concept of the global city stresses these consequences of globalization as “power and inequality” (Global 351).

In Globalization and Its Discontents, Sassen argues that global cities emerge as places of contestation in the interaction between global capital and transnational labor. Sassen addresses the lopsided developments in urban areas where “overvalorization of corporate capital and the further devalorization of disadvantaged . . . firms and workers” are taking place (xx). Sassen analyzes further “transnational identities and communities” formed within the “contestation, internal differentiation, [and] continuous border crossings” in global

cities (Discontents xxxii, xxxiv). Sassen maintains that while these global cities are transformed as they cater to the needs of global capitalism, marginalized lower-class city dwellers also “have found their voice and are making claims on” these cities (Discontents xxxiv).

In Citizenship and Migration (2000), Castles and Davidson argue that while globalization is an efficient economic mechanism, it is culturally “incapable of giving meaning to people’s lives” (6); therefore, globalization creates a crisis for nation-states, which then are left the task of ameliorating globalization’s impact on the people. In Citizenship and Migration, a nation refers to “a ‘people’ defined on the basis both of belonging to the territory of the state and having a common cultural and ethnic background,” whereas a state refers to “a political system based on secular (and usually democratic) principles, capable of regulating economic and political relations and change” (7-8). Both a cultural and a political construct, a modern nation-state confronts the task of reconciling contradictions within its borders to sustain the polity both as a “cultural” and a “political community” (Castles and Davidson x). Castles and Davidson suggest that replacing the nation “with a democratic state based on open and flexible belonging” offers a solution to this crisis the nation-state faces in the increasingly global society (viii). The nation-state must dispel the old concept of the nation built on the assumption that “there is sufficient cultural homogeneity to allow agreement on the basic rules of conviviality, despite differing

individual and group values” (vii). While they do not explicitly advocate multiculturalism, Castles and Davidson point out the contradictions “between *citizenship* and *nationality*” or, in other words, between the old “notion of the *citizen* as an individual abstracted from cultural characteristics, and that of the *national* as a member of a community with common cultural values” (12). Focusing on immigrant and minority populations and optimistically supporting the nation-state as still the sole political institution “capable of maintaining democratic citizenship,” Castles and Davidson alert modern nation-states to their tendency to radicalize minorities based on cultural differences (15).

Like Sassen, Castles and Davidson also dwell upon subjectivity formation in places affected by globalization, suggesting that people inhabiting global/local areas may cultivate separatist, diasporic, or transcultural consciousness (154). A “separatist consciousness” refers to feelings of not belonging to the society these people are situated in, whereas “diasporic consciousness” refers to feelings of belonging to a particular ethnic group irrespective of the group members’ countries of origin (154). And “transcultural consciousness” builds congeniality across cultural and ethnic identities (154). This construct can be given added flexibility if we recognize that people may espouse one consciousness in a given context and another consciousness in different circumstances.

Foreseeing democracy as the geopolitical form gaining increasing recognition among peoples, Castles and Davidson quote from the 1993 speech delivered by the Secretary

General of the Council of Europe, Catherine Lalumiere, in saying that states “can no longer shelter behind the cozy screen of non-interference” confronting the trend that “[h]uman rights have ceased to belong to the domain of ‘domestic affairs’ ” (210). This last assumption recapitulates a phenomenon in global society as minorities often appeal to transnational legal, cultural, and political NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and networks to redress injustice in their own nation-states. This political interpretation of globalization leads to the next discussion on citizenship on the transnational and global scale in Espada’s poetics.

ESPADA’S POETICS

Puerto Rican American Martín Espada was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1957. Espada received a B. A. in history from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a J. D. in law from Northeastern University. Once “a radio journalist in Nicaragua, . . . a groundskeeper in a minor league ballpark,” “a night desk clerk in a transient hotel, [a] bindery worker in a printing plant, [a] bouncer in a bar, [a] welfare rights paralegal, and [a] tenant lawyer,” Espada is now an Associate Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst where he has taught since 1993 and lives with his wife and son (Rebellion 122, City 89). Espada has published seven poetry collections, including The Immigrant Iceboy’s Bolero (1982), Trumpets from the Islands of Their Eviction (1987),

Rebellion is the Circle of a Lover's Hands (1990), which won the PEN/Revson Fellowship and the Paterson Poetry Prize, City of Coughing and Dead Radiators (1993), Imagine the Angels of Bread (1996), which received an American Book Award, A Mayan Astronomer in Hell's Kitchen: Poems (2000), Alabanza: New and Selected Poems 1982-2002 (2003), and an essay collection, Zapata's Disciple: Essays (1998), which won an Independent Publisher Book Award. Espada has edited both El Coro: A Chorus of Latino and Latina Poetry (1997), which received a Myers Outstanding Book Award, and Poetry Like Bread: Poets of the Political Imagination from Curbstone Press (1994). In collaboration with Camilo Pérez-Bustillo, Espada translated The Blood That Keeps Singing: Selected Poems of Clemente Soto Vélez (1991). Among the awards that Espada has received are the PEN/Voelker Award for Poetry, two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, and a fellowship from the Massachusetts Artists Foundation. Espada was appointed the first Poet Laureate of Northampton, Massachusetts in 2000.² Espada belongs to a group of "Neorican or Nuyorican poets," Puerto Rican American poets writing in English, and was hailed as "*the* Latino poet of his generation" (Vélez 76, "Martín Espada" Norton Poets Online).

Poetry of Advocacy

Ray González suggests that Espada has continued the tradition of political poetry written by Chicano and Puerto Rican poets who were also activists in the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s (“Legacy” 3). Espada acknowledges his connections to poets writing political poetry ranging from Walt Whitman, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Jack Hirschman, Kevin Bowen, Carl Sandburg to Pablo Neruda (“Interview” by Anderson). Espada both writes and edits political poetry, and he has become a controversial figure for writing poems about Mumia Abu-Jamal, a “political prisoner” in Espada’s eyes, and about the nun Dianna Ortíz (“Legacy” 6). A poetry anthology Espada edited, Poetry Like Bread, has been used in high schools to teach political poetry (“Legacy” 6).

Espada defines his poetry as “poetry of advocacy” which speaks “for those who do not get the chance to speak,” and which in subject matter often deals with other people’s experiences rather than centering around events in the narrator’s life (Ratiner 177). “[E]ven when I began writing poetry as a teenager, I was interested in ‘poetry of advocacy.’ I was interested in speaking on behalf of those without an opportunity to be heard. . . . Certainly, being able to observe this perpetuation of silence meant that I felt a responsibility from the beginning to break that silence” (Truth 29). Espada’s poetry, which is for and about the Puerto Rican, Latino and Chicano communities, often deals with experiences of other people rather than the life of the author or the narrator: “In the past, what I’d done most of the time

was to write about other people. And that's the poetry of advocacy" (Ratiner 177).

Espada's poetry of political awareness can also be classified as poetry of political action, a dimension of his work that will be discussed in a later section, "Verse Politics."

Espada started writing poetry at the age of 16 "as a way of defining . . . [and] discovering" himself when he confronted the "frankly hostile, racist" neighborhood he moved to from Brooklyn, New York with his family (Browning).³ The teenage writer soon realized his literary mission as a poet advocate: "Pretty soon I began to write about more than myself and to understand my writing as being outside of myself. That I was, in effect, an advocate" (Browning). Yet Espada's community-based political consciousness emerged even before he started writing, owing to his father's influence: "I had a political awareness before I began to write poetry" (González "Legacy" 3).

Family Tradition

Political activism is a family tradition of the Espadas; Martín Espada's great-grandfather was a leader in a movement demanding Puerto Rican independence (González and Rodríguez). Espada's father, Frank Espada, a Puerto Rican American with dark skin, was a photographer and a leader in the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s in New York where Frank Espada grew up (Zapata's 3, González and Rodríguez). Frank Espada was jailed for a week in 1949 for declining to sit in the back of a Mississippi

bus, and he was arrested again in 1964 at the World's Fair in New York with 800 others at the Scafer Beer Pavilion, which did not hire African Americans or Puerto Ricans (Zapata's 3, González and Rodríguez). It was the second incident that initiated Espada to politics, as Frank Espada started taking his son to political forums and rallies after his release (González and Rodríguez).

Both the father's political activism and his photography inspired his son in his conception of how art is to be interpreted. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Espada's father completed the Puerto Rican Diaspora Project, which consists of a series of photographs about the immigration and life of Puerto Ricans (González 3). The father's project is embedded in Espada's first three poetry collections; the poems of The Immigrant Iceboy's Bolero parallel Frank Espada's photos; on the cover of Trumpets from the Islands of Their Eviction is Frank Espada's photo of a Puerto Rican woman who has returned to Puerto Rico, and Rebellion Is the Circle of a Lover's Hands adopts Frank Espada's photo of a young man with half of his face covered by a Puerto Rican flag as the cover.

From Visions to Changes

Espada in his poetry of advocacy envisages the ways to bring justice to his community. Espada believes that these visions will bring real changes in life:

Today when people talk to me about what is visionary, what is impossible in terms of social change, I always point to them [to Frank Espada's resistance on the bus before desegregation]. . . . When we talk about what cannot be changed in this society, it boils down to a matter of imagination. When someone tells me that we cannot have fundamental social change, that, to me, is a failure of the imagination. Sometimes I have to come full circle back to history in order to point to the future. (Truth 31)

To Espada, political poetry is an outline for reform and redemption, which to him must be imagined in the mind first before any real changes can take place. Espada's argument has been supported by real occurrences in today's politics. "[T]he poet's vision, the vision that made the poet so dangerous" had kept poets out of the White House when the United States verged on a major political decision ("On the 100th").⁴

Espada has explained that his poetry is not about justice but rather the imagined struggle for justice: "From the beginning, I was always interested in the idea of justice, hand in hand with the poetry. To this day, I think that that is probably the single most important idea in my work, not justice per se, but actually the struggle for justice, being able to talk about justice in philosophical terms, in aesthetic terms, in practical terms" (Truth 29). For Espada, poetry is about "the problem of how to make justice" (Truth 29).

The “dignity,” “defiance” and “resilience” of people bring the redemptive spirit into his poetry (Ratiner 178). Espada explains that redemption and transcendence in his poetry originate from the dynamism of the interplay between the desire for justice and the oppression that stamps it (Ratiner 178). The justice Espada’s poetry seeks comprises improvements in the work and financial conditions of Latinos in the United States and political and economic reforms in the commonwealth of Puerto Rico. In poetry and in life, Espada calls for “a culture of conscience” (“A Culture”). This is also the title of the graduation speech he gave at Hampshire College in 2003, in which Espada challenged the new graduates to retain “their passion for justice” (“A Culture”). Espada’s poetry depicts justice in process by presenting true stories in poetic terms that he hopes will awaken the reader’s conscience.

The poetry of advocacy is a voice for and about the community. Espada’s poetry addresses issues of the silent Latino population and in particular the Puerto Rican community in which he grew up; Espada sees this articulation for the community as “part of” his “responsibility as a poet” (Ratiner 177). Espada maintains that he has a distinctive voice in poetry because of his focus on the community: “Puerto Rican poetry in the United States . . . [has always been] reflecting the life of its community rather than the life of an educated elite, the focus of so much ‘mainstream’ poetry” (“Documentaries” 257). Espada’s poetry of advocacy has a different voice from those of mainstream poets because the political and

social reality of the Latino community cannot be elided; Espada once declared that “[b]eing Puerto Rican is a political circumstance” (“Interview” by Anderson). This distinction originates from the exigency a minority poet feels in speaking about issues in his community: “Those of us who have gone on to be a part of the middle class can’t afford to cloak ourselves in the class of privilege. We have to give something back to the community that created us. . . . I can’t afford the luxury of standing still” (González “Legacy” 6). This statement also rings true to many Latino poets and poets who are from the working class and find their inspiration there (González “Legacy” 6). For example, Pablo Neruda once said that his poetry belongs to the working class, and the working class belongs to poetry (González “Legacy” 6). The political action implied in Espada’s poetry also finds resonance in June Jordan’s announcement: “We are the ones we have been waiting for” (“Multiculturalism” 409). Espada’s fleshed-out portraits of Latinos told in his endotopic knowledge of the community have justice inscribed in an advocacy for action.

Espada’s method in presenting his visions is journalistic realism or “poetry of witness,” in Barbara Hoffert’s terms (65). Espada “tell[s] the story as a journalist would” and “give[s] politics or history a human face” by incorporating true incidents, personal and place names, and the times of occurrences in his poems (Ratiner 175, Browning). Concrete details and names establish the poetry’s sincere and persuasive tone and help dismiss the possible criticism that he is stealing the voice of the abject. To Espada, making the political

personal is “the most effective way to write a political poem” because literary journalism draws the reader’s attention to events of injustice that the reader may have grown numb or indifferent to: “And so the challenge for the political artist is how to render that in such a way that people’s sensibilities don’t skip over that scene, so that ultimately they can really empathize with” the people in his stories (González “Legacy” 3, Ratiner 175).

Nuyorican and Latino American Poetry

Espada can be classified as a Nuyorican poet in a strict sense and a poet in the tradition of Latino poetry from a broad perspective. A “Latin Americanist,” Espada extends his concerns outside the Puerto Rican community to people from and in Central America (Truth 36-37). Espada wrote poems that are set in Spain, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Mexico, and other Central American countries as well as in Puerto Rico. Espada’s poetry also often invokes the Mayans, ancient Indians inhabiting what are now Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize, and the Aztec, an ancient people who built an empire in Mexico.

Puerto Ricans were among the wave of Caribbean immigrants who came to New York after World War II (Mohr xi). Espada estimates that about a third of Puerto Rican island inhabitants migrated to the U. S. mainland during the 1950s and 1960s when Operation

Bootstrap failed to industrialize Puerto Rico, and the islands' economy slumped at that time ("Documentaries" 258). Of all Latinos, Puerto Ricans are the most visible in New York because they are American citizens eligible for benefits from the government (Mohr xi).

For early Puerto Rican immigrants, who "used *Nova Yor* or *los Novayores* to refer to" the United States, New York represents the whole of the American experience (Mohr xiv).

Shortened from New York and Rican and with the implications of "not really Puerto Rican," Nuyorican or Neorican was originally a derogative term Puerto Rican islanders used to call Puerto Ricans living in New York ("Documentaries" 258). According to Espada, the term now applies to poetry that is written in mixed English and Spanish, expressed in "clear, direct, and concrete" language used in both African American and Puerto Rican communities, often intended to be recited aloud or "even chanted," and strongly affected by salsa music ("Documentaries" 258-60).⁵ Espada suggests that the Nuyorican literary movement in the United States had acquired prominence "[b]y the early 1970s" ("Documentaries" 258). And most of the works of Nuyorican poets, including Sandra María Esteves, Tato Laviera, Pedro Pietri, Miguel Algarín and others, appeared in Nuyorican Poetry (1975) edited by Miguel Algarín and Miguel Piñero, and Víctor Hernandez Cruz has been loosely associated with the group (Mohr 92, Vélez 76).

Adding momentum to the Nuyorican literary movement, Miguel Algarín in 1973 established the Nuyorican Poets Café to serve poets and a working-class audience, and the

café brought the term wider attention (Griffith xii, Algarín 537). Allen Ginsberg found the café after it opened and brought William Burroughs, Gregory Corso and Lawrence Ferlinghetti along to patronize the place (Algarín 537). The café now also stages plays in addition to having poetry performances and has published its own anthology.

In addition to being part of the Nuyorican movement, Espada is writing consciously within the tradition of Latino poetry, which he discovered in college when his friend lent him a poetry anthology that opened his eyes to the Latino canon:

In college I found for the first time this thing called the canon. . . . The canon was presented as basically the only alternative [consisting of the works of “Pound, Eliot, Yeats, Stevens,” and “Crane”]. I began to question whether what I was doing was poetry at all. Whatever I was writing was not like this in any way. . . . Then one day, a good friend of mine gave me a book called *Latin American Revolutionary Poetry* . . . [which deals with] the sort of social struggle that I had written about from my perspective as a U. S. Latino. But I never before understood that I was part of a history, [and] part of a tradition.

(Browning)

A poet of “the tradition of Latin American poets writing in historical terms,” Espada feels he has a responsibility to bring Puerto Rican and Central American histories to the attention of the people (Ratiner 170). His poetry of advocacy has melded his experiences as

a history major, a tenant lawyer, a speaker for his people, and a poet in the Nuyorican and Latino literary tradition. Though González suggests in his introduction to Touching the Fire (1998) that the twenty-first century will be the most productive era of Latino poetry, Espada feels that Latino poetry has not sold well enough and is not promoted as much as mainstream poetry is by publishers (González 1, Espada Truth 26). Espada's political poetry constitutes his attempt to bring history and politics into life through the power of words.

VERSE POLITICS

Eviction and Conquest

“Trumpets from the Islands of Their Eviction”

“Trumpets from the Islands of Their Eviction,” the title poem of Espada's second poetry collection, documents the intensification of globalization and localism, asymmetries in legal rights, classism, and discrimination as outcomes of globalization within the Puerto Rican American community. The Puerto Rican American community is a global/local site contested by the forces of global capitalism and international politics, as well as individual Puerto Rican Americans. Puerto Rican Americans are transnationals who are not fully American or Puerto Rican since Puerto Rico has remained an unincorporated territory of the

United States (Fernandez et al. xvii). At the end of this poem, the music that represents the visions of these transnationals returns, and these visions create a localism, which makes claims on the global/local Puerto Rican community just as Sassen maintains (Discontents xxxiv).

The “islands” in the poem’s title refer to Puerto Rico, which comprises the main island, Vieques, Culebra, and other islands (“Puerto Rico” 1). The eviction in the title alludes to Puerto Rican migration as a result of the transference of its sovereignty to the United States and economic policies founded on transnational cooperation between the United States and Puerto Rico. These policies developed a transnational economy founded on the networking between U.S. TNCs and Puerto Rican producers rather than on Puerto Rican local industries (Baver 122). This relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico started in 1898 when Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United States. Puerto Ricans became American citizens in 1917, and since then they have been free to travel to and live in the United States (“Puerto Rico” 1). Nearly one million Puerto Ricans moved to the U. S. mainland in the late 1940s following the launch of Operation Bootstrap (Rivas 151, “Puerto Rico” 1). Operation Bootstrap, a program to industrialize Puerto Rico, did not create enough jobs to compensate for jobs lost in agriculture (Baver 22).

The word eviction in the title underscores two themes, eviction and conquest. Evict combines two etymological units, “out” and “to conquer”; other than expulsion from a place,

eviction connotes conquest as well. The first definition of evict in The Oxford English Dictionary is “[t]o recover (property or the title of property)” (“Evict”). The second major use of evict, “[t]o expel (a person) by legal process,” refers to a relocation dictated by laws as in the example of a tenant’s expulsion under a court order (“Evict”). The third definition of evict is “to conquer,” which has military and political implications. And less frequently, evict also means “[t]o vanquish in argument or litigation,” denoting conquest by virtue of language (“Evict”). These definitions of evict create a dynamism throughout much of the poem based on the association between eviction and conquest.⁶ The migration of Puerto Ricans is linked to U. S. colonization and subsequent American influences on the islands’ economic policies. This poem implies that the changes of Puerto Rico’s legal status have initiated the people’s relocation and the process of accelerated globalization and transnationalism in the Puerto Rican communities both on the islands and in the United States. The ending of the poem suggests that a vision constructed in words will triumph over adversities in the status quo.

At the onset of the poem, Puerto Rican immigrants seem to hear the triumphant trumpet music from the distant Caribbean islands; the music evokes a vision of freedom and equal rights. Supplanting capital, the music of trumpets is now the matter that generates transnational exchange between Puerto Rico and the United States: “At the bar two blocks away, / immigrants with Spanish mouths / hear trumpets / from the islands of their eviction”

(Trumpets 17). Like music, the vision lingers in the mind of these immigrants. However, the compelling presence of American laws in the form of patrol cars and arrests also enters the private living spaces of these immigrants: “The music swarms into the barrio / of a refugee’s imagination, / along with predatory squad cars / and bullying handcuffs” (Trumpets 17). These Puerto Rican Americans find that while they have gained refuge from the economic woes of the islands, they still confront certain legal problems in the United States.

The barrios are global/local nexuses whose meanings are contested simultaneously by Puerto Ricans and American laws. The inner-city barrios where these immigrants live emerge as global/local nexuses replete with Puerto Rican cultural representations and political and judicial realities that accompany their dubious legal status and impoverished financial conditions. In the very beginning, the poem focalizes global/local boundary crossing in the private living spaces of the Puerto Rican American community.

The first stanza establishes the Puerto Rican American community as a global/local nexus, while the second stanza emphasizes the legal problems Puerto Rican Americans have with the implication that their fate is a continuous relocation at the request of laws. In the courthouse, the names of the evicted are called out one by one with detailed accounts of the reasons for their ejection. Mrs. Alfaro must leave her residence because she sends the mice she captures to her landlord (Trumpets 17). Daniel, who is in the third grade, is asked to retreat to the back of his classroom because of insufficient English skills (Trumpets 17).

Then, the narrator contrasts Mrs. Alfaro and Daniel with his father and a Puerto Rican farmer who gain their rights to space by a will that does not bend to pressure. The narrator's father is thrown in prison for not conforming to a racist seat assignment on the bus.⁷ Also fighting for a space, a Puerto Rican farmer in Florida insists on his rights to frequent a grocery store though the clerk declines to sell him food on the basis of his race.

These four examples reflect some of the common issues in housing, education, discrimination, and interethnic relationships Puerto Rican Americans confront. Classism evidently exists in Mrs. Alfaro's case where the apartment's sanitary conditions are deficient and fire safety codes (the apartment has "claustrophobic stairs") have not been met (Trumpets 17). Ethnocentrism in not recognizing the worth of another language plays an important role in Daniel's isolation in an educational setting. Unable to consider these sociopolitical and cultural factors, legal and educational systems divest Mrs. Alfaro and Daniel of their rights to remain in their global/local spaces. The father and the farmer are counter examples as they successfully vanquish racism and remain in the places where Puerto Rican and American cultures, economies, and laws converge.

In the third stanza, the narrator connects legal issues in the daily lives of Puerto Rican Americans and the question of legality in international politics and global capitalism. Uprooted from their culture, land, and community on the islands, Puerto Rican Americans who migrate to the U. S. mainland are stripped of their cultural, geographical and communal

representations and are then starkly defined by laws: “We are the ones identified by case number, / summons in the wrong language, / judgment without stay of execution” (Trumpets 17). For example, the court defines Mrs. Alfaro’s rights to her living space in the number of days prescribed by laws but overlooks another number, five children, in Mrs. Alfaro’s life. The narrator relates that the court gives Mrs. Alfaro “thirty days” to move out of the apartment with “the confusion of five children” (Trumpets 17). Mrs. Alfaro and Daniel are two examples of immigrants who have lost their cultural, social, linguistic, and human identities. The poem has withheld the crucial information, that is, the fact that while Puerto Ricans can legally reside in the U. S. mainland, they do not have full political rights as their fellow citizens do (“Puerto Rico” 1). The poem sends a strong political message by remaining silent about this legal issue. The themes of eviction and conquest allude to the tenant-like legal status of Puerto Rican Americans in the United States and in Puerto Rico; Puerto Rican Americans are defined largely by their legal status in terms of the relationships between Puerto Rico and the United States, but as a people, they lack cultural and historical representations.

In the final stanza, the music of the trumpets returns, which Puerto Rican immigrants seem to hear at a bar. At the poem’s close, in their ability to envisage a future, Puerto Rican immigrants assert their rights to the global/local spaces they inhabit: “The sound [of music] scares away devils / like tropical fish / darting between the corals” (Trumpets 18). Devils

refer not just to legal enforcement personnel in the first stanza but also to the bombs fired by the U. S. Navy at the sea near the Puerto Rican island of Vieques (James A9). The colorful tropical fish are set in contrast to the dull-colored, inanimate torpedoes and bombs fired in the Navy's war games in Vieques. The narrator imagines that the music can fend off "devils" and that tropical fish will again swim freely in the seas surrounding Puerto Rico (Trumpets 18).

In 1940, the U. S. Navy acquired 70 percent of the land on Vieques and erected a naval base named Roosevelt Roads (Fernandez et al. xx). The Navy held routine military exercises in Vieques beginning in the 1970s (Barreto 3). Later, because of the islanders' complaints, the U. S. Navy left Vieques in May 2003, closed Roosevelt Roads in March 2004, and relocated its facilities to Mayport, Florida (Carrillo 6). The opening and closing of the navy base on Vieques is more than just a military issue. Amílcar Antonio Barreto suggests that bombing exercises on Vieques constitute a decisive factor in the formation of Puerto Rican "cultural nationalism and ethnic identity" (2). This poem registers the contestations of global/local nexuses by geopolitics, global economy, racism, judicial systems, and educational policies in the United States and on the island of Vieques, unfolding the issues of "power and inequality" in Sassen's terms and asymmetrical developments in Wilson and Dissanayake's concept in these global/local spaces (Sassen Global 351, Wilson and Dissanayake 5, 8).

The pastoral ending creates an elegiac mood as these Puerto Rican Americans long for the agricultural past before the conquest. Operation Bootstrap and changes in laws that allow Puerto Ricans to move freely to and work in U. S. territories caused the great migration to the United States. The late twentieth century witnessed the decline of agriculture, the islands' industrialization, and Puerto Rico's gradual incorporation into the American economy. In the 1940s and 1950s, sugar cane, coffee and tobacco cultivated by small farms were once Puerto Rican's main crops ("Puerto Rico"). The plan to industrialize Puerto Rico, Operation Bootstrap, has been a half failure in the islanders' eyes in its attempt to revive the economy ("Puerto Rico," Rivas 151, Baver 22). Currently, the agricultural sector accounts for around one percent of Puerto Rico's GDP and employs merely 2.3 percent of labor ("Puerto Rico"). Judged from the present economic structure of Puerto Rico, the agricultural past is lost completely.

Today in Puerto Rico, people's lives are increasingly regulated by American laws and policies mainly because of their dependence on welfare stipends (Baver 123). Federal funds have increased sharply since the 1960s from 27 million in 1960 to 716 million in 1980 (Baver 123). Sherrie L. Baver maintains that the funds "mean increasing coverage by U.S. laws and regulations plus increasing participation in U. S. politics" (123). While these funds were allocated primarily to develop the economy and to build infrastructure, by the mid-1970s, most of the funds had been spent on social welfare (Baver 123). As the poem

suggests, Puerto Rican Americans are still negotiating for living spaces in global/local nexuses where legality, geopolitics, military power, and global capitalism have formed a complex picture in an age of globalization.

Visions in Action

“Imagine the Angels of Bread”

Two of Espada’s poems stand out as paradigmatic poems of political action, “Imagine the Angels of Bread” and “For the Jim Crow Mexican Restaurant.” “Imagine the Angels of Bread” is one of the best examples of poetry of political action in which visions are transformed into action. In this poem, the most improbable scenarios unfold as the minorities, immigrants, and the working class obtain the justice they might not even imagine in life. The poem begins with an incantatory refrain, “[t]his is the year,” which foretells the advent of justice in the immediate future. This prediction of the rise of justice in the poem’s opening recurs at the poem’s ending in religious terms when bread, compared to angels who hallow Christ’s tomb and herald His resurrection, will surround the mouths of the disadvantaged in a life of abundance and dignity. Myriad religious expressions make the narrator’s visions about secular happiness sound prophetic and holy.⁸ Religious imagery in this poem strengthens the impression that the narrator has a sturdy faith in his visions.

“This is the year that squatters” who have no rights to the land they settle on “evict landlords,” and the ownership transfers from the owners of the properties to people who have no rights to the land (Angels). Cast in sea imagery, this incident is narrated in a language that mocks the solemnity of the occasion. The squatters are portrayed as “admirals” who look into the distance as if attempting to spot the lands and foresee the future of their adventurous explorations (Angels). The squatters take their view from “the roofdeck” of their dwellings, now theirs and not the landlords’ properties (Angels). This theatrically performed vision about squatters lampoons “the Admiral” Columbus’s proclamation that part of America including Puerto Rico, where Columbus landed in 1493, is the property of Spain despite the long habitation of indigenous Indians across the continent (City 17). This vision also criticizes the legality of international politics.

In the second vision, refugees who shudder in shawls “deport judges,” who wait in lines to be expelled. Both the first and the second visions extend the themes of eviction and conquest in “Trumpets from the Islands of Their Eviction.” Just as people who seek refuge become the judges of their own destinies, so too in the next scenario, law enforcement officials surrender their weapons when laws and the question of legality are futuristically reinterpreted; the police find that their enforcing tools collapse in their hands: “[R]evolvers . . . blister the fingers . . . [,] and nightsticks splinter / in their palms” (Angels).

The next vision brings historical reasons into account, reassessing the authority of the police and the judicial system. In this scenario, the spirits of African Americans who were lynched a hundred years ago return to reconcile with the progeny of their oppressors. As the oppressors' children apologize, these Black people sip coffee as their masters and mistresses used to do in the Big House. This vision suggests that today's laws could be tomorrow's lynching; laws are predicated on historical circumstances and political considerations.⁹

Next, the narrator imagines the day when Mexican immigrants are welcomed with bands and not fenced off with wires and barricades. This is the year that "those / who swim the border's undertow / and shiver in boxcars / are greeted with trumpets and drums" (Angels). As the New York Times reported in June 1995, drought and the sagging Mexican economy drove numerous Mexicans to cross the border for jobs ("Number" 36). These border crossers often become dehydrated while hiding in hot rail cars and sometimes die from train hoppings ("Number"). Their plight is worsened by heartless practices of many smugglers who seal or lock these people in boxcars and tell them that someone will free them at their destinations ("Number").

Another way for Mexicans to cross the border to the United States is to swim across the All-American Canal in California. So many Mexicans drowned while carried off by the canal's undertow that U. S. Attorney General John Ashcroft spoke on migrant safety in June 2001 about maintaining "a safe, orderly [U.S.-Mexican] border" by adding 100 lights, more

search patrol guards, and many vehicles (“Attorney”). As Peter Andreas maintains in Border Games: Policing the U. S.-Mexico Divide (2000), the border between the United States and Mexico has been defined more by enforcing the physical border and less by tightening surveillance on corporations that hire illegal workers (100). The immense pressure of laws on illegal migrants is at odds with the disproportionately light penalty on corporate employers according to Andreas (101). The asymmetries in power and legal rights in these incidents support Wilson and Dissanayake’s opinion that globalization brings about uneven and imbalanced relationships and developments (5, 8).

The poem’s vision anticipates the redefinition of the U. S.-Mexico border when the world is globalized with increasing cooperation and exchange between North and Central American economies. Former U. S. President Bill Clinton in a 1994 speech acknowledged the conflicts in maintaining a strict border control while also encouraging trade pursuant to the North American Free Trade Agreement (Andreas 103). Incumbent U. S. President Bush expressed the same view in 2004, proposing the idea of three-year work permits for these migrant workers (“Amnesty”).

In the next section of the poem, the narrator imagines that workers in the farming and food processing industries exchange roles with their employers. In the narrator’s imagination, farmworkers harvest the deed of the land on which they toil and inherit the cannery in which they work: “[T]he hands pulling tomatoes from the vine / uproot the deeds

to the earth that sprouts the vine, / [and] the hands canning tomatoes / are named in the will / that own the bedlam of the cannery” (Angels). In this vision of political action, laborers have claims on the places of their work rather than being strictly defined by the value of the labor they produce, which they exchange for wages. Calling the cannery “bedlam,” or a state of unruly uproar, is not rhetorical hyperbole about the conditions of farmhands in the U. S. agricultural states. As of 2003, tomato pickers in Immokalee, Florida earned forty cents for every thirty-two-pound bucket they picked, and orange pickers in Florida received around seven dollars for filling a bin with an estimated two thousand oranges (Bowe 106).

According to the Miami Herald, Florida labor contractors deducted smuggling fees from farmworkers’ wages, charged them unfairly for food, housing, and loans, and sometimes threatened the workers with violence. The Miami Herald article also maintains that most of these farmworkers do not speak out about their conditions because most of them are illegal migrant workers and often live miles away from towns (Bowe 107-08).¹⁰

In the poem’s next episode, the narrator offers a vision about the life in retirement of workers of menial jobs: “[T]he eyes / stinging from the poison that purifies toilets / awaken at last to the sight / of a rooster-loud hillside, / pilgrimage of immigrant birth” (Angels). This episode is taken from the true story of Félix Rodríguez, who returned to the verdurous Aibonito in Puerto Rico after working as a janitor in Manhattan for forty-five years (Zapata’s 69). Next, the narrator imagines that people in the lower class will one day live in clean

apartments, will not feel ashamed about depending on welfare, and will no longer confront workplace violence: “[T]his is the year that cockroaches / become extinct. . . . ; / [T]he food stamps / of adolescent mothers / are auctioned like gold doubloons, / and no coin is given to buy machetes / for the next bouquet of severed heads / in coffee plantation country” (Angels).

The last episode critiques Columbus’s tribute system in Española, now the Dominican Republic and Haiti, where Columbus commanded every Taíno Indian over the age of fourteen to contribute a hawk’s bell full of gold every three years (Sale 155); Columbus punished those who could not meet this goal (Sale 155).

The penultimate stanza presents historical evidence about political visions that have come true. The narrator maintains that the abolition of Black slavery began with “a vision of hands without manacles.”¹¹ Since this poem addresses the issue of slave laborers, the imagery of hands gaining freedom is conjured up in this vision. The narrator then suggests that if the closing of Nazi concentration camps started “as imagination of a land” of safety and freedom, the present moment is the time for the realization of his insights (Angels).

The narrator maintains that if the Taínos revolted after knowing that the Spaniards were not immortals, then this is the time to use one’s imagination. By giving these histories, the third stanza raises the hope of seeing the visions in the first and second stanzas become reality; “this is the year” that justice will arrive, the narrator maintains (Angels).

The poem concludes with a final vision predicting a good life for the working class, minorities, and immigrants: “So may every humiliated mouth, / teeth like desecrated headstones, / fill with the angels of bread” (Angels). In this vision, people who are now destitute will one day all be blessed with ample food. An improved living standard for the poor and disadvantaged is also a dream of Espada’s; he hopes that “the war is over, and Zapata’s disciple [his father] is lunching on perfect Brie” (Zapata’s 12).

The poem implies that the improvement of the financial situation of the poem is far from a simple issue in a globalized society. These disadvantaged people’s mouths are “humiliated” for multiple interrelated issues such as a legal status determined by the act of conquest, evictions resulting from colonization, identities defined by laws alone and not by personal attributes and culture, discrimination against Latino immigrants, indentured slavery, menial jobs, workplace violence, and so on (Angels). These people’s impoverishment and violated legal rights are affected by the complex amalgamation of issues involving transnational politics, global economies, and the negotiations between cultures and languages for global/local spaces. Presenting the life of these people as a complex issue in the age of globalization, this poem proposes that only through solving the interrelated problems in housing, employment, the welfare system, legal inequality, and transnational politics can these people be free from classism, racism, and discrimination and reach a better living standard.

“For the Jim Crow Mexican Restaurant”

Jim Crow is a derogatory term that refers to Blacks and their segregation (“Jim”). The term derives from “Jump Jim Crow,” the name of a minstrel show performed by Thomas Dartmouth Rice starting in 1828 and replicated by his imitators (“Jim”). In “For the Jim Crow Mexican Restaurant in Cambridge, Massachusetts Where My Cousin Esteban Was Forbidden to Wait Tables Because He Wears Dreadlocks,” the boss lays off the waiter Esteban on a false pretext, saying that Esteban’s “black dreadlocks” are “unclean” (Mayan 23). In this occasional poem about Esteban, political action unfolds to dispense justice in the narrator’s imagination. First, the narrator lists all the facts with which he establishes his argument to accuse the boss of racial practices. The narrator notes that except for Esteban, the staff and the boss are all White though they all work in the service industry and all wear T-shirts. His cousin Esteban, a “sculptor,” has far more skill than his job demands, rolling tortillas with his artist’s fingers that have the dexterity of ancient cigar workers. The boss, who does not appreciate Esteban’s skill, dismisses Esteban from his job for his African hair style.

In the narrator’s curses on the owner and his restaurant, justice unravels in a series of imagined actions. First, justice is administered to correct racist immigration policies; the INS arrests the wait staff, suspecting that they are illegal immigrants from Canada. Next, the boss is punished for firing Esteban on a false excuse of hygiene; mice leap freely from the

stove during the Board of Health inspection. Then, to show solidarity with the laid off Esteban, the kitchen workers strike and stop tending to the stoves; foods burn, and customers are frightened as the smoke rolls out of the kitchen. Next, the food that will be cooked also rebels, as a Mexican revolutionary “squadron” liberates tortillas from the refrigerator (Mayan 23). Finally, the boss hallucinates because of a guilty conscience and sees dreadlocks coming to life, twisting like vines around his ankles. At the end of the poem, the boss is asked to spell the names of Aztec gods on the menu to acknowledge Latino culture, which he originally uses to promote his economic interests, and to respect the Latino history these ancient deities symbolize.

The poem’s ending refutes the assumption that ethnic culture can be abandoned in the pursuit of profits and economic advantages. Espada maintains that Latino heritage and working class experience are resources he will not relinquish in his art, and in his poetry he pays tribute to the backgrounds in which he grew up. To him, “[p]aying homage is about the acceptance of an inheritance, the refusal to forsake ancestors, community, [and] class” (Zapata’s 7).

The poem also suggests Latino workers’ lack of rights in the workplace. In this poem, Espada associates racial segregation of African Americans from the 1870s to the 1950s with workplace segregation of Latinos founded on physical racial profiling (“Jim”). While Esteban may not be an illegal worker, many Latinos working in the United States are.

Currently U.S. businesses employ eight to twelve million illegal immigrants, and half of them are Mexicans (“Amnesty”). However, as Julie Quiroz-Martínez of The Nation suggests, the two situations are dissimilar; whereas U. S. laws were mostly on the side of African Americans during desegregation, they are not on the side of illegal Latino workers, who are not protected by laws in their work (14).

In contrast to the confidence Espada reveals in “Imagine the Angels of Bread” and his poem on the Mexican restaurant, a few earlier poems convey the powerlessness he feels as a legal aid in Chelsea, Massachusetts. For example, in the poem “Mi Vida: Wings of Fright” about his encounter with a Guatemalan refugee and his daughter, Espada writes about “a bookshelf of prophecy / but a cabinet empty of cures” (City 45). Espada’s despair at his inability to make changes in life reaches a nadir in the poem “City of Coughing and Dead Radiators” which ends with a man yelling “Death to Legal Aid” in the courtroom (City 41). The frustrated narrator in this poem is then haunted in his sleep by shadows of those whom he cannot help in their eviction including the poor, drug addicts, the sexually exploited, and alcoholics.

Espada’s views about the effectiveness of political activism obviously changed with the publication of his fifth book, Imagine the Angels of Bread. In his poem “Thieves of Light,” for example, a lawyer brings light back into the life of a poor woman (Angels 57). Gus the hotel owner cuts off the power to Luisa’s room for as long as three months after

Luisa refuses to pay her rent, which has no hot water and is infested by mice. In this poem, the tenant lawyer obtains a court order and finds a locksmith and an electrician to reconnect electricity for Luisa.

When the lawyer looks at the court order in his hand, he realizes that this case about an ill-behaved landlord and a poor tenant is different from what he has learned in law school: The court order, “like a newspaper to swing at flies, [is] so far from the leatherbound books / of law school” and at variance with “the treatises / on the constitution / of some other country” about basic human rights (Angels 59). The lawyer is obliged to play the role of an intruder and a thief of light for once because the constable will not deliver the summons to the landlord. In the “dim yellow globe” of light, the narrator sees hope in justice again: “[T]here was a light louder than Gus, / so much light / I had to close my eyes” (Angels 59).

Both in his practice of law and in his poetry, Espada attempts to bring justice to his community and the disadvantaged population.¹² “Going to law school was a decision I made because I wanted to realize a commitment to the community, [and] to try and bring some justice to that community,” Espada recalls (Truth 29). As he is “interested in” his “work experience as subject matter for poetry,” Espada also brings his work experience in the law court into his verse (Truth 34). In poems on conquistadors, Espada continues to examine complex issues in law and politics in global/local nexuses.

The Tales of Conquistadors

The Reincarnation of Ponce de León

In “The Governor of Puerto Rico Reveals at His Inaugural That He Is the Reincarnation of Ponce de León,” “Rebellion Is the Circle of a Lover’s Hands (Pellín and Nina),” “Bully,” and “Colibrí,” Espada expresses his own preference for poetry that is closer to the life of the community and shows his opposition to poetry that inclines toward abstraction.

In January 1997, when the pro-statehood Governor Pedro Rosselló held his inauguration ceremony, Espada visited Puerto Rico with his wife and son and wrote the poem “The Governor of Puerto Rico Reveals at His Inaugural That He Is the Reincarnation of Ponce de León” (Zapata’s 58). This poem criticizes the Spanish conquistador Juan Ponce de León’s and former Puerto Rican Governor Rosselló’s zeal for power. In the poem, Espada maintains that conquests are absurd as the poet Carl Sandburg, who was in the Navy that invaded Puerto Rico, suggests (Zapata’s 68). Wherever conquests occur, in Puerto Rico or in the United States, the danger in the thirst for power is the same.

In these poems on conquistadors, Espada suggests that like “the circle of a lover’s hands,” poetry evolves around the community for its subject matter (Rebellion 26). Amiri Baraka maintains that Espada’s poetry “does not necessitate fantasy as its voice, it illuminates

reality” (Rebellion 16). In these poems on both political and aesthetic issues, Espada develops his own opinions about good poetry.

The Spanish explorer and conquistador Juan Ponce de León (1474-1521) was among the first Europeans to reach Puerto Rico in 1493 with others on Columbus’s Second Voyage (Fuson 3, 19, 172).¹³ Learning that there might be gold in Puerto Rico, in 1506 Ponce de León founded the first European settlement in Puerto Rico where he had been the first governor from 1510 to 1512 (Fernandez et al. 264, Fuson 221-22). Ponce de León also named these Caribbean islands Puerto Rico, “rich port” in Spanish, a name which has survived two earlier appellations, San Juan Bautista, given by Columbus, and Borinquén given by the Taínos (Fernandez et al. 265, Fuson 50). Ponce, the second largest city of Puerto Rico, is named after Ponce de León.

Ponce de León conquered and colonized not just Puerto Rico but also Florida. In 1513, commissioned by King Ferdinand II of Spain, Ponce de León sailed to Florida, and based on its verdant vegetation, gave the place its current name, which remains the oldest European name in U. S. geography (“Ponce,” Fuson 116). Though legends suggest that the quest for the fountain of youth was the main reason underlying Ponce de León’s voyage to Florida, research into historical documents suggests that the search for the fountain was mostly the King’s idea (Devereux 89, Fuson 118). Multiple reasons such as Ponce de León’s disagreement with Diego Columbus and the King’s desire to acquire new lands and

resources constituted the motivations for this exploration (Fuson 222, 231). Ponce de León subdued the natives and colonized Florida, becoming the governor of both Bimini and Florida in 1514 (“Ponce”). During an Indian attack, Ponce de León was wounded, and in 1521 he died after retreating to Cuba (Fernandez et al. 265). Florida remained a Spanish colony with the exception of a brief interval until its acquisition by the United States in 1812 and 1817 (Fuson 177).

In the poem, Juan Ponce de León, governor of San Juan, who has subjugated the Indians in Puerto Rico several years ago, now extends his conquest to North America; his gait (“[m]arching through Florida”) and accouterment (“in his armor”) indicate the military purpose of his journey (Mayan 26). Pestered by mosquitoes and almost consumed by thirst, Ponce de León glances toward the sky and remembers San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico. As the governor there, Ponce de León enjoys napping in the croaks of frogs and dreaming about gold mines. Unlike Florida, which has annoying mosquitoes and a climate of parched dryness, San Juan in Puerto Rico calls to mind a land of ecological fecundity (“the mating songs of frogs”) pleasant in evening temperature (the coolness of “dusk”) and abundant in “gold” (Mayan 26). While he teeters on, San Juan curses the fountain of youth, which he will never find in his life; as his swearing implies, this trip is a curse for both the colonized American Indians and the conquistador, who suffers in his search. Now remembering the purpose of his trip, Ponce de León staggers ahead in his armor, slow as “a tortoise” (Mayan

26). In his thirst for the fountain, new land, and power, the noble governor has been reduced to an animal.

Five centuries later, the tongue of Ponce de León that once desired the spring has turned into dust in a tomb situated within the cathedral of San Juan. Yet the craving for power and conquest is revived in the speech of the governor-elect of Puerto Rico. In San Juan, the place where almost four centuries of Spanish colonization began, “the governor announces / that he is the reincarnation / of Juan Ponce de León,” the first European colonizer and governor of Puerto Rico, and that all Puerto Ricans will enjoy prosperity if they drink his spring water (Mayan 27). The governor distributes spring water with his picture on the bottles at his inaugural. Everyone but the governor toasts with the water. The ending suggests that the governor does not believe in his own promises.

In reality, Governor Rosselló delivered his inaugural speech in El Morro where Ponce de León, the first governor of Puerto Rico, was buried. Espada argues that the choice of the place of the ceremony suggests that the governor saw himself as the reincarnation of the great conquistador Ponce de León: “Perhaps Governor Rosselló came to believe that he was Juan Ponce de León, the first governor of Puerto Rico, who died searching for the fountain of youth” (Zapata’s 61). Espada maintains that “this [inauguration] was both a manifestation of power and a parody of power” because the new governor who demonstrated his political power with the deployment of a large number of police and military troops at the ceremony

does not have real power over the islands (Zapata's 62). Just as the poem suggests, the governor who does not have the full authority of the head of a state has in fact a power not much more than that of a "high school principal" (Mayan 27). To Espada, the people lining up as far as eight blocks for a free gift from the governor on Three Kings Day symbolize the nation's dependence on welfare and charity (Zapata's 64, 66-67). In Puerto Rico, transnational U.S. enterprises and franchises have replaced the traditional culture; on January 6 the Three Kings Day, Espada saw along the streets an inflated Pepsi bottle, Burger King's fluttering banners, a Salvation Army van, giant clowns, bands, and scant signs of culture (Zapata's 64).

The fountain of youth in the poem alludes to federal funds and other enterprise incentives, which the nation will now have access to because of the Puerto Rican governor's connections: "[H]e has dipped his smooth hands / in the fountain of youth" (Mayan 27). "[A]ll Puerto Ricans / will live forever / and always have rice and beans," the governor proclaims (Mayan 27). In the poem, the governor tactfully associates "the thirsty conquistador" and himself to strengthen political support for him on the islands (Mayan 27). The industrially packaged water with a label bearing the governor's photo artfully suggests a prospect of industrialization. This poem censures politicians' hunger for power and conquest, while also criticizing the colonial approach to writing poetry. This criticism is

articulated even more clearly in “Rebellion Is the Circle of a Lover’s Hands (Pellín and Nina).”

“Rebellion Is the Circle of a Lover’s Hands (Pellín and Nina)”

This poem was written on the fiftieth anniversary of the Ponce Massacre, in which twenty Puerto Ricans, including two police officers, died and more than a hundred people were injured in a 1937 parade that took place in Ponce, Puerto Rico (Fernandez et al. 265). The police in Ponce fired at unarmed demonstrators when the pro-independence Nationalists held the parade despite the fact that the mayor had rescinded the permit (Fernandez et al. 265). Written from the perspective of a pair of lovers, Pellín and Nina, this poem gives an emotional account of the massacre and establishes the connection between the movement on the islands and social justice in the United States. The poem also compares poetry to a love relationship between the poet and his community.

In the poem, as Nationalist demonstrators gather, with the calm voice of a person from the upper class, the governor commands the mayor of Ponce to withdraw the permit for the parade. In the family history, though not in the national history, it is remembered that on the day of the parade, Pellín with his blood scribbles words of defiance on the sidewalk. While his senses are fading away, Pellín hears the cracking of machine guns and the cries of people running wildly in dispersion. When the news reaches Nina’s house, she is embroidering her

wedding gown and is already aware of what may have happened; meanwhile, Pellín has stopped scrawling on the sidewalk. Many years later, Nina establishes a family in New York and has a son who now worries her because of the guns, deaths, and arrests he talks about. The poem concludes that rebellion is an ongoing process, like the movements of the two lovers' hands.

In an interview, Espada suggests that rebellion is a sign of one's human nature: "[T]he point of the connection [in this poem] is to say that for these individuals, there is an understanding that the struggle is necessary, that the sacrifice is necessary, [and] that resisting what is put upon us is essential to maintaining our humanity" (Ratiner 172). The circular motions of Pellín's hands represent a writer's confrontation with injustice and problems in his writings. The weaving motions of Nina's hands represent activist efforts in the community. Both types of resistance are vital to the survival of the human race: "And so the image of the hands in that poem refers both to Nina's hands, which weave, and to Pellín's hands, which write in blood. But both sets of hands are essential for our resistance and our survival" (Ratiner 172). Espada suggests that the poem explicates the struggle to be human, which has persisted from Puerto Rico to New York: "[P]oetry such as this [poem] provides the individual with some sense of the motion of history, [and with the question] how does that change the way they will behave tomorrow?" (Ratiner 172).

This poem can also be read as Espada's ars poetica. To Espada, poetry should stay away from excessive decorativeness in phrasing and trivial topics and place its emphasis on the everyday life of the common people. A poet of the community does not mince his words about the disruptive history of his subject matter. Espada's political poetry, evoked through acute personal emotions, places a challenge to both language's orderly structure and the tradition of refined verse; the ideal poet "dipped a finger / into the bloody soup of his own body" (Rebellion 24). This poem contrasts the governor's callousness with the fervor of the general public. Pellín's rickety scribble records the chaotic polyvocality of the people in demonstration instead of the voice of the governor: The governor gives his "order with patrician calm" to stop the parade of the crowd, which turns into "the stampede of terrified limbs / and the panicked wail . . . babbling past" Pellín, who is scratching "defiance / in jagged wet letters" (Rebellion 24).

Sometimes public information reduces the resistance poetry poses for language and public history: "[T]he news [about the Ponce Massacre] / halted the circular motion / of his [Pellín's] lover's hands" (Rebellion 24). In contrast, poetry registers the stories and emotions of the community honestly. There is a tacit understanding between poetry, represented by Pellín's writing, and activism in the community, represented by Nina's weaving: Nina "nodded, [and] knew / before she was told" about Pellín's death (Rebellion 24). Many years after the parade, though Nina has moved to another city where the weather

is different, the resistance that is human nature manifests itself in Nina's son in his confrontations with violence, threats, and fear in his community. "[R]ebellion . . . keep[s] moving" and remains the link between a poet's conscience and his community's activism (Rebellion 26).

In another poem, "Bully," resistance is represented by a group of school children who challenge the priggishness of the statue of Theodore Roosevelt. A school replaces Roosevelt's name in its official title with a Spanish surname. The statue of President Roosevelt is conquered by the "army of Spanish-singing children," who "spray graffiti" on his statue (Rebellion 38).

The prudish Roosevelt statue with a "monocle" and a "Victorian mustache" under the siege of a group of playful Hispanic children signifies a shift in poetry's aesthetic (Rebellion 38). These children rebel against the conqueror's primness with energetic daily routines that carry the marks of their Hispanic culture; their daily meals that provide nourishment for their vigorous existence are their ammunitions, and their paintings reflect the continuation of an ancestral native culture: "[B]rown children [are] devouring / the stockpiles of the cafeteria, [and] children [are] painting Taíno ancestors / that leap naked across murals" (Rebellion 38). The poem's closing gives the political vision of rewriting history and the prospect that a poet's resistance to the literary canon represented by the statue will be inscribed in literary

history: “[N]ow children plot to spray graffiti / in parrot-brilliant colors / across the Victorian mustache / and monocle” (Rebellion 38).

“Colibrí”

Another poem, “Colibrí,” also suggests that poetry connects to life, politics, and history. The poem records an occurrence that happened during the vacation Espada and his wife took in Jayuya, Puerto Rico. Lizards in Jayuya remind the narrator of the native Taínos’ “green canoes” that once were scattered over the land. Though the Spanish conquered Jayuya “with iron and words,” naming everything in Spanish, the original name of the natives has been preserved (Rebellion 34). Taíno in the native language means “men of the good,” referring to their gentle and generous nature, as Columbus recorded in his log (Barreiro 31, 38). The art of the Taínos, which they carved on the rocks “in perfect circles of amazement” like “eyes and mouths,” has also remained to this day (Rebellion 34).

The narrator sees a hummingbird, named “colibrí” by the Spaniards, flit about in the hall and beat against the walls of the country estate. In the eye of the narrator, the bird symbolizes “a racing Taíno heart,” which pounds rapidly when the native hears the colonizers’ gunfire (Rebellion 34). A woman reaches her hands out to the frightened bird; her “hands /cup the bird / and lift him through” the window (Rebellion 34, 36). The bird vanishes into the sky, its “paradise,” in the evening songs of frogs (Rebellion 36). The

poem ends with the narrator's epiphany about the connection between the bird and the colonized, and his hope that history is like this woman's hands.

The poem also comments on the state and the Church's cooperation in matters of foreign conquest. In the age of navigation, the Church's conviction that Christian civilization owned the rights of all barbarians it came into contact with provided a rationale for political and military conquests. Applying this religious assertion to political use, Spanish monarchs and European rulers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries announced their sovereignty and jurisdiction over the land of non-Christians (Tyler 98). Spanish rulers at the time founded their claims to foreign territories on the thesis proposed by Henry of Susa, the Spanish Cardinal bishop of Ostia of the thirteenth century (Tyler 98). In his treatise, the bishop maintains that "heathen peoples had their own political jurisdiction and their possessions before Christ came into the world. But when this occurred, all the powers and the rights of dominion held by heathen peoples passed to Christ" (Tyler 98).¹⁴

The Taínos, nonetheless, found ways to resist Spanish domination, and their history can be felt everywhere in Jayuya's landscape. The bananas on the trees look like the Taínos' "multiple green fingers / curling around unseen spears" to fight for their culture (Rebellion 34). The imagery of green lizards and native vessels suggests the rich natural and cultural resources that the Indians possessed. The implication that Taíno culture merged into the natives' natural surroundings is an apt description. As José Barreiro suggests, the Taínos led

an “ecosystemic” life that had great respect for the animals, plants, and natural resources on their land so that they were able to feed the whole population without depleting these resources (35, 31).

Espada suggests that the poem deals with the “legacy of conquest” while paying tribute to his wife, who released the bird, and to “all people who are kind” (Ratiner 179). Espada has hopes of seeing the world become a place of justice and freedom because “people like that [woman] still exist. . . . [I]n spite of everything, we are as human beings still capable of being gentle, still capable of kindness, [and] of generosity” (Ratiner 180). Moreover, Espada maintains that “one of the ways” the oppressed people “resist is to become more human, deliberately choosing to contradict the image of dehumanization which is foisted upon them, by exhibiting those human qualities of dignity and grace and gentleness” (Ratiner 180). The confinement of the hummingbird within the building represents the colonization of the Taínos by Spaniards. The poem suggests that poetry and activism in the community, like the hands of a kind woman, will guide the oppressed people like the Taínos to freedom. As Espada suggests, “Rebellion Is the Circle of a Lover’s Hands,” “Bully,” and “Colibrí” expound his philosophy that resistance illuminates humanity in the disadvantaged.

The New Multicultural Paradigm

“Alabanza”

“Alabanza” commemorates the restaurant staff who belonged to Local 100 of the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees International Union and, during the September 11 attack, were working in the kitchen of the Windows on the World Restaurant located on the 106th floor of Building 1 of the World Trade Center (“World,” Wilhelm). The narrator chants the recurring praise, *Alabanza*, in the style of a *declamador*, a performer of poetry in Latin American plazas (“Documentaries” 260). The repetition of “Alabanza” in each narrative unit expresses the narrator’s respect to the workers. The other musical element in the poem is the Afro-Caribbean salsa music played in the background from the kitchen radio. The music consoles the workers in their daily drudgery and also represents resilience in human nature. Moreover, “Alabanza” suggests a new multicultural model in the metaphor of windows.

The poem begins with a eulogy in Spanish, “Alabanza.” The narrator praises the Anglo-looking Puerto Rican cook who has a clean coiffure and comes from the city of Fajardo where a lighthouse shines over a sea threatened by nature’s destructive power. The narrator praises the cook who wears a cap that commemorates Roberto Clemente, a famous baseball player and relief worker who died in a crash as his plane dropped into the ocean

during a flight that transported cargo to earthquake victims in Nicaragua. On the cook's shoulder, there is a tattoo saying "Oye," which means "hey" or "listen" in Spanish, revealing the cook's gregarious nature (Alabanza 231). The death of Clemente adds one more casualty to the victims associated with the earthquakes in Nicaragua. Like Clemente, the cook's pirate ancestors lived a life of defiance against the power of death symbolized by the dark waves of the sea.

Despite the shadow of these natural disasters, the workers bustle in the kitchen. The narrator praises the radio in the kitchen, which is on before the oven is on, suggesting a priority of spirituality over material gains. The narrator also praises material enjoyments because to Espada, food ("bread") that the kitchen workers prepare constitutes the basis of human life, and this poem pays tribute to the work of the kitchen staff members who sustain the life of others (Alabanza 231, "Then").

The narrator then pays homage to Manhattan with its rising skyscrapers and compares it to Atlantis submerged in the sea, suggesting that Manhattan, like Atlantis, will become a legendary city. This simile likens the crumbling of the two towers to the annihilation of a civilization. Next, the World Trade Center is likened to "an ancient aquarium" through whose windows the workers see their future and the voices of people of diverse cultures and various nations (Alabanza 231). The aquarium imagery connects the poem to Robert

Lowell's poem "For the Union Dead" and suggests that New York still has its cultural vitality and has not been transformed completely into a city of material pleasure.

The narrator then extols the daily work of these workers who get up every morning to prepare food on the stoves, turn on the exhaust fans, and serve the hungry public. The narrator pays respect to the busboy who is doing the dishes and making wonderful music ("the *chime-chime*") in the ears of the narrator (Alabanza 231). The narrator pays tribute to the dishwashing worker who substitutes for a sick person or simply works overtime to provide for his family back in a Caribbean country. The imagery of the altar manifests the holiness of the labor of the kitchen staff: They slit "open cartons to build an altar of cans" and work overtime "to pile the sacks of rice and beans for a family" (Alabanza 231-32). The narrator next praises the waitress who sings the blues while listening to the kitchen radio. The work in the kitchen represents the busy diligence of people in all occupations who work to sustain their families and the nation.

As foreshadowed by the dark sea that buries Clemente and his plane and by the earthquakes that take many lives in Nicaragua, a thunder breaks the windows of the towers; night enters day, and stillness inundates the kitchen once full of music. The stove, like a miniature lighthouse, glows once more to warn the workers of an immediate catastrophe. The narrator compares this calamity to "the bristles of God," which these people only vaguely perceive but cannot understand.

The stove, candles of the lighthouse, and the inflamed airplane carrying Clemente stand for human efforts to resist the power of death despite death's mystery. The victims "flung in constellations" enter history and become part of the myths of this city and cities that will rise on this strip of land in the future (Alabanza 232). These images suggest that people's diligence in sustaining their lives is praiseworthy though they cannot predict or defy death and disasters.

In the next section of the poem, the deaths in Manhattan are likened to casualties in Kabul, Afghanistan as they are all victims for unfathomable reasons. The ghosts from Manhattan then teach the Afghan phantoms their music of peace in Spanish. Espada gained the inspiration for the music from the songs of Christina Olsen, who became a pacifist after her sister died on September 11 and once traveled to Afghanistan to sing songs about peace to the Afghans ("Then").

"Alabanza" suggests that glass windows of the World Trade Center be used as a multicultural paradigm, since Americans now will view the world from a perspective that takes this tragic event into consideration. Multiculturalism in the United States emerged near the end of the twentieth century following the civil rights movement and corresponding with the increasingly diversified American population shaped by large waves of migration from underdeveloped countries ("Multiculturalism"). The concept of American multiculturalism has been reflected in affirmative action measures since the 1970s, and today

multiculturalism in the United States has become part of the strategies and methodologies in education and in all aspects of American life (“Multiculturalism”). In literature, as C. James Trotman suggests, the multicultural approach tends to explore issues of “race, class, culture, gender, and ethnicity” in forgotten social histories often from an interdisciplinary perspective (ix).

In “Alabanza,” the glimpse of Manhattan provides a retrospective view of the partially ruined city, which is likened to “Atlantis glimpsed through the windows of an ancient aquarium,” and a prospect of the nation’s future (231). The immigrant workers can see through the glass windows of the towers to the world outside and hear the music of multiple nations—“*Ecuador, México, Republica Dominicana, Haiti, Yemen, Ghana, [and] Bangladesh*” (*Alabanza* 231). These immigrant workers in the kitchen, a global/local space they occupy, see through the glass windows to a prospect of the multicultural United States.

“Alabanza” examines the theoretical foundation of critical thinking from the perspective of multiculturalism. The poem adopts the model of glass windows instead of the postmodern metaphor of fractured mirrors to describe the gaze. Windows separate the “we” within the building from the “others” outside the windowpanes. The postmodern model recognizes the role of others in the act of rational cognition by stressing self-reflexivity in the subject’s gaze, which is fragmented because the subject attempts to incorporate heterogeneous elements in one’s subjectivity. Slovenian Žižek suggests a parallel construct of

this pluralism in the metaphor of the West's fantasy of the adoring gaze of the East (Žižek 139).¹⁵ Chicano poet Luis J. Rodríguez delimits the disparity between the gaze as fantasy and the multicultural gaze toward others when saying that “[t]he politics of difference are not the same as the politics of ‘the other.’ ” (393). Instead of incorporating diverse people and cultures into a pluralism, the window paradigm in “Alabanza” compares rational thinking to the act of looking out a transparent window into multiple nations and cultures or to hearing “the chant of nations” (Alabanza 231).

At the business hub of the global city New York, the World Trade Center is an emblem of American capitalism and its power extended through the networking of global capitalism, geopolitics, movies and other cultural products, and news agencies. A widely accepted interpretation suggests that the tragic event on September 11 +has created an end to the “age of irony” of literary theories dominated by postmodern deconstructive discourse and suggested a return to reality (Žižek 157).¹⁶ However, in my reading, “Alabanza” broadens the significance of the attack and explains it as the Real confronting humans. The Real is compared earlier in the poem to “the dark saint of the sea,” “the ocean” that buries both Roberto Clemente and the legendary Atlantis, and finally to God who “has no face” (Alabanza 231-32).

“Alabanza” offers a new explication of the multicultural gaze. The glass windows of the World Trade Center are a metaphor for the lens of multiculturalism, a pair of ethical

eyeglasses that see suffering, unattended histories, and many nations in people. This new paradigm revamps an old definition which treats multiculturalism as a sort of cultural pluralism. The new multicultural paradigm in “Alabanza” locates heterogeneous elements, cultural differences, historical ruptures, and people from difference backgrounds outside the subject. “Alabanza” is of great significance to the Poetics of Political Action because “Alabanza” comments on a new multicultural gaze that is formed after a confrontation with the Real, the subject of poetry of political action. Žižek explains the Real in Lacanian theories as human freedom confronting inexplicable catastrophes: “Real is, rather, freedom as a radical cut in the texture of reality” (166). An example of immense human suffering can be found in the story of Job in the Bible, and September 11 is another instance of the Real. According to Žižek, these disasters bring anxiety into human consciousness because of our awareness of our freedom and agency in these events over which we have little power of control: “[T]he true anxiety is caused by the awareness that we did a free act” (166). To Žižek, this awakening to our freedom is the very birth of ethics (165).¹⁷

Rodríguez suggests that for minority poets, poems are written “not just to speak fluently, but to reveal,” and that “[p]oems now lose their decorative value. In some cases they become the place to get the real news of what’s going on” (399). Not merely written to reveal, “Alabanza” brings the issue of ethics in poetry to people’s attention in the figure of the human confrontation of the Real. This poem offers a new interpretation of

multiculturalism described in the poem as a community of people looking through glass windows to multiple communities, appreciating their differences or reflecting on their suffering.

In closing, I would like to return to the issue I raised in the beginning of the chapter about the validity of poetry in contemporary global society and comment on the hypothesis that “poetry makes nothing happen” (Auden 248). Auden’s question is founded on a modernist dissociation of poetry and reality, on the assumption that there is a clear demarcation between the two. However, literary critics and the general public today tend to believe that the borderline between poetry and life is rather tenuous and is constantly being redefined. For instance, in an article written for the special issue of the PMLA (2001) on globalizing literary studies, Stephen Greenblatt remarks on the transformation of the field of English literature, and his comments serve well to explicate the problematic in the poetry-reality divide: “We need to understand colonization, exile, emigration, wandering, contamination, and unexpected consequences, along with the fierce compulsions of greed, longing, and restlessness, for it is these disruptive forces, not a rooted sense of cultural legitimacy, that principally shape the history and diffusion of languages. Language . . . does not respect borders” (62). The Poetics of Political Action exemplified in Espada’s imaginative poetry is part of the language Greenblatt suggests.

Espada's poetry of political action addresses an audience in the future and offers a vision, which the poet believes is not only real but is enacted in the very moment when the eyes meet the words. The globalizing trend that has affected politics, culture, language, economy, and our daily lives likewise exists within the domain of literature. Wilson and Dissanayake's global/local concept explains the visionary interregnum Espada's poetry suggests. Sassen's notion of the global city as global/local space recapitulates the continuing negotiations between globalism and localism in Espada's poetry. Chapter Two examines the trend that the personal is increasingly the political in the fields of feminist and body theories. This chapter explores the idea in Cynthia Enloe's remark that "the personal is international" (196). This chapter has been concerned more with transnational and global/local phenomena than with people's diaspora because being a second-generation Latino American, Espada's poetry suggests the former more than the latter. Espada's role as a poet advocate explains the poet as deeply immersed in his family and communal experiences. His early poem "Trumpets from the Islands of Their Eviction" sets the basic tone of eviction and conquest Espada will explore in his later works. "Imagine the Angels of Bread" and "For the Jim Crow Mexican Restaurant in Cambridge, Massachusetts Where My Cousin Esteban Was Forbidden to Wait Tables Because He Wears Dreadlocks" illustrate the vivid performance of poetic visions; most unlikely scenarios happen, such as bread flying around like angels, and tortillas, like a liberated people, jumping out of a refrigerator. "The

Governor of Puerto Rico Reveals at His Inaugural That He Is the Reincarnation of Ponce de León” and other poems criticize conquests and poetry replete with abstraction. “Rebellion Is the Circle of a Lover’s Hands (Pellín and Nina)” emerges as Espada’s ars poetica about the intimate connection between the poet and his community; the metaphor of poetry as the lover’s hands also appears in the poem “Colibrí.” In a recent poem, “Alabanza,” the issues of eviction, conquest, community, history, localism, and globalization all come together to form the metaphor of glass windows, which this poem proposes as the new paradigm for multiculturalism, as people see through the windows to their future of the polysemous and polyvocal nations within one state and treat other people and cultures as something resembling the Lacanian Real.

The Spanish novelist Nuria Amat maintains that “[t]he writer is a language dissident” (191). To Amat, avant-gardism “consists of continuing to write despite the uselessness of writing” (196). The rebellion and resistance in Espada’s poetry about his imaginary and cultural communities in global/local nexuses in this global society confirm what Amat has said. In poetry of political action, the border between poetry and politics is erased, shifted, redefined, and contested; this border no longer remains at the place where literary critics used to discover it.

Notes

¹ For example, the 1998 journey of the director of the American Poetry & Literacy Project Andrew Carroll is a political action about poetry. Carroll gave out 100,000 free copies of poems in 1998 while driving from New York to San Francisco in a trip called “The Great APLseed Giveaway” (Lee).

² Biographical information about Espada is taken from Espada’s poetry collections and from his biography on the website of Online Poetry Classroom.

³ Espada recalls his high school life in New York as racism-fraught: “In a Long Island high school, . . . I faced racial obscenities everywhere, spray-painted on my locker and even scrawled in the icing on a cake. . . . Not coincidentally, at this time I began to write poetry, as an attempt to explain myself to myself” (Zapata’s 5).

⁴ This incident refers to Laura Bush’s cancellation of a White House poetry symposium that was originally scheduled on February 12, 2003 (Scharf 29).

⁵ Eugene V. Mohr holds the same view as Espada does. See the chapter on Nuyorican poetry in Mohr’s The Nuyorican Experience.

⁶ Thomas Fink suggests that the notion of eviction is “central to the problem of Puerto Rican in/visibility on the mainland” (205).

⁷ This episode is modeled on Espada’s father’s experience of racism and imprisonment. According to Espada, once out of the prison, his father sat in the front of the bus again (Zapata’s 29).

⁸ Heather Zadra suggests too that the ending is about redemption “through a secular resurrection, a rising up not of Christ, but of the people.”

⁹ Political activism that traditionally employs protests and demonstrations as venues of expression often has to deal with police forces that are sent to maintain the order on these occasions. As Espada suggests in his poem “Imagine the Angels of Bread,” in his

acceptance speech of the 2003 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, activist Lucas Benitez maintains that there is confusion as to where laws stand on occasions when people seek justice through political activism: “Yet today, we stand here in this historic city [Washington, D.C.] . . . receiving this prestigious award for our work in defense of human rights. . . . Truth is, my compañeros and I are confused. It’s hard for us to understand in which of the two worlds we actually live—in the world where the voice of the poor is feared and protest in defense of human rights is considered the gravest of threats to public security? Or in the world where the defense of human rights is celebrated and encouraged in the pursuit of a more just and equitable society?” (“Coalition”). Benitez said that the demonstrators of the 2002 Taco Bell Truth Tour were cordoned by a large number of police forces: “We marched into downtown Miami surrounded by nearly 3,000 police in riot gear, mounted police, police on bicycles, police on foot, police in helicopters hovering above Miami’s skyline, their propellers beating out the soundtrack to what seemed to us like a movie about martial law in the U.S.” (“Coalition”).

¹⁰ Farmworkers in Immokalee, Florida established the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, which reported oppressions of farmhands to the authorities. A dozen Florida labor contractors, smugglers and other people involved in slaving and exploiting farmworkers were already sentenced to jail (Greene). The coalition held the Taco Bell Truth Tour in 2002 and the Taco Bell Truth Tour in March 2004; in 2004, demonstrators marched to and rallied at Taco Bell’s headquarters in Irvine, California (“Coalition”). The marches informed the public about farmworkers’ harsh working conditions and revealed the connections between corporate exploitation and mistreatments of farmhands in the fields (“Coalition”).

¹¹ According to Espada, the vision is also Whitman’s in the poem “I Sing the Body Electric” in which the poet sees the future in a slave at auction: “This is not only one man, this is the father of those who shall be fathers in their turns” (Zapata’s 105-06, Whitman 85)

¹² Rivas maintains that Espada's poetry "continues to focus on the community from which he has sprung—the young and growing Latino community of Boston, and the homeland" (151).

¹³ Conquistadors refer to the Spanish who conquered Mexico and Peru in the sixteenth century.

¹⁴ Columbus's name means literally "Christ-bearing colonizer" (Barreiro 30).

¹⁵ "What ultimately fascinated the political classes, and even the wider public, in the West was the fascinated gaze of the East towards the West. This is the structure of fantasy" (Žižek 139).

¹⁶ Sociology professor Slavoj Žižek, though, does not agree with this interpretation (158).

¹⁷ The Real "happens, but it's too traumatic to assume. Let's say that the ethical act is [the] Real" (Žižek 165).

CONCLUSION

Interpoetics in Multicultural Society in the Age of Globalization

Bruce Robbins's and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essays in Cosmopolitics represent two divergent positions about the concept of globalization. Robbins regards globalization as a cosmopolitanism that is the antithesis of nationalism (4). Unlike Robbins, when Spivak discusses the unpaid labor of women at home, she focuses on the significance of personal experiences in public and global spheres: "We must keep trying to deconstruct the breach between home and work in the ideology of our global struggle to reach this female bottom layer that holds up contemporary global capital" (342). Spivak's argument that women's work at home is indistinguishable from office work can be used as a metaphor for boundary crossing in poetry (332). This dissertation interprets globalization less as the outcome of global capitalism and its conflicts with nationalism and more as a multiculturalism in critical thinking including intercultural, interlinguistic or any other attempts to associate and also to redefine disciplines or concepts.

The global multiculturalism in the poetry of Lo Fu, Graham, Song and Espada constitutes these poets' responses to polemics in poetry or in their national or global culture, history, and politics. For example, in Lo Fu's Driftwood, to defy the constraints nationalism

and nativism place on the mind, in his imaginative contemplation, the narrator roams among Chan, Taoism, and the reality. In Lo Fu's Driftwood, Buddhist and Taoist nondualism has given the self the liberty the poetic mind needs for intellectual activities.

Graham's works question the Enlightenment mind frame in contemporary poetry in figurative language and imagined stories; her narrator expresses skepticism in Christology; in her poems, Eve questions the androcentric history in the Bible, and her narrator finds the progression of her life at odds with linear narrative. To salvage these situations, Graham presents the narrator in negotiations with thingness in nature in "The Dream of the Unified Field," or in interaction with a puppet in the poem "High Tide." The other remedial measure Graham has taken is to include time as a factor and delineate the transfiguration of the self in time. In their poetry, Lo Fu and Graham attempt to create a lyric voice with enough liberty to articulate life's complexity.

Like confessional poetry in the 1960s, American poetry today continues to explore the frontiers between the personal and the political, and between the personal and the international.¹ In Song's poetry, for example, the body and poetry are mutually permeable. Her poems register the narrator's body schema as a metaphor of the art of poetry, which is composed of interwoven physical perceptions and psychological sensations. Song's poetry calls for a theory of the body to explain the experience of female physicality. My theory of

inbodied feminism explicates Song's poetry about the body and explains her verse as part of third wave American feminism's promotion of self-determination and empowerment.

The third chapter examines the interchangeability between poetry and politics in Espada's political poetry. Poetry has generally been considered as dissociated from life and from reality. In response to this misperception, Espada's poems, in Maxine Kumin's words, put the art of poetry back "in the public eye," attesting to poetry's connection to life and to its power in pressing for social changes (155). Advocating for Latinos, immigrants, and the working class in the United States, Espada's poems treat the inequality and asymmetrical developments in globalization as well as the voice of localism in global/local spaces.

In a global and multicultural world, these poets have formed various agenda to test new writing methods and to produce new concepts. These innovative efforts vary from "an empty bottle . . . singing with an open mouth" on the ocean in Lo Fu's Driftwood, to Graham's criticism of the desire for closure ("Are you still waiting for the true story? (God's laughter)[.]"), to Song's protest of censorship imposed on the body (Moving out of the pineapple fields "meant we couldn't wear anything purple[.]"), and finally to Espada's agony of the loss of history unrecorded ("The river cannot testify to all the names[.]") (Lo Fu 23, Graham Swarm 12, Song Bliss 6, Espada Mayan 80).² If the world is striated by power as Michel Foucault suggests, then, in the words of Louise Glück, the poet with an interpoetic

inclination is “the child” who “choose[s] / her own punishment” or agenda of transgression (Glück 48).

Puerto Rican American poet Judith Ortiz Cofer says that Puerto Ricans “do not adjust the volume [of salsa music]; they conduct their business above it” (51). The multicultural poetry of Lo Fu, Graham, Song, and Espada is like the music that blends into life and other disciplines. The poems examined suggest that far from an irrelevant art, multicultural poetry in global society has been radically inscribed in life, other domains, and fields.

Notes

¹ A. Poulin, Jr. traces the radical tradition of contemporary American poetry back to the confessional school founded by Robert Lowell and other poets in whose works personal lives take on public and political significance (648).

² “一只空瓶子……張著嘴 唱歌[.]”

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