

Projective Citizenship—

The Reimagining of the Citizen in Post-War American Poetry

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the work of four poets writing in a projective or “open field” tradition in post-war America: Charles Olson, Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones, Susan Howe, and Myung Mi Kim. It considers the way these poets engage, via innovations in poetic form, with conceptions of the citizen and meanings of citizenship at different historical moments in the United States. Drawing on recent developments in citizenship theory which have focussed on what Engin Isin calls “acts of citizenship,” “Projective Citizenship—The Reimagining of the Citizen in Post-War American Poetry” suggests that poetry might offer a means for imagining alternative notions of the citizen, conceiving of citizens as active agents rather than passive subjects.

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## Preface

This dissertation emerges from a question posed by Charles Olson in the 1950s. In the early letter-poems of his Gloucester-based epic, *Maximus*, Olson/Maximus asks, “Who can say who are / citizens?” As the following pages demonstrate, that question was then (and continues to be now) part of wider debates over what citizenship meant and who had the power to define the citizen’s status.

The premise of this dissertation is that poets have long attempted to engage with public discourse about citizenship, in part through making visible the workings of governmental versions of “the citizen.” I consider a particular historical place and time—the United States in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—in order to show how poets Charles Olson, LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Susan Howe, and Myung Mi Kim have used the poem not just to address themes pertinent to citizenship but also to offer methodologies by which the citizen might differently constitute him- or herself. These poets, working within the innovative tradition of Open Field/Projective poetics, employ non-traditional forms and fragmented existing texts in order to show how citizenship often comes into being as a normative script to which citizens are subject and which they are complicit in sustaining. By disrupting such scripts within their poems, these poets participated in historical and contemporary discourses over citizenship in order to imagine new possibilities for the citizen through their creative acts.

My arguments draw on recent work in citizenship studies that recognize a need to understand citizen status outside of traditional conceptions of rights, responsibilities, fixed borders, ethnic affiliation, place of birth, and so on. Various theorists, including Engin Isin, Melanie White, and Étienne Balibar, have begun to privilege the acts that constitute the citizen rather than the definitions that delimit inclusion and exclusion. While citizenship, in its narrowest sense, is a

governmental, legislative category, designating an individual to whom a state has accorded a set of rights and responsibilities (voting, paying taxes, serving on juries, the expectation of a fair trial and due process), such theorists have shown that citizenship more fully relies on a set of narratives told to, about, and by citizens.

Although citizenship is an essential category, the means by which an individual can rely on the protection of her government in a time of crisis, and through which she can expect to participate in the construction and maintenance of her society, it is experienced unequally. On one level, this inequality arises from the fact that some are born into citizenship while others apply for it; in a recent speech as part of the Zócalo Public Square/Cal Humanities' "Searching for Democracy" series, former Clinton-speechwriter Eric Liu wondered, "What if every single one of us today had to earn our citizenship in some form or fashion?" (April 5, 2012). Additionally, beyond a rhetoric of whether citizenship is innate or earned, race, gender, and class govern the expectations of the state and of other citizens; historical factors and perceptions of appearance or behavior can determine how one is seen inside or outside citizen status, as Devon Carbado and others have shown.

In her 2007 essay, "Borders of the Body: Black Women, Sexual Assault, and Citizenship," Toni Irving records the then-definition of citizenship from the United States Citizenship and Immigration website: "a native-born, foreign-born, or naturalized person who owes allegiance to the United States and who is entitled to its protection." That definition inscribes three categories within citizen status; they are not mutually exclusive (one can be foreign-born and naturalized) and the separation between these statuses allows for an assumption of difference within citizenship that has historically been used to discriminate the kinds of protection different classes of citizen are afforded. American citizens of Japanese affiliation during World War II, for example, were

treated as hostile to the country of which they were citizens; they experienced citizenship not as a protection but as a technology of surveillance, suspicion, and control.

Within the pages of this dissertation, I explore how Olson, Jones/Baraka, Howe, and Kim have reacted to similar failures of citizenship in order to insist on the citizen's ability to articulate his/her relationship to citizen status. Since citizenship remains subject to revision by government, it becomes useful as a status not by virtue of its possession but by virtue of our ability to articulate and give meaning to it. The poets I examine within this dissertation react to normative scripts of citizenship by employing innovative poetics—that is, writing which tests, questions, and at times obviates inherited laws and forms, turning instead to its own content and concerns—in order to offer alternative conceptions of citizen status. In so doing, they contribute to a public discourse over citizenship by allowing us to re-imagine who citizens are, how they behave, and why they are necessary.

A central premise of this dissertation is that citizenship involves making decisions about how to act with and towards others, often against hierarchies and pre-determined scripts. This premise involves moving away from a passive conception of “being” a citizen and towards an understanding of the participatory acts through which citizens relate to others and to the state. The citizen, conceived in this way, is a creative agent, and especially so where his or her citizenship is denied or weakened. This dissertation, therefore, is about the beliefs of a set of American poets working in experimental traditions who sought to make visible limitations placed upon citizenship—who used their written acts to interrupt existing scripts of citizenship and so to suggest plural manifestations of citizen status.



He must have worked all night.  
What he imagined was a vanishing point,  
A tenacious correspondence between diverse spheres.

Or rather, a kind of serenity [eue'maneria, beautiful day]  
The new politics which remains largely to be invented.

—David Herd

## Creative Acts of Poetry:

### The Bollingen Prize, the Citizen-Poet, and Projective Citizenship

If we are visited in our state by someone who has the skill to transform himself into all sorts of characters and represent all sorts of things, and he wants to show off himself and his poems to us, we shall treat him with all the reverence due to a priest and giver of rare pleasure, but shall tell him that he and his kind have no place in our city, their presence being forbidden by our code, and send him elsewhere, after anointing him with myrrh and crowning him with fillets of wool. For ourselves, we shall for our own good employ story-tellers and poets who are severe rather than amusing, who portray the style of the good man and in their works abide by the principles we laid down for them when we started out.

—Plato, 3.398a-b, 157.

## Exiling the Transformative Poet

The banishment of the poets from the city is ages old, and ambiguous. In Book III of *The Republic*, Plato has Socrates lead Glaucon a merry verbal dance which recruits him to an enthusiastic exiling of the transformative poet—the poet who would pretend he is Achilles—while accepting the severe, conservative poet, the poet who would describe Achilles’s deeds. Although Plato allows certain kinds of poetry to stay, and although he reverently honours the transformative poets, he establishes an opposition between the state (or its law codes) and the poet. Those poets allowed to remain are complicit in the state; they may write only according to certain prescribed principles. *The Republic* may be thought of as calling into being city-space, imagining ideal dimensions to the city as an allegory for political life whether lived in the city or not.<sup>1</sup> *The Republic* certainly places the poet in a fundamentally political role as regards his or her citizenship. Within the city-space only certain kinds of poetry, certain kinds of poets, are allowed to exist; citizens must be protected by the state from poets who would mislead them.<sup>2</sup>

In 2005, citizenship theorist Engin Isin ended a defence of his monograph *Being Political: Genealogies of Citizenship* by lamenting the absence of attention to poetry and poetics in citizenship theory.<sup>3</sup> *Being Political* forms “part of a larger body of work that suggests a way of investigating citizenship historically as a generalized problem of otherness” (2005, 374); it situates claims about citizenship not just in terms of the development of the idea of the city from polis to cosmopolis but in the context of poets from Hesiod to Brecht through Dante and Rimbaud. Yet Isin cast his own understanding of citizenship as hampered by “the limits of my expression”; he felt “it would certainly be different if I were a poet,” concluding:

I have come to realize that throughout centuries and across cultures poetic expressions were much more able to penetrate the essence of the political than other forms of expression. There is something about poetic articulation that captures the essence of the political while other forms of expression get tangled up with politics. I feel we have only glimpsed the deep affinities between poetics, polis and the political. (386-7)

Claiming a specialist status for “poetic articulation” (as Plato had, albeit to different ends), Isin hinted at a distinction between the political as a domain of action versus politics as the rehearsal of routine; he placed poetry at the site of the former. His triangulation of “poetics, polis, and the political” argued that within the originary space of citizenship the creation of art is linked to, and might constitute an active engagement with, structures of power. In this view, poetry offers a specialised medium for handling political questions about the relationship between the individual and the state, as well as for exploring the city as a persisting site of citizenship. Poems, as “moments where the relationship between citizenship and alterity is transformed” can record and even achieve change in the statuses of citizen and non-citizen (2002, 284).

The challenge offered by Isin in these remarks remains largely unanswered. Poetry continues to remain outside the purview of citizenship studies, for the most part, while critical studies of poetry have only recently turned to consider the citizen and citizenship.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, those critics who have considered these terms have opened up some important areas of analysis. Alan

Filreis' archival research has made visible the extent to which poetry was conscripted into citizenship debates, as well as debates over American identity, between the 1930s and the 1950s; to some extent, this dissertation begins where his book *Counter-revolution of the Word* (2008) left off.<sup>5</sup> Susan Vanderborg's suggestion that "Olson saw a polis whose borders would be flexible enough to include multiple textual formulations of citizenship" (2001, 56) argues for the poetic text's ability to register and intervene in the understanding of citizen status.<sup>6</sup> Eric Keenaghan's *Queering Cold War Poetry* (2009) connects poetic strategies to the individual's experience of citizenship within governmental structures, examining the relationship between "poetic disclosure" and "regimes of power that produce heteronormative citizens" (12).<sup>7</sup> These analyses of poetry and citizenship can be situated within a wider turn to the citizen as an analytic category within scholarly discourse: in the opening sentence of his historical account of *Theatre and Citizenship*, David Wiles points out that "citizenship is the preoccupation of today" (2011, 1).<sup>8</sup>

This dissertation is an attempt to take up Isin's challenge by bridging citizenship studies and poetic analysis in part through careful attention to the formal as well as thematic dimensions of several poets' engagements with citizenship in post-war America. In addition to asking, as Charles Olson did in *Maximus*, "who can say who are / citizens" (1983, 15), I am interested in understanding how poets might articulate citizenship. For Plato, both the subject and the style of poems rendered poets outside citizen status; in the following chapters I explore how poets use innovative formal and compositional methods to re-imagine citizenship and to suggest alternative ways of acting as citizens beyond existing codes of behavior.

## The Bollingen Prize: Ezra Pound's Tenuous Citizenship

*Projective Citizenship: the Reimagining of the Citizen in Post-War American Poetry* considers a particular tradition of poetics that emerged in the United States of America in the wake of World War II: Open Field/Projective poetics, which owed its existence, at least at first, to the ideas and efforts of Charles Olson. In this introduction, I read the emergence of projective poetics in light of a cultural climate within which the idea of the American and of the citizen were being redefined in response to intranational, international, and supranational pressures. In so doing, I aim to show that *how* one writes poetry in America or as an American has long been connected, by critics and poets alike, to issues of citizenship.

In February 1949, a jury of fourteen of Ezra Pound's peers awarded him the inaugural Bollingen Prize for Poetry on the strength of the *Pisan Cantos*.<sup>9</sup> That book had been written at the American Military Detention Center near Pisa, Italy, where Pound, detained and accused of treason, was awaiting transfer to the United States. He had been returned to the U.S., declared insane on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1945, and committed to St. Elizabeth's hospital. In announcing the Prize, a *New York Times* headline of Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1949, made a link between Pound's poetry, his sanity, and his *bona fides* as an American: "Pound in Mental Clinic / Wins Prize for Poetry Penned in Treason Cell." The pun on "penned" as the act of having written and the status of a prisoner underlines the charge of treason, casting doubt on the poetry by associating it with the imprisonment.<sup>10</sup>

From the start, the poetic qualities of the *Pisan Cantos* were bound up with Pound's status as an American. Objections to the Prize were made on the basis of the book's anti-Semitism, its perceived elitism, and its expatriate author's allegedly traitorous wartime behaviour. What these objections shared was that they tended to employ a rhetoric of citizenship, directly or by insinuation, in order to suggest that the values one must expect from the "good citizen" were not present in Pound, in the ideas his poetry contained, or in the way his poetry was written.

The first, most negative, and most damaging of the objections to the Prize, Robert Hillyer's essay "Treason's Strange Fruit" (*Saturday Review*, June 1, 1949), claimed "it is ironic that among the conditions of the award is the stipulation that the recipient must be an American citizen. By some tenuous legality Pound may be a citizen, but he knows nothing and cares less about civic obligations."<sup>11</sup> Although citizenship is a legal status, it is meaningful, Hillyer suggests, only if that status is matched by civic-minded behavior; the actions of the individual can render legal protections moot. Following this logic, Hillyer excludes Pound from full citizenship: he is an "alienated citizen"; "the Bollingen jury stretched a point to consider Pound a citizen" (10).

Hillyer separates a legal-jurisdictional notion of the citizen (Pound was officially a U.S. citizen in a way that T.S. Eliot, having adopted British citizenship, was not) from an ethical-moral notion of the citizen concerned with "civic obligations" (10). Hillyer seemingly knew about the preface that was read before Pound's allegedly-traitorous radio broadcasts and which invoked "the fascist policy of intellectual freedom and free expression of opinion by those who are qualified to hold it" as part of a claim that Pound "will not be asked to say anything [...] incompatible with his duties as a citizen of the United States of America" (Doob, xiii). Nonetheless, Hillyer viewed Pound as having forgone those duties.

What, for Hillyer, constituted Pound's failure in his "civic obligations?" One might imagine that it was Pound's bigotry; the next month, Congress would task Pound's poetry with "mak[ing] many derogatory references to Jews and Negroes," references that did a disservice to "the great contributions made in World War II by many thousands of Negroes and Jews who laid down their lives for an ideal" (Leick, 30).<sup>12</sup> Yet Hillyer, though noting Pound's "prevailing and brutal anti-Semitism" (11), instead attacks Pound's status as citizen on three other grounds: his geographical separation from America, his political and religious affiliations, and his qualities as a poet.

Firstly, Pound “has seldom set foot in America since he was twenty-three” (10); this geographical remove is matched, for Hillyer, by what he writes: “his poems are the vehicle of contempt for America” (9) while his absence from “American soil” allows Hillyer to deem him “hostile” (10). Hillyer similarly casts aspersions on the Bollingen jury’s geographic ties to America, and by extension their U.S. citizenship: he claims they were motivated by worship of Eliot, by “awe for a man who managed to get contemporary America out of his system, an aspiration of many new poets and critics” (28). In Hillyer’s mind, the Bollingen Prize was a disgrace to American ideas and ideals; his essay imagines an Eliot who has enormous sway over American poetry despite being an “expatriate” who has “gone far” from America—so far gone that “he will be the next English laureate” (11).<sup>13</sup> For Hillyer, the recipient of the Prize and the process of judging alike are not American enough.<sup>14</sup>

Hillyer also cast Pound’s religious and political affiliations as a failure of his civic obligations. The *Pisan Cantos* was a “ruthless mockery of our Christian war dead” (9), a complaint that equated American identity with a single religious outlook: to be American was to be Christian. Hillyer’s complaint participated in a narrowing definition of the American in the post-war period: a 1954 revision to the Pledge of Allegiance, only 60 years old at this time, would insert “before God,” codifying the “we” who expressed allegiance to America in terms of faith.<sup>15</sup> Pound’s Confucian leanings, though not named as such, were part of what Hillyer saw as his disrespect to Christians.<sup>16</sup> This disrespect was compounded by Pound’s “career in the service of Mussolini,” which made him “an agent against the United States” (11). Hillyer reads Pound as part of a Jung-inspired Nazi conspiracy (the name Bollingen was an homage to Carl Jung) and as politically divorced from American ideals, particularly evidenced by his publication of *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* in which he supposed “Il Duce’s ideology to be the embodiment of Jefferson’s” (Editor’s Note, 9). Already geographically removed by Hillyer from an idea of American citizenship that privileged civic

obligation, Pound was further exiled because he held political and religious views that were not conventionally American.

Hillyer's conclusion to his attack on Pound's poetry and citizenship focuses on the un-American values evident in the style, as well as the content, of the *Pisan Cantos*. His quotations from the book are selected for their anti-Semitism and their "obscenities." Hillyer spends a number of paragraphs complaining that Pound's poetry offends in its lack of order, in its "disordered" status that is compounded by "private symbols, weary epigrams [...] and the polyglot malapropisms that pass for erudition among the elite" (11). The *Pisan Cantos* fail civic obligation by being *not* poetry: "if they are poetry at all, then everything we have previously known as poetry must have been something else" (11). As with Hillyer's dismissal of Pound-as-citizen on geographic, political, and religious grounds, his poetic alienation of Pound relies on a narrow definition of poetry, understood negatively as something that Pound is not writing.<sup>17</sup> In this, Hillyer was also not alone: innovative form in mid-century poetry was a treasonous disease: Ben Lucien Burman saw Stein's influence as "the lurking genius of yellow fever" and the editors of *Pinnacle* were threatened enough by modernist poets that they urged a genocide: "the only way to eliminate the trouble is to eliminate them" (quoted in Filreis, 166).

To object to Pound's receipt of the Bollingen Prize was not simply to put forward an aesthetic or moral stance; it was to make a claim about what constituted citizenship. Hillyer's attack was far from isolated in linking poetic activity and civic values.<sup>18</sup> Writing ten years later, reviewing the controversy, Paul Olson would declare that "Such lines as 'Petain defended Verdun / while Blum was defending a bidet' pretend to be true and they are simply lies, lies of the kind which made Plato kick out the poets" (227). For Paul Olson, as for Hillyer and Viereck, the *Pisan Cantos* were inextricably connected to "the responsibilities of the poet to society" (229). Conservative traditionalists, whose voices sounded loudly in the period, argued that innovative



form went hand-in-hand with treasonous behavior, Communist tendencies, and un-American activity.<sup>19</sup> The machinations of the modernist avant-garde and the clinical “estheticism” of New Criticism were threatening to the fundamentals of citizenship. Stanton Coblenz, founder of the League for Sanity in Poetry, argued in 1950 that “a small discontented avant-garde” was able to enforce a “type of freedom enjoyed by the citizen of a totalitarian state, who is unrestrained in expression so long as he follows the Party line” (Filreis, 166-7).<sup>20</sup> Fellow conservative Paul Viereck argued, “the artist, being a citizen, should be critical of innovations that are uncreative, the craving for radical novelty in art and politics” (Filreis, 181). Creativity alone was enough to cast into doubt one’s citizen status. For the artist to act according to the dictates of citizenship, he or she must neither be radical nor novel in art or politics, a view that sounds far closer to an insistence on a “Party line” than anything the poetic avant-garde had proposed.<sup>21</sup>

Conservative, anti-innovative, anti-modernist arguments (like Viereck’s) held that “canons of grammar were the fundamental laws of good citizenship” (Filreis, 290). Critic and scholar Richard Weaver’s popular *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (1953) even tried to introduce a new category of citizenship, language citizenship: “like the political citizenship defined by Aristotle, language citizenship makes one a potential magistrate, or one empowered to decide” (142). What Weaver adds to Aristotle’s conception of citizen status is an argument that fitness to judge depends on adherence to conventional grammar. Pound’s “disordered” modernist poetics thus become doubly treasonous: they evidence criticism of America and so are not suitably American; they also use an experimental syntax, which cannot be aligned with orderly American values of “good” citizenship.

Such reactions were part of an anxiety in American letters about the relationship between the poet’s effect on society and the definition of citizenship. In addition to Hillyer’s own “Modern Poetry versus the Common Reader” (1949), the post-war period saw a plethora of articles with titles such as “Literary Decadence and World Decay” (Joseph M. Lalley, 1947) or “The Treason of

Modern Poetry” (Carl Edwin Burklund, 1949); the same period saw the rise of enthusiastic, self-certain organisations such as the League for Sanity in Poetry (which actually predated the Pound insanity controversy) and more than one Conference on the Defense of Poetry. These organisations and articles positioned themselves in opposition to academic coteries; they purported to provide a popular opinion on what poetry should be, politically speaking: largely apolitical, fundamentally “American.”

Interviewed in the Australian newspaper *The Argus* on December 26<sup>th</sup> 1944, under the headline “Angry U.S. ‘Poet’ pleads for ‘Sanity,’” Stanley Korn, New York Director of the League for Sanity in Poetry, objected to the appointment of Archibald MacLeish as an Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs on the grounds that he wrote “unintelligible” poetry. That MacLeish’s position had nothing to do with poetry shows the extent to which being a “good citizen” and being a traditional poet were intertwined. Speaking of modernist writing more widely, Korn maintained, “I couldn't understand half of it, and I bet the people who wrote it couldn't either.” In the League’s view, the individual could be measured by his poetics: “‘We didn't oppose MacLeish on political grounds,’ said Mr Korn, ‘we opposed him because he put himself up as a poet, yet could not write decent poetry.’” Even worse, the effects of MacLeish’s indecent (i.e. Modernist) poetry were damaging to America: “His poetry makes Americans look foolish to the rest of the world.” Modernist poetics, Korn felt, were eroding not only faith in American poetry but even harming foreign and domestic policy and the values of American society more widely.<sup>22</sup>

Debates over poetry at home and abroad had thus become linked with debates on what it meant to be an American citizen. Between the two World Wars, poetry was viewed as “one of the most dependable sources of knowledge about society [...] for some people, poetic discourse was capable not merely of talking about but actually of substantially deciding basic social and political issues” (Nelson, 1991, 127). By the time of the inaugural Bollingen Prize for Poetry, critics were

reading poetry, poets were writing poetry, and the wider public was responding to poetry as if it directly related to what they understood American citizenship to involve. The connection between citizenship and poetry had begun to emerge in debates over communism in the 1930s, but its roots lay earlier than that, often being traced back to Whitman's creation of a distinctly 'American' verse form. Alan Filreis has traced the shifting and difficult-to-understand battles between what he terms "communists, anti-communists, and anti-anti-communists" in order to locate the roots of the "conservative attack on modern poetry" in the 1930s and before. His research indicates that "in the poetry wars of the late 1940s and 1950s, the very definition of citizenship was at stake" (317).

One indication of the extent to which this definition was at stake lay in the frequently-invoked term "citizen-poet." The citizen-poet was there to be a "witness to history," particularly in the wake of the Second World War (Brunner, 252). His role—Edward Brunner notes that "the citizen-poet was white and male (and had usually graduated from Harvard)" (252)—was defined not primarily by what he wrote but by his style. The "so-called fifties poem" became valuable as poets and critics sought "to establish clear-cut standards for writing as a citizen-poet" (xi); such poems involved "verse that was metrically regular, organized by stanza, and usually in rhyme" (x).<sup>23</sup> On the other side of the poetic divide, modernist innovators sought to link new forms with new politics: speaking in Reagan's 1980s America, Allen Ginsberg reflected on the 1950s and 1960s as informed by the way "Whitman opened up a lot of political space, simply by changing the poetry from a very fixed and classical form, to an open form that any-body could participate in" (24). In the 1950s, William Carlos Williams insisted that a Whitman-derived "relative measure" or "open form" was "essential to the new world, not only of the poem" but to other aspects of contemporary life; Williams "present[ed] free verse as a technical innovation that accords with

modernity and radical democracy” (Leypoldt, 2009, 252).<sup>24</sup> For Ginsberg and Williams, among others, the poet could effect political action through formal means.<sup>25</sup>

## Creative Acts: Poets and the Claim to Citizenship

Yet what did these poets and critics mean when they referred to citizens and citizenship? The terms were vexed then, as they are now; they were hazily defined, if at all. In a rare attempt during the period to consider the idea of the citizen, poet Stephen Vincent Benét, writing in the *Yale Review* in 1941, interrogated the phrase “I am a citizen of the United States.” Throughout his discussion, he remained certain that the written word had a powerful role to play in constructing citizenship; warning, “the words that we write down are going to go on in ways that we did not expect,” he used the example of the Mayflower Compact to illustrate his point (130). His choice of quotation—“to combine ourselves together in a civil body politick”—indicated his focus was on the relationship between writing and citizenship. Having flippantly suggested that “of course, we know what the United States means—we know it so well that we do not even have to think about it” he continued by asking,

And yet do we? For it took five years of active revolution to make the one word, ‘States’—and twelve years of confederation and argument and, later on, four years of Civil War to make the word ‘United’ an effective word. (129)

For Benét, the notion of citizenship was similarly far from straightforward. The rhetorical markers of nations, states, and federations to which one could pledge citizenship were themselves unstable, liable to mean differently at different times and to different people. The “we” in Benét’s deliberately naïve “we know” raised a question as to which group was being named when the United States was invoked: who are we as citizens when “I am a citizen of the United States?”

Generally, citizenship designates a complex affiliation concerned on the one hand with the protections a nation-state offers its citizen-subjects and on the other hand with the duties it requires of them, and they of each other. There is, claims political theorist Judith Shklar, “no notion more central in politics than citizenship, and none more variable in history, or contested in theory” (60). T.H. Marshall’s genealogy of citizenship famously identified three key categories which, while historically-emphasized, are present together in most conceptions of citizenship: civil, political, and social citizenship.<sup>26</sup> The terms citizen and citizenship are not synonymous: the former tends to designate membership status, usually of a geographic space which is also a political territory, such as a nation- or city-state; the latter more commonly refers to the *mores* of social practice, the qualities (innate or gained through education) which constitute civil behavior. Most basically, a citizen is a recognized member of a larger group, though there is often confusion as to whether the term designates an individual who has been granted citizen status (the legal meaning) or an individual who conforms to a social code of conduct (the rhetorical meaning, as in “the good citizen”). Citizenship thus exists both because determined by governments and because recognized by other citizens or non-citizens (variously aspiring to or contesting it). Part of its contested quality derives from debates over who gets to grant and define it; as we have seen, tensions exist between citizenship as a legal status and as a popular project, with aspirational qualities and ideological biases.<sup>27</sup>

Although the conditions of citizenship are historically and culturally specific, they tend to concern: inclusion in or exclusion from a geographically determined space, marked by borders; degrees of affiliation or belonging to a communal group understood via (a combination of) national, religious, ethnic, or cultural aspects; and the involvement in decision-making or judging (often through participation in political processes).<sup>28</sup> Recent theories, however, also attend to the re-shaping of citizenship through unexpected actions by citizens; it is with such developments in

citizenship theory that I most engage in *Projective Citizenship*. As Keith Faulks points out, “citizenship is [...] a dynamic identity. As creative agents, citizens will always find new ways to express their citizenship” (6). For Faulks, the citizen might lay claim to her status in a proliferating range of ways, and part of what this dissertation hopes to achieve is to show that poetry can be part of the creative agency of the citizen, despite mid-century requirements that it be traditional, un-innovative.

I am situating my readings of American poetry within a particular development in citizenship studies: Engin Isin and others’ problematizing of both legal/governmental definitions of citizenship and liberal reifications of the individual as the primary concern of citizenship. Citizenship theorists have begun to emphasise and explore the constructed, shifting, and discrepant aspects of being and becoming a citizen over normative, definitive, and quantifiable markers.<sup>29</sup> In so doing, they have faced the challenge of offering a meaningful account of citizenship that reflects multiple national allegiances, divergent experiences of labor, conflicting cultural affiliations, competing ethnic heritages, and multi-lingual co-presences. A classical rhetoric of rights and responsibilities, which relies on established, bureaucratic structures of reform such as the ballot box, the court, and the government-sanctioned or -permitted protest, needs replacing, these critics argue, with a conception of the active citizen constituted in part through her relationships with others and her awareness of others’ presences, what Charles Olson termed, in his unpublished essay “Definitions by Undoing,” “being as group with will.”<sup>30</sup>

This dissertation builds on that complication of the relationship between citizens, nations, and states in order to make a claim that citizenship and the citizen are not coterminous with nations and national identity, despite the assumptions among poets and critics of the interwar and post-war period that approved “American” behaviour was tantamount to “good citizenship.” I see

citizenship as a necessarily group-oriented status, concerned with the ways one acts towards others; in this, I am mindful of Michael Warner's claim that

you can be a member of the nation, attribute its agency to yourself in imaginary identification, without [...] exercising any agency in the public sphere. Nationalism makes no distinction between such imaginary participation and the active participation of citizens. (173)

Warner's focus is the particular historical moment of republicanism. Nonetheless, his characterisation of nationalism suggests, as Anderson's "imagined community" does, an aspect of national identity that citizenship does not share: I cannot imagine myself a citizen, as C.L.R. James found out to his cost.<sup>31</sup> While "most of the scholarship on citizenship has claimed a necessary connection to the nation-state" (Sassen, 2002, 277), an awareness of the unequal ways individuals occupy citizen status has led to critiques of the link between citizenship and the nation.<sup>32</sup> Such critiques variously identify "cultural citizenship" (Rosaldo, 1995, 2003), "multiple citizenship" (Heater), "flexible citizenship" (Ong, 1998), "postnational citizenship" (Soysal, 2004), and "denationalised citizenship" (Sassen, 2002) as they attempt to name a dynamic citizenship that exists in relation to nations but is not limited to/by them.<sup>33</sup> As part of this development, theorists have attended to non-citizens: Sassen has argued that "citizenship is partly produced by the practices of the excluded" (2002, 49); Charles T. Lee has argued for "an alternative conception that conceives of citizenship not only as juridical institutions or political acts" but also as "acting and living as citizen-subjects" (2010, 59); Engin Isin has considered immanence, the coming-into-being of citizens, alongside the ways citizenship is constructed through narratives created by citizens, in contradistinction to categories of "strangers, outsiders, aliens, and barbarians."<sup>34</sup>

Analogous to the status of citizen and non-citizen is the relationship between the city and the rural, in so far as the rural is defined as that which is outside the urban. Isin has clarified that "my conception of the political as being *of* the city cannot be reduced to being *in* the city" (2005, 377). The city, Isin argues, "becomes definable only through its problematizations" (377). While Sassen

has preferred the city to the nation-state as a site of citizenship, seeing “the global city” as “a partly denationalized space that enables a partial reinvention of citizenship” (2003, 4), Isin’s claims more broadly engage with the condition of the city as related to citizenship, or what he calls, in a riff on Hannah Arendt’s “the right to have rights,” “the right to a city” (2005, 377). Although his arguments in *Being Political* carefully historicize a set of cities, he is also interested in “city-space” as an image or analogue of citizenship. In other words, because the city is the site of demarcation between the included and the excluded, it is the site where the workings of citizenship narratives, such as Plato’s *The Republic*, come into view. Returning to Plato’s exiling of the transformative poet, we can see how Isin’s claim works: because these poets are excluded from the city, we can observe at work a script of citizenship by which citizens define themselves as against non-citizens. Isin’s rehabilitation of the city-space involves what he calls “city as a difference machine,” an understanding of the city as “an object of thought” and as a “battleground *through which* groups define their identities” (2002, 50). Without setting aside the contingencies of actual city spaces, it is possible to also conceive of city-space as a means by which poets and others write and resist citizenship narratives. The poets this dissertation analyzes all position their reimagining of citizenship in relation to cities and city-space; it is by reading the ways citizens and non-citizens are defined, and define themselves, within and outside city-space that we can most fully understand what citizenship involves at a given historical moment.<sup>35</sup>

A focus on the category of the non-citizen has led to Isin and Nielsen’s notion of “acts of citizenship.” Their collection of the same name reorients citizenship studies away from “the citizen as individual agent” and towards “collective or individual deeds that rupture social-historical patterns” (2). Acts of citizenship differ from the habitual practices we have come to associate with citizenship (voting, tax-paying, learning languages, serving on a jury); they are spontaneous, innovative actions which have the potential to alter the terms of citizenship through



unanticipated, unpredictable engagement with other citizens and with the institutions of state authority. Habitual practices risk being “passive and one-sided in mass democracies” whereas acts of citizenship allow for “breaks with repetition of the same” (2), for the kinds of innovation that might constitute new versions of the citizen.

The chapters in this dissertation consider acts of writing as acts of citizenship. I explore the ways citizenship works as a script that is produced both bureaucratically—through such measures as the Pledge of Allegiance, the United States Citizenship Test, and the Immigration and Nationality Act—and through popular discourse, including literary works (broadly defined to include poems, essays, bibliographies, and other non-governmental written works). Political thought relies on the construction of such scripts, which are then taken up by citizens: Joanne Harriet Wright argues that in *Leviathan* Thomas Hobbes was able to “provide a script of citizenship, encouraging citizens of England to behave as though they had entered into a social contract with one another” (55). Wright's point is that scripts of citizenship are not simply generated by the state and resisted by “the people”; they are adopted and sustained by the citizens who are their subjects. As Sherrily Munshi has shown, citizenship scripts are not confined to written documents: her readings of early 20<sup>th</sup> century constructions of Indian American citizens show how photographic stories are used by “new” citizens to legitimate their citizenship; these “new” citizens were effectively encouraged and required to construct narratives of citizenship which scripted certain kinds of behaviour, potentially at the exclusion of others.<sup>36</sup>

The role of literature in constructing or resisting such citizenship narratives has been mostly discussed with reference to prose fiction. Brook Thomas' *Civic Myths* analyses novels, including Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*, that “dramatize various conflicts citizens subject to rule by law confront” (216). Thomas's analysis shows how American fiction has long engaged the “contradictions and tensions” inherent in being an

American citizen. For Julie Lupton, writing more broadly, “the literature of citizenship provokes collective and individual processes of evaluation, deliberation, and debate” (216). Thomas and Lupton, among others, are interested in literature’s potential for citizenship education, formal or informal; they argue that literature provides rational and affective grounds for a consideration of what it means to be a citizen.

Perhaps it would be enough to do the same for post-war American poetry: in what ways have poets writing in or to the United States thematized citizenship and tried to provoke reconsiderations of the citizen? Engaging that question is certainly part of my project: Charles Olson, LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Susan Howe, and Myung Mi Kim all present situations in which “the citizen” becomes contested, disputed, untenable. Yet my contention is that the innovative American poetry I examine does more than dramatize conflict or provoke debate; it seeks to create alternative possibilities for acting as a citizen through writing.<sup>37</sup> The transition here from being a citizen to acting as a citizen is crucial: the former targets how we are expected to be according to a script that is variously cultural and governmental; the latter targets the range of ways we might participate as citizens, potentially though not necessarily in ways that interrupt that script, and possibly in defiance of others who have placed us outside the category of the citizen. In other words, we cannot only look at how these poets describe the citizen; we must also look at what their poetics imagine as possible for the citizen. At the very least, new ways of writing and of engaging language come into being through innovative poetics; beyond that large claim, this dissertation aims to target the political outcomes that stem from poetic innovation that considers citizenship.

In order to do so, I analyze a particular tradition within post-war American poetry—Open Field poetics/projective poetry—which has sought to reimagine what constitutes poetry and how the poem relates to the individual as part of a wider group of writers and readers.<sup>38</sup> Projective

poetry is a particularly rich tradition from which to explore what Melanie White has called “creative acts of citizenship,” innovative acts which “arise from a breakdown of our capacity to recognize how we should act while simultaneously responding to its crisis with an invention.” Faced with uncertainty—impossibility, even—as to how to behave, the creative actor imagines (the possibility of) a response which shapes her act *a priori*; it is in the possibility of response that a “citizenship ‘yet to come’” emerges (4).<sup>39</sup>

White’s formulation shares with Olson’s sense of projective verse an element of both discovery and mystery: the ways one might act/write are not *pro forma* but *ad hoc*. We can find within projective poetics a similar inventiveness in response to crises of uncertainty. I call the alternative imagining of the citizen that results from such innovation *projective citizenship*: projective firstly in that it is explicitly directed outwards from the individual, taking as its horizon the ways citizens act in relation to one another, and secondly in that it anticipates immanent ways of acting as a citizen. Within projective citizenship, many of the familiar designations of the citizen remain in play: the citizen is part of a roughly-determined geographic arena (though might seek responses from beyond that area); the citizen engages with the historical residue of national, ethnic, and religious affiliations; the citizen exists through given rights, including the right to speak and write, and is protected by a nation-state. Yet the projective citizen comes into being as a citizen primarily through writing; to this extent, projective citizenship requires the responses of other citizens in order to become praxis. Making visible the ways the citizen is produced in relation to an existing script, projective citizenship aims to transform the citizen into a creative actor able to disrupt, interrupt, and re-write normative scripts.

My focus on innovative form is explained in part by a suggestion that innovative poetic form is particularly adept at responding to the limitation of existing scripts, to the “repetition of the same” that denotes traditional poetics and habitual civic activities. Radical departures from the

conventions of poetics, whether taking the shape of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*, Wilfred Owen's wartime half-rhymes, or Olson's projective poetics, often start from the premise that the existing forms available to the poet are no longer effective in a contemporary context, and they often target the poet or poem's relationship to a communal, potentially civic, group. Susan Vanderborg argues that "the open-parenthesis poem"—Olson's hallmark (paradigmatic for projectivist poetics—is "an ideal model for a political poetry that could incorporate multiple definitions of citizenship without prioritizing them or excluding future qualifications" (2001, 25). In this view, innovative form makes possible new articulations and understandings of the citizen; it allows writers and readers to imagine the citizen in ways that differ from dominant narratives, to ask "who can say who are /citizens?" rather than cede the ability to speak or question.

An additional theoretical basis for analyzing the horizon of response sought by creative, projective acts of citizenship, both in the political space and in the spaces of the poetic text, is Étienne Balibar's identification of a possible (or "necessary impossible" [156]<sup>40</sup>) collective citizenship achieved through innovative "worksites of democracy,"<sup>41</sup> which he defines as "domains of initiative and reflection" where citizenship can be formulated, in the wake of a challenge posed by European unification and apartheid, through intellectual processes.<sup>42</sup> These "worksites" allow citizens to consider emergent possibilities for "collective political practice, *collective access to citizenship*, always 'in the making'; we must, he argues, recognize that "individuals and groups can *neither separate nor get along at will*" (173) and require a citizenship that can accept dissensus alongside consensus.<sup>43</sup> Balibar, like White and Isin, conceives of citizen status as emergent, active, and responsive to others; it is this conception of citizenship, I argue, that is shared by projective poets.<sup>44</sup>

Reimagining the Citizen

One challenge posed by Balibar’s worksites, a challenge important to the poets I study, concerns how intellectual work might constitute “not only *poiesis*, fabrication of the material means of existence, but potential political *praxis*” (175). If Balibar easily elides from *poiesis* to materiality without having to circumnavigate the ways Auden’s line has become misused as a soundbite, a stick with which to beat poets given that “poetry makes nothing happen,” he remains aware that theories of citizenship do not citizens make. Such a challenge is a key motivation for this dissertation, in no small part because it is a motivation for the poets whose work I engage. The political agency of poetry will continue to remain contested; arguments on one side risk conflating *poiesis* with *praxis*, and on the other risk divorcing the one too far from the other.<sup>45</sup> While I would hope for a certain agency—a “political life.” to use Lisa Siraganian’s term<sup>46</sup>—for the poem, my focus is less on the question of whether the poetic text affects politics, but on the ways these poets imagined the poetic text affecting politics in terms of the practices and possibilities of citizenship.

That said, creative acts of writing and speaking must be allowed to be politically effective, in part because they are often all that is left to someone denied citizenship, as I acknowledge in my first chapter: there, I read Olson’s ideas of citizenship against C.L.R. James’ study of *Moby-Dick*, written while awaiting deportation from the United States and styled as a citizenship claim. *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: Herman Melville and the World We Live In* hoped to assert James’ status as citizen against a decision to remove him from the U.S. by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Although his writing failed to assert his citizenship in the eyes of the INS, it did so in relation to other citizens, and it attested to the possibility of a creative written act as an expression of citizenship—in this case, an innovative re-reading of a recently-canonical literary work important to the popular cultural imagination of American identity.

Despite James' faith, like Stephen Vincent Benét's a few years earlier, that the status of the citizen could be interrogated in writing by a citizen, in reality citizen status is more often determined by the state.<sup>47</sup> The year after Benét's article, over one hundred thousand residents of the United States, the vast majority legal citizens, were forcibly detained in War Relocation Centers on the grounds of their declared or perceived affiliations with Japan. The illogic by which the internment proceeded was evident to the detainees and a feature of the earliest internment writings. Mine Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (1946) was one of the few internment stories to find publication soon after the closing of the War Relocation Camps.<sup>48</sup> Her book uses pen-and-ink sketches interspersed with autobiographical reminiscences to assert its author as "a native-born American who has been cast out of citizenship and into a wartime concentration camp" (Creef, 2004, 82); as Okubo would later recall, "To think this could happen in the United States. We were citizens" (66). That "ethnicity alone was enough to determine one's loyalty to the United States" (and thus eligibility for incarceration) shows how citizenship, as both institutional category and social principle, operated according to ethnic and racial criteria rather than legal rules (Duncan, 2004, 80). *Citizen 13660* described Okubo, in writing, as she saw herself and, in sketches, as others saw her Japanese-American body. The subject's legal citizenship had been called into question by the gazes of fellow citizens, gazes that were already legitimated by the state's redefinition of the American citizen.<sup>49</sup>

The War Relocation Camps were a sinister reminder that definitions of citizenship during wartime and after the war could shift almost without warning, that they were open to redefinition by government decree as well as by existing citizens' willingness to reject others as legitimate citizens. The internment of thousands of Americans was not an isolated development. There was general consternation during and after the war as to the definition of the American citizen: Americans found themselves uncertain as to who or what they believed a citizen was or should be.

A *LIFE* magazine article of March, 1945, titled “Un-American activities, what are they?.” quoted Jersey City Democratic mayor Frank Hague, who had asserted, “We hear about constitutional rights, free speech, and the free press. Every time I hear those words I say to myself, ‘That man is a Red, that man is a Communist. You never heard a real American talk in that manner.’”<sup>50</sup>

Although free speech had been protected in law, at least according to popular myth, since Andrew Hamilton’s successful defence of the printer John Peter Zenger in 1735, it was entirely possible for freedom of expression to be equated with un-American activity in interwar and wartime America.<sup>51</sup>

Hague’s equation of freedom with Communist belief indicates just how rhetorical and subjective American identity was during the period. Similar uncertainties had led to the instigation of the Dies Committee, which formed in 1938 from the Special Committee on Un-American Activities (1934-1937) in order to investigate alleged disloyalty by Americans.<sup>52</sup> Questions over American citizenship post-1945 similarly informed the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952, which began as the McCarran-Walter Bill.<sup>53</sup> The Act redefined immigration policy, allowing for citizen status to be removed if someone was perceived to have engaged in “un-American activities.”<sup>54</sup> The ascendancy of the House Un-American Affairs Committee in the wake of the Dies Committee further narrowed the activities allowed to American citizens by treating with suspicion a range of views and actions that did not fit within certain political, religious, or cultural pre-conceptions of the American.<sup>55</sup> While these were legislative, governmental measures, they functioned through encouraging Americans to suspect each other’s behavior, to doubt whether others’ activities were inherently American. The legislative script of citizenship entered into the public sphere, affecting popular discourse regarding citizenship. That Archibald MacLeish was repeatedly accused of Communist leanings throughout his career indicates that poetry was no safer

a space than Hollywood: to be an innovative poet was a risky proposition within post-war America.<sup>56</sup>

Counter to such infringements on the definition and behavior of the U.S. citizen were legal, governmental, and popular defenses of citizenship. Although the narrative of citizenship I am tracking seeks to recognize the ways principles of exclusion and norming underpinned even apparent developments in citizenship, such as the McCarran-Walter Act's outlawing of a race-based approach to citizen status, it is important to realize that such exclusions mattered so much because citizenship was such a desirable status.<sup>57</sup> In 1943, the United States Supreme Court described it as "a right no less precious than life or liberty."<sup>58</sup> This assertion of citizenship came in a legal decision upholding the right of a naturalised citizen, William Schneiderman, to remain a citizen in the face of government arguments that his affiliation with the Communist Party, pre-dating his granting of citizenship and undisclosed at the time, negated his citizen status. In this case, citizenship rights protected differences of political belief; Justice Rutledge, for the majority, argued that a citizen could not be meaningfully considered a citizen if living under the fear of potential revocation; "he could not open his mouth without fear his words would be held against him" and his alienation from the expression of ideas would render him not at liberty, as a citizen should be.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Article 15 of the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights enshrined citizenship as a fundamental human right, offering a supra-national legitimization of citizenship rights. During the period this dissertation analyses, the events of the Civil Rights era further widened protections (albeit belatedly and in conflicted ways) afforded to U.S. citizens.<sup>60</sup>

As both the advances of the Civil Rights era and the Supreme Court defences of citizenship indicate, its value to the citizen, and the non-citizen seeking inclusion under its protection, is that it can be harnessed by the individual in order to change his or her relationship to the state; at its most successful, citizenship protects the citizen from injustices at the hands of other citizens or



government. Precisely because of this, however, it is also subject to revision by the state, in which case the individual's relationship to citizenship is altered without her say. Moreover, as Russ Castronovo has pointed out, in a fascinating study of the link between citizenship and death in the nineteenth century, "a formal legal definition of citizenship forces an experience of national belonging"; moreover, "haunted by social death, citizenship as the precept for equal membership also serves as an architect of inequality" (204). Citizenship operates both as the ultimate protection, especially for the stateless, and also as a technology for the management of individuals, whether by other citizens or by the state. My discussion of LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka's poetry shows that the extension of legal, *de jure* citizenship was not equivalent with the enjoyment of *de facto* citizen status, and indeed citizenship might not, from some vantage points, be wholly desirable.

Given the detainment (and deportation) of legal citizens of the United States during the immediate post-war period, and given the suppression of innovative writing by conservative commentators who succeeded in having the Bollingen Prize suspended, it would be easy to follow John Ciardi's 1955 claim that "no sane poet today persuades himself that the action of his art and imagination has any significant consequence in the practical reality of Dow-Jones averages, election returns, and state of the nation" (quoted in Filreis, 116). In such a climate, could—can—a poet meaningfully engage with politics or contribute to understandings of citizenship? Despite Ciardi's pessimism, poets, particularly those working within innovative forms, continued to believe they could. It is a contention of this dissertation that the publication of the *Pisan Cantos* marks a beginning point for an on-going attempt by poets influenced by Pound and other modernists to link innovative forms and new poetics to critiques of citizenship that might resist narrowing, normative constructions of the American citizen. Modernist, postmodern, projective, and other radical forms were never going to enjoy a one-to-one relationship to political life, as Williams had declared they would, yet poets searching for new ways to imagine citizenship in post-war America

realized that innovation might shake the habits of political discourse, unsettling readers from all-too-comfortable familiarity.<sup>61</sup>

One of the figures who spoke out against criticism of Ezra Pound after his return to the United States was a thirty-something-year-old government employee who had just begun to turn his hand to poetry: Charles Olson, then serving as a kind of secretary to Pound while he was in St. Elizabeth's. Despite his misgivings as to Pound's politics and bigotry, and despite having written against Fascism for *Survey Graphic* in 1944, Olson wrote an essay in defence of Pound, "This is Yeats Speaking" (1946). His essay ventriloquized W.B. Yeats (Pound had served Yeats as secretary) addressing the American public, an early instance of Olson's tendency to imagine the audience who would receive his works, a formal decision I explore in Chapter 1. Yeats-Olson does not condone Pound's politics, making an argument about poetry and politics that is "not as you think" (1997b, 141); that is, he does not make an aesthetic, intellectualist, apolitical claim like the ones Hillyer and others attributed to modernist writing and writers.<sup>62</sup> Olson did not argue that poets should "stay out of it" ("it" being politics), just that they should avoid becoming political officials.<sup>63</sup> The innovative poet can remain political, though must do so outside of government; a few years later, Olson would have quit working for Roosevelt's administration in order to write poetry.

Where Pound had stumbled, for Yeats-Olson, was not in his political beliefs as such, nor in his bigotry, for "I would undo no single word of all he published, quarrel as I have with him," but in passively stooping before sovereign power: "he subordinated his critical intelligence to the objects of authority in others," including Mussolini (142). In accepting Fascist beliefs, Pound rejected the dialectical world of Hegel and the Blakean insistence on the conflict of opposite, says Yeats-Olson, who offers a counter-methodology through picking a "quarrel" with Pound's words

rather than undoing and censoring them: “critical intelligence” consists in speaking back, in response.

“This is Yeats Speaking” seeks less to save Pound from himself or others than to save Americans from their own passivity. “Yeats” accuses “writers, readers, fighters, fearers” of having, like Pound, become subordinate:

It is the passivity of you young men before Pound’s work as a whole, not scripts alone, you who have taken from him, Joyce, Eliot and myself the advances we made for you. There is a court you leave silent—history present, the issue the larger concerns of authority than a state, Heraclitus and Marx called, perhaps some consideration of descents and metamorphoses, form and the elimination of intellect. (143)

This charge of passivity concerns the ways citizen-subjects engage with state authority. It argues that contemporary writers and readers had remained silent in response to their historical moment in ways that the *Cantos*, for all its author’s sometime subordination, had not. For Yeats-Olson, the contemporary poet must “hold the mirror up to authority” and uncover “larger concerns” that exceed the state.<sup>64</sup> His bitter rejoinder to his readers is that they are unaware of or uninterested in this role; they have not considered “the use” to which works like *The Cantos* can be put.<sup>65</sup>

Olson’s criticism was backed by his own praxis, developed in his poems of the period but articulated most forcefully in his essay “Projective Verse,” finished in February 1950, six months after Hillyer’s attack on Pound.<sup>66</sup> “Projective Verse” is a methodology for replacing passivity with active participation in the communicative acts of writing. Projective writing was “open” to new writers and to new possibilities of writing; it accepted no pre-existing container for ideas, instead developing shape and sound as it proceeded from the idea at hand: “FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT,” as Olson proposed, by way of Robert Creeley. Against conservative suggestions that a radical style could make you less American, that the “citizen poet” wrote in familiar, regular meters, “Projective Verse” sought a style that emerged from the individual body, that allowed the writer the fullest expression and extension of himself.

Olson insisted on the “kinetic” quality of poetic elements (“the syllable, the line, as well as the image, the sound, the sense”) rather than on fixed, stable measures. Kinesis was essential to “creating the tensions of a poem” in ways that engaged the objective reality of the world (1997b, 243). Olson placed the poet’s physiognomy at the heart of the poetic process, seeing the poetic product—the typewritten poem—as a transcription of that physiognomy. From the poet’s focus on his own breath and the space of the page as it records that breath, “all act springs”: the projective poem becomes an active, energetic counter to what Olson saw as the passivity of contemporary poetry and contemporary life.

“Projective Verse” significantly imagines a poetry that not only changes the relationship of the writer to poetic form but also goes further, inviting a response from other writers and readers. Projective verse emerges through responding to others’ writings, through “the acquisitions of [the poet’s] ear,” the gatherings of “the ear which has collected, which has listened” and which “has the mind’s speed.”<sup>67</sup> Olson’s essay outlines how this act of listening might be transformed into a creative act, faulting Pound for having “stayed there where the ear and the mind are” then gone “outward”: he has missed a step, in which the poet goes “down through the workings of his own throat” to where “breath has its beginnings, where drama has come from,” which is the beginnings of “act.” This criticism of Pound exposes his “stooping before sovereign power.” The Olsonian poet, by contrast, must be attentive to his own body as well as the circumstances of his world. From this combination, his act, projected by the typewriter-recorded breath, could spring outwards towards others. Implicit in this cycle from breath to ear is the listening ear of others that will in turn acquire the poet’s breath. “Projective Verse” inscribes its own audience, imaging a responsive community: “keep it moving as fast as you can, citizen [...] USE USE USE the process” (249).<sup>68</sup> The invocation of the citizen here is more than rhetorical: its entry into

“Projective Verse” signals an early attempt by Olson to re-imagine the citizen, a hesitant definition of the citizen as acting kinetically.

## Projective Verse—Projective Citizenship

Emerging in response to a poetic discourse that was inextricably bound up with questions of citizenship, and motivated by a political and cultural landscape in which the citizen could not be easily defined, “Projective Verse” offered not just a statement of poetics but a reconsideration of the ways the citizen participates in wider community. My dissertation argues that projective poetics, as outlined by Olson and revised by others, has repeatedly been used to re-imagine citizenship. In investigating the links between projective poetics and what I call projective citizenship, I read the writings of four poets not typically placed together: Charles Olson, LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Susan Howe, and Myung Mi Kim.<sup>69</sup> I examine the ways in which Jones/Baraka, Howe, and Kim revised Olson’s poetics as they, too, sought to imagine alternative constructions of the citizen. My chapters follow a chronological sequence: I focus on Olson’s work until the early 1960s, Baraka’s work during the 1960s and 1970s, Howe’s work in the 1980s, and Kim’s work from 1992 to 2002. In so doing, I show that projective poetry has, in revised incarnations, continued to offer ways to think about citizenship.

*Projective Citizenship: the Reimagining of the Citizen in Post-War American Poetry* identifies a number of different incarnations of projective citizenship, each of which responds to shifts in the way poets and critics have understood the citizen. For Olson, the central tension relates to who gets to define the citizen; for Baraka, citizen status is deeply conflicted, tainted by bourgeois aspiration; for Howe, the citizen is a gendered concept subject to authoritative narratives; for Kim, a meaningful citizenship must account for questions of what language citizens are allowed to speak;

her poetics exist in translation, an example of what Balibar has called for in terms of translation as the language of (European) citizenship.

This dissertation reacts to a series of moments where citizenship is seen to be fragile, even futile. Faced with encroachments on the status of the citizen, the poets I examine found reasons and methods to offer alternative conceptions of community. Given that citizenship is a *sine qua non* of the modern state, citizens need to be invested in the definition and conception of their status within citizenship, and the poets I examine make cases for rescuing the power to define the citizen from bureaucratic, legal, and governmental arenas. Engaging with debates over citizenship in popular discourse, where its definition was often conservative, these poets sought to re-imagine the term within the public sphere. For Olson, this involved a fictive version of Gloucester; for Baraka, an attempt to create a black community and a Black Nation through poetry; for Howe, a return to the originary emergence of citizenship in the public consciousness—England, 1649; for Kim, an account of contemporary migration narrative alongside the L.A. Riots of 1992.

In exploring this particular genealogy of interactions between poetics and citizenship, I do not offer a complete history of the engagement with citizenship by post-war American poets, a task that would require several hundred pages and would engage with works by Gwendolyn Brooks, Langston Hughes, José Garcia Villa, Adrienne Rich, and others. Nor can I offer a full account of Open Field/Projective poetics and its inheritors, an extensive list that would also include Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Edward Dorn, Denise Levertov, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Leslie Scalapino, and many more. My choice of poets is not a claim that the projective tradition is alone in considering citizenship, but I am drawn to this tradition for two reasons: firstly, its commitment to considering how innovative forms might offer new potential for political statements; secondly, because of the way projective poems project towards actual or would-be citizens, other (immanent) members of a citizenship community, often invoked within the poets' poems.<sup>70</sup> By analyzing the

ways Olson, Jones/Baraka, Howe, and Kim have used projective poetics to think through and redefine the terms of citizenship, we can more fully understand the political aims of the projective poetic tradition, as well as its poetics; we can also recognize the ways poetry continues, into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to be a meaningful medium for the analysis and articulation of the citizen.

Jones/Baraka, Howe and Kim all acknowledge their debt to Olson's poetics; they each revise projective poetry's claims; and they each engage with citizen status both thematically and formally. My chapters on their work are not meant to provide a genealogy from Olson to Kim but to offer three different responses to the projective citizenship developed within Olsonian poetics. All four writers engaged with city-spaces in and through their poetry: Olson with Gloucester, Jones/Baraka with Newark, Howe with Buffalo and Dublin, Kim with Los Angeles. Their texts often inscribe audiences, communities of (potential) citizens imagined within and written into the poems themselves, as when Olson-Maximus addresses Gloucester residents or Kim depicts a speaker learning English through the shape of speakers' mouths rather than the sound of words. As such, their works often have two audiences, one existing within the poetic text (the audience of citizens the poem depicts and/or addresses) and one imagined for the text (the political agency or cultural effect hoped for as a result of writing and speaking).

These writers are also linked by their innovative uses of the lyric mode; I discuss this tradition most fully in my second chapter, on Jones/Baraka, exploring the ways lyric involves something other than stable, authentic, quasi-autobiographical subjectivity.<sup>71</sup> Lyric, as Jonathan Culler has shown, is inextricably bound up with questions of address, and the lyric speaker is therefore shaped by a relationship with one or more listeners and readers. As a communally-oriented status, citizenship must involve encounters between an "I" and a "you," singular and plural, ghosted by the possibility of a "we" that is variously definitive or conjectural. Lyric—freed from traditional, so-called Romantic notions of individual unitary identity and from the "banishment of the lyric

‘I’” some critics have connected to L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry (Kinnahan, 2005, 12)—provides a valuable mode for reimagining the citizen as constructed through transformative encounters with others—provided, of course, we do not oppose lyric to narrative.<sup>72</sup>

Chapter One, “‘To Try To Get Down One Citizen as Against Another’: Citizenship through Epistolarity in Charles Olson’s Early Poems,” links Olson’s re-envisioning of the written act and the space of the poetic page in “Projective Verse” to a redefinition of the polis, the classical site of citizenship, within contemporary America. Olson’s aim in “Projective Verse,” put into practice in his early poems and in his epic, *Maximus*, was to conceive of the page as a threshold that connected writers and readers. Through the projective poem, made possible by the technology of the typewriter, the poet could speak from deep within his physiognomy, projecting outwards to readers. Reading “Projective Verse” and *Call Me Ishmael*, I show how Olson develops a conception of citizenship based not in ideas of national identity or the legislative realm of politics but in a notion of “the crew” or the “group with will,” whose members cohere around and through words. Olson’s reconceived polis relies on communication between its citizens, rather than on political status or geographic proximity. Criticising existing versions of citizenship as rooted in a narrowing nationalistic understanding of the human, Olson attempts to create a citizenship through epistolarity, a citizenship predicated on writing. Yet C.L.R. James’ deportation for “un-American activities” indicates the limitations of Olson’s citizenship through epistolarity: ultimately governmental institutions get to “say who are citizens.”

Olson’s letter-poem “To Leroi Jones” attempted to include Jones in this incipient group of citizens, but his writings failed to account for the fact that Jones/Baraka’s experiences of citizenship were shaped by the way his black body was perceived by governmental institutions and by his fellow citizens: for all that Olson valued *proprioception*, knowledge of one’s own body, he was often less than sensitive to the ways others’ bodies were conscripted into certain cultural positions.



Jones/Baraka critiqued Olson's universalist conception of the citizen, adopting but contesting the tenets of projective verse as he in turn engaged governmental designations of the approved citizen. My second chapter, "'Ellington was a 'citizen'": Lyric Community beyond Citizenship in LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka's Poetry of the Sixties and Seventies," explores how Jones/Baraka's so-called cultural nationalist phase developed from an extended consideration of citizenship within *Blues People*. This study of the blues as a distinctly African American art form outlined a highly conflicted understanding of citizenship, seeing it both as the "path" for African Americans and as a yielding of Blackness (or Bluesness) to "white" norms. I argue that Jones/Baraka's poetry of the 1960s and 1970s revises lyric in order to investigate how the "we" of citizenship could function in an American space which had for so long differentiated the legal citizenship of black Americans from that of white Americans, and which continued to discriminate against their social citizenship. Within *Black Magic* (1969), Jones/Baraka's radical lyric mode subverts the subject positions "I," "you," and "we," offering the possibility of a creative act of citizenship which would continually disrupt identity positions, encouraging self-reflection as part of the formation of group dynamics. Ultimately, though, Baraka uses this lyric community as a communal lyric, a way to develop a conception of citizenship applicable to an explicitly Black nation. The city—Newark, Harlem—is figured as the key, contestatory site of collective identity, but Jones/Baraka's hesitations over the "whiteness" of citizenship leads him to depart from citizenship as a sought-after status, preferring to put his faith in nationalism. While this emphatically suggests the damage done to citizenship by popular and governmental scripts of approved behaviour, it also ceded any chance to intervene in citizen status.

For Susan Howe, projective citizenship is articulated within text and texts, in terms not just of texts' semantic and formal elements but also their material conditions, including the archives that restrict access to them. Howe encounters in Olson's "Projective Verse" both practices of

exclusion and the potential for presence. Describing George Butterick's carefully-spaced editing of Olson's poetry as "one of the most generous gifts to poetry in my time," she recognises in Olson's writing the perpetuation of female exclusion: "If there is Woman in Olson's writing (there aren't women there), she is either 'Cunt,' 'Great Mother,' 'Cow,' or 'Whore.'" In the next sentence, she suggests a possibility for women within projective poetics and American literature: "but the feminine is very much in his poems in another way, a way similar to Melville. It's voice ... It has to do with the presence of absence" (180). Women are nowhere to be found within the city poetics of *Maximus* or Olson's letters; instead, symbolic, mythological, objectified Woman appears. Howe, recognizing the innovations of Olson's "articulation of sound forms. The fractured syntax, the gaps" (180), opts to revise projective verse and the Olsonian conception of citizenship through epistolarity, re-inscribing the presence of women by engaging with the way written texts construct versions of citizenship.

My third chapter, "'The subtle workings of the Body Politic on every citizen': Citizenship through Text in Howe's *A Bibliography of the King's Book*," shows Howe rethinking citizenship through a formal practice of reconstituting textual authority. Her response to projective verse and the failures of the Olsonian conception of citizenship is to re-examine the ways in which writers might subvert the documents through which citizenship is scripted. She does so not by directly examining citizenship in 1980s America but by tracing the bibliographic history of texts written in Caroline/Cromwellian England, including the *Eikon Basilike*, purportedly authored by King Charles I just before his execution, and subsequently undermined by John Milton's retort, *Eikonoklastes*. Howe indicates, both in her formal devices and in her uncovering of the figure of a wandering shepherdess, Pamela, who crosses between literary texts, interrupting ideology, the ways a written text might respond to and undermine existing written texts without itself imposing a definitive version of citizenship. In this conception of projective citizenship, the citizen comes

into being through fragmenting and piecing together existing texts; by so doing, the citizen can intervene in texts that conceive citizens in passive terms.

A question remains, in Howe's *A Bibliography of the King's Book; or, Eikon Basilike*, as to whose citizenship might be affected and effected through such textual subversions. While her formal innovations offer and depict a politics of textuality that aligns with the Marxist-inspired valuations of innovative poetry suggested by Anthony Easthope in *Poetry as Discourse*, her return to a historical moment risks setting aside the social-historical particulars of late-20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. citizenship. Howe's poetics provides a model for intervening in propagandist texts and institutional limitations on the citizen after the fact; it may only be able to limit existing scripts rather than transform them, even as it offers a methodology for disruption that extends beyond identity positions, escaping both Olson's masculinist stance and Baraka's cultural nationalism.

Myung Mi Kim, who like Howe engages documentary sources and questions of gender in her poetry, as well as questions of ethnic difference in experiencing America, is evidently influenced by Howe's poetics.<sup>73</sup> Although Kim is writing at the furthest remove from the publication of "Projective Verse," she has acknowledged the importance of projective poetics' "propositional character," the possibility that "the poem is what is in fact emerges at that very moment of encounter, with your ear, with your psyche, with your body, with your historical conditions" (Morrison, 83).<sup>74</sup> Projective poetics is one of the traditions within which Kim works as she imagines an alternative conception of the citizen aware of the presence of multiple languages within citizenship. In offering a poetry for "multilingual voices" that is paradoxically written in what seems to be English, Kim questions the "listening" by which written acts of citizenship function; she explores situations in which individuals-in-communities must attend to one another's discrepant uses of language in order to produce meaning. She directly rejects the normative versions of citizenship implied by the United States Citizenship Test, pondering not

“who can say who are / citizens” but how it is we speak as citizens, and how we listen to others speaking. Kim’s version of a citizenship through translation—in-translation, as I discuss in Chapter Four—makes possible a set of citizen-encounters that allow for dissonant experiences of written and spoken language. In so doing, it offers the most optimistic formulation of citizenship; her “multilingual voices” align with Balibar’s fourth worksite of citizenship, in which translation becomes a language through which citizens can avoid remaining trapped in a homogenizing national language.

At the same time, all four of these poets can only ultimately construct conjectural versions of citizenship. A poem cannot perform citizenship as a speech act in the way the U.S. Citizenship Oath does; as I discuss in my chapters on both Olson and Kim, the poem remains outside those spheres of activity that have directly constituted citizenship in the U.S. during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>75</sup> Poetry remains at best a worksite, an experiment that takes us outside the boundaries of what has been customarily understood by citizenship. Projective poetics attempt to unsettle us from habituated activities, but that attempt can only work, it seems, where we as fellow citizens are prepared to respond to it: “Poetry by itself cannot solve social problems, nor should it be asked to, but it can generate imaginative alternatives to narrow ways of being in the world that promote exploitation over exploration or blind convention over creativity” (Nichols, 11). Poetry’s oft-cited marginalisation from contemporary popular discourse, suggest that response on our part is lacking, especially when it comes to innovative poetics.

In engaging with questions of meaning—in exceeding the aesthetic not in a narrowly political way that targets only governmental language and institutional decisions but through a broader questioning of how acts of writing construct versions of citizenship—poetry can create new possibilities for citizenship.<sup>76</sup> If these possibilities are not equivalent to political change, they might make that political change possible through their alteration of the habitual practices that script

relationships between citizens and between the citizen and the state. While I discuss several moments where citizenship has been defined negatively, in terms of its failure or its limitations—the moments to which Olson, Jones/Baraka, Howe, and Kim are motivated to respond with creative, written acts—I hope by doing so to affirm the ways poetry matters within citizenship. Citizenship has become both a bureaucratic concept, rendering its logic invisible to most while still preserving its definitive judgement, and a popular idea, a notion vaguely harboured within public discourse. Poets have long been trying to make citizen status visible from where bureaucracy conceals its working, and by so doing inform that wider discourse. “Who can say who are /citizens” is a resonant challenge, a surviving question, a necessary uncertainty. Projective citizenship extends outward from that moment, where we find ourselves its latest addressees, its most recent speakers.

“To Try To Get Down One Citizen as Against Another”:

## Citizenship through Epistolarity in Charles Olson’s Early Poetry

“Do you renounce allegiance to any other country but this?”

—Myung Mi Kim, *Under Flag* (29)

### Writing Citizens: C.L.R. James, Charles Olson, and *Moby-Dick*

“The best claim I can put forward that my desire to become a citizen is not a selfish or frivolous one”: it was in such terms Anglo-Trinidadian writer and Marxist theorist C. L. R. James characterised his critical study of *Moby-Dick*, written on Ellis Island as James awaited deportation under the provisions of the Internal Security Act. *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: Herman Melville and the World We Live In* (1953) was a self-styled “claim before the American people,” an attempt to legitimate citizenship in 1950s American through an act of writing.

James, married to an American citizen, had petitioned for citizenship but the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) had rejected his application on the grounds of his writerly activity conducted in the decades before his petition. The adjudicating official, James records, “noted that I had written *World Revolution*, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist International*, a *History of Negro Revolt*, *The Black Jacobins*, had translated the life of *Stalin* [...] he considered that all this looked very suspicious [...] the founders of revolutionary movements, he said, had been writers” (155).<sup>77</sup> James’ choice of subjects situated him outside citizenship, according to the INS. Moreover, the INS official’s stance demonstrated a belief that writers had the power to affect other citizens’ beliefs.<sup>78</sup>

The decision against James makes clear how much citizen status in the 1950s was at the whim of government: the law at the time of James’ examination did not allow for his deportation; the

law, having changed subsequently, was invoked to remove him from any claim to citizenship. James was examined a month before the Internal Security Act was passed, yet his deportation was based on definitions of citizenship peculiar to that Act, Section 305 of which legislated the behavior of an applicant like James for the “ten years next preceding” petition. In effect, this section delimited citizenship for potential as well as actual applicants; anyone transgressing the Act’s approved activities during the period before petition would be “presumed [...] not well disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States, and unless he shall rebut such presumption he shall not be naturalized as a citizen.”<sup>79</sup> James was therefore already “un-American” even before applying for citizenship. The content of what he called his “pioneer work” led James to be labelled subversive, even though that work predated the writing of the McCarran Act, let alone its passage (157).

In the face of the INS’s coupling of his written work and his claim to citizenship, James’ study of *Moby-Dick* tried to transform citizenship through writing, to place writing as central to citizenship rather than as something which could forfeit one’s citizenship.<sup>80</sup> James attempted to rebut the INS’s “presumption” about his disposition towards the U.S.A. through a written counter-act, an interpretation of Melville’s version of American identity made not directly to the INS but “before the American people.” James’ choice of *Moby-Dick* as an object of study engaged a contemporary trend of reading Melville as a distinctly American book (a trend encouraged by newly-developed American Studies programs at Harvard and other universities). However, James’ reading departed from prevailing criticism: rather than interpreting Ishmael as having survived Ahab’s totalitarian monomania, as F.O. Matthiessen’s *American Renaissance* (1941) had recently done, James read Ishmael and Ahab as equally dangerous. He valued the *Pequod*’s crew over the individual: “it is the relations of the work on the ship that determine their status as individuals” (20). Only as related individuals, James contends, were the crew Melville’s “candidates for the

Universal Republic [...] a world federation of modern industrial workers.” In making a written claim to citizenship, James was also attempting to reimagine what citizens were: “They owe allegiance to no nationality” (20).

James’ claim to citizenship, asserting itself not to be “selfish or frivolous,” sought to legitimate him as part of a group identity that was more than social but still not simplistically national. Refusing to accept that the would-be citizen was without rights, he tried to write himself into citizen status by making a “protest against [these injustices] as a violation of the rights of every citizen of the United States” (158). He linked himself to legally-designated citizens, insisting that the injustices of INS policy and the Internal Security Act were “inconceivable to me, and, I am positive, to the great majority of American citizens” (165-6). In this phrasing, James aligns himself with “the great majority” by virtue of belief, not birth or ethnicity; the two first-person pronouns advocate for his inclusion in the category of “the citizen” as against the INS’s exclusion of him. Having exhausted legal channels,<sup>81</sup> *Mariners* constituted James’ final appeal, an appeal that relied not on the law but on his ability as a writer to invoke a community that could include would-be citizens alongside legally-designated American citizens, the two groups linked by a shared appreciation of human rights in the face of present injustice.<sup>82</sup>

James’ conception of citizenship was shaped and illustrated by the context of Ellis Island, where “the despised aliens, however fiercely nationalistic, are profoundly conscious of themselves as citizens of the world” (154). James did not overlook nationalism as a structuring force—his study was, after all, a petition for *American* citizenship, even if he often carefully cast it as “citizen[ship] of the United States,” and he devoted a chapter to the ways *Moby-Dick* is structurally and thematically American—but he critiqued the rigid division between citizens and aliens that reduced the humanity not only of aliens but also of the guards, managers, and judges in the INS. At the same time, he positioned citizenship as a higher status than national identification:



allegiance is owed not to nationality, in James' reading of Melville, but to the idea of citizenship itself, which emerges self-consciously as a way of being in a relationship to others.

James' claims existed in sharp distinction to prevailing popular and governmental rhetoric, within which citizen status was repeatedly treated as indistinguishable from national identity. James aligned himself with Melville's contention in *Redburn* that "you cannot spill a drop of American blood without spilling the blood of the whole world [...] Our blood is as the flood of the Amazon, made up of a thousand noble currents all pouring into one. We are not a nation, so much as a world" (169). Senator McCarran, the author of the Internal Security Act (1950, also known as the McCarran-Woods Act), claimed that America was "the last hope of Western civilization" and offered a very different formulation of American citizenship using almost the same imagery:

I take no issue with those who would praise the contributions which have been made to our society by people of many races, of varied creeds and colors. America is indeed a joining together of many streams which go to form a mighty river which we call the American way. However, we have in the United States today hard-core, indigestible blocs which have not become integrated into the American way of life.<sup>83</sup>

McCarran's metaphor cast the "mighty river" as exclusively American; reluctantly and conditionally including "many races, of varied creeds and colors," it imagined "the American way" as a single body threatened by what could not be integrated and incorporated: anything subversive was a bodily distemper, "indigestible." In McCarran's vision, the non-American individual could make "contributions" but could not rechannel or alter in any way "the American way of life." McCarran cannot bring himself to recognize the contributions of immigrant Americans; at best, he will agree not to complain if others do. The Act to which he gave his name visited similarly restricted understandings of "the American way" on the citizen, privileging the Americanness of citizenship rather than the citizenship of Americans.<sup>84</sup>

James' reading of *Moby-Dick* sought to reframe the individual's relationship to citizenship; in another, similarly radical study of *Moby-Dick* written around the same time, *Call Me Ishmael*, Charles Olson tried to reconceive American identity in terms what he would call "being as group with will" rather than in terms of individual rights and responsibilities.<sup>85</sup> There is no evidence that C.L.R. James knew Olson's work, or that Olson read James', yet both writers provocatively read the relations of labouring individuals—the "crew"—as key to *Moby-Dick* and to American identity; both studies were attempts to reimagine nationalism. In describing important American innovations in whaling—"the BRAND NEW," as Olson said about the 1688 petition to Governor Andross of Boston "for permission to set out upon a fishing design about the Bohames Islands, And Cap florida, for sperma Coeti whales and Racks"—Olson argued that such innovation worked *against* nationalism: it meant that "colonial boundaries were being eliminated" and it eroded "provincial patriotism" (24). Innovation exceeded nationalism. Outlining a similar sentiment in a letter to his then-student, Ed Dorn, Olson insisted, "you has this ADVANTAGE, that you is an American" but that in using such a label there was "(no patriotism intended: sign reads, 'LEAVE ALL FLAGS OUTSIDE—PARK YR KARKASSONE')." Olson "sought in his early poetry and prose to establish a background of internationalized space as the arena in which to imagine human suffering" (Herd, 2010, 381); *Call Me Ishmael* was an early attempt to reconceive the American without resorting to nationalist rhetoric.

*Call Me Ishmael* was, as James Ziegler has pointed out, a significant revision of Olson's work towards a doctorate at Harvard, an about-face in his hopes for American policy and his plans for American Studies as an incipient discipline. Olson's alternative to patriotism in *Call Me Ishmael* was to situate the individual within historical time and geographic space rather than as part of an Exceptional American identity justified by Manifest Destiny. Two Olsonian concepts are key to understanding this position: *'istorin* and "spatial nature." Olson defined history as *'istorin*

(Herodotus' term): something you had "to find out for yourself," as he had instructed Dorn: an individual process of discovery (1997b, 301, 304).<sup>86</sup> At the same time, Olson conceived of the American in distinctly geographical terms, defining "an American" as "a complex of occasions, / themselves a geometry / of spatial nature" ("Maximus to Gloucester, Letter #27," 1983, 185). Olson took "complex of occasions" from the phenomenological philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, whose *Adventures of Ideas* Olson read closely and enthusiastically when it was republished in 1954. There, Whitehead wrote: "the human body is indubitably a complex of occasions which are part of spatial nature" (191). In translating "complex of occasions" from all human bodies to a definition of "an American," Olson emphasized the particulars of an American environment or "spatial nature," the individual's immediate geography.

Yet the goal of *'istorin* and spatial nature was not the individual conceived of in isolation but what *Call Me Ishmael* termed "social force" (63). Olson outlined three options for "an American." Firstly, "you can approach BIG America and spread yourself like a pancake, sing her stretch as Whitman did," which is "easy. THE AMERICAN WAY [...] N.G." Whitmanian poetics failed to resonate for Olson because they did not account for the particularities of individual experience, although they did reflect the individual's connections to the group. Although Whitman's "I contain multitudes" and Olson's "one makes many" might seem to share a philosophy, Olson would base his sense of the group on individual acts of self-knowledge, rather than on an attempt to empathise with others. Olson similarly dismissed the second option for "an American" as being "easy too": to "recognize our power is simply QUANTITY. Without considering purpose" would fail to get at the root of what made the American *American*; it was effectively static.

Olson's preferred approach was "the creative vantage": "See her as OBJECT in MOTION, something to be shaped, for use. It involves a first act of physics" (63). The individual emerged not through Whitmanian mass but through relations of individual labor. James had seen Ahab and

Ishmael as part of the same problem; Olson saw Ishmael as part of the solution, but refused to position Ahab as the villain. While “Americans believe themselves such democrats,” Ahab was also a part of American democracy: “Ahab is the FACT, the crew the IDEA” (64). The crew was only “what we imagine democracy to be” and democracy as a “political system [...] had led men to think they were free of aristocracy” (64). Democracy, though preferable to totalitarianism, risked turning individuals into spectators who could not even recognize that they were being passive.

Olson’s solution to passivity, developed particularly during the 1950s, involved the “interchange” of ideas among individuals who formed a willing (though not necessarily harmonious) group. In *Call Me Ishmael*, he outlined a first version of this willing group, predicated on relations between actively participant individuals. Olson termed those on board the *Pequod* “[Melville’s] crew, a ‘people,’ Cloutz and Tom Paine’s people, all races and colors functioning together, a fore-castle reality of Americans not yet a dream accomplished by the society.” He saw these Americans, as Melville had in *Redburn*, as a group not dependent on nationality but instead formed around their own labor, Paine’s writings, and Anacharsis Cloutz’s appearance at the French National Constituent Assembly on June 19, 1790. Olson positioned this “crew” as a deferred ideal, a dream “not yet [...] accomplished,” “not yet a dream,” a “fore-castle reality.”<sup>87</sup> Melville’s written republic existed only potentially, a fact to which James’ deportation attests: while Olson and James both identified individuals acting together as an alternative to a governmentally-scripted, nationalist citizenship, James remained outside the “crew,” deported.

Within *Call Me Ishmael*, Olson had not yet begun to formulate a concept of citizenship; instead, he remained focused on the group-oriented individual. That not all individuals were welcome to form “a people” in the United States at the time Olson (and Melville) wrote is nowhere addressed in *Call Me Ishmael*, though it occasionally surfaces, as when Olson describes Owen Chase’s crew on the *Essex* (the model for the *Pequod*) as comprising “George Pollard, Jr. as captain, Owen Chase

and Matthew Joy mates, 6 of her complement of 20 men Negroes, bound for the Pacific Ocean” (Olson 11). In this instance of “all races and colors functioning together,” the black sailors are separate from the others, functioning differently as signifiers if not as sailors. That they are “*bound for the Pacific Ocean*” eerily calls to mind captive Africans on slave ships, further objectifying these sailors even as Olson sought to accord them full membership of a “crew, ‘a people.’”<sup>88</sup> Olson’s depiction of individuals working in relation to one another risked obscuring the way cultural particulars compromised individuals’ experience of group membership.

Herein lay both the fantasy and the dystopia of Olson’s view of the group: while he hoped free-to-participate individuals could actively form relationships as Americans in a non-national sense of the term, he did so at a time when America excluded individuals from citizenship, in law or in practice, based on their ethnicity, religion, and gender. His writings during the 1950s and 1960s do not represent a consistent theory of citizenship; however, through paying careful attention to Olson’s struggle to develop new ways of understanding who the citizen might be and what he might do as a citizen, we can uncover a number of key elements of citizenship that are both particular to Olson’s historical moments and germane to our contemporary landscape, where citizenship is once again an urgent category.

In this chapter, I argue that Olson sought to re-define citizenship in terms of individuals’ creative, written acts as opposed to governmental legislation and nationalist rhetoric. I show how his influential essay “Projective Verse” drew on his interpretation of the individual in *Call Me Ishmael*, and his understanding of human contact and physiognomy in the letters that formed “Human Universe,” to develop a theory of what I call “projective citizenship” that placed writing at the heart of what it means to be a citizen. Olson’s plethora of letters model an epistolary methodology for achieving a communal, creative citizenship; his serial epic, *Maximus*, combined the pedagogical role of the poet with the epistolary possibilities of the letter as he attempted to

form a polis of citizens that could extend beyond Gloucester, beyond the pages of *New American Poetry*, and beyond such magazines as *Origin*, *Floating Bear*, and *Yugen*—open to unanticipated horizons.<sup>89</sup> However, this ideal epistolary polis failed to effectively oppose institutional redefinitions of citizenship during the 1940s, '50s, and '60s that prescribed acceptable American behaviour and which included the Internal Security Act; the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC); the internment of 120,000 Japanese American citizens and residents in concentration camps in the Western States and Arkansas; and other *de jure* and *de facto* segregation along racial and gender lines.<sup>90</sup>

The America that Olson professed to have been “absorbed” by had been long engaged in a struggle over the rhetorical and political definition of citizenship; this struggle had intensified during the 1930s and reached a crisis point in the early post-war period. Poets and literary critics participated in these debates over American identity and the definition of citizenship as much as anyone else: as Alan Filreis has documented, the very public war of words that took place between Communists, anti-Communists, and anti-anti-Communists from the 1930s through the 1950s tasked poetry variously with models or perversions of acceptable American behaviour. The notion of the citizen-poet effectively claimed for the forces of conservatism the definition of the good citizen: someone who was formally traditional, anti-innovative, and grammatically normative. Innovative poetry was not only ‘bad’ art—it was bad citizenship.

These debates both reflected and were influenced by legislative changes and governmental policies during the '30s, '40s, and '50s that had direct repercussions for the ways U.S. citizens behaved. The Dies Committee, which formed in 1938 from the Special Committee on Un-American Activities (1934-1937), investigated acts of alleged disloyalty by Americans; in 1945, this committee gave rise to a Standing Committee, the infamous House Un-American Activities Committee, which lasted from 1945 to 1975. As a result, American citizens’ freedom of political

beliefs were narrowed, with communists and any parties that could be linked to them (however erroneously) risking internment or social alienation. The Dies Committee helped pave the way for the Internal Security Act (1950), which began as the McCarran-Woods Bill, and the Immigration and Naturalisation Act (1952), which began as the McCarran-Walter Bill, both of which redefined the relationships between aliens and citizens. In a radical revision of immigration policy, the former allowed for the removal of citizen status if someone was deemed to have engaged in “un-American activities.” It also for the first time required an oath from would-be citizens swearing “to bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by law.”<sup>91</sup> Although the 1960s would see an apparent expansion of citizenship rights, Olson’s America was a place where the citizen’s behaviour was increasingly controlled; courses of actions permitted to the citizen at one time could be dramatically altered according to the mood of the time. Both individual Americans and elected legislators increasingly tried to ratify an appropriate syntax, an approved faith, and acceptable political beliefs as the terms of American citizenship.<sup>92</sup>

### Towards a Projective Citizenship

In 1966, Olson wrote, “I’ve been absorbed by the subject of America all my life” (1997b, 593). He had studied in one of the earliest Ph.D. programs in American Civilization, worked for the Common Council for American Unity and the Office of Inter-American Affairs, written a pioneering critical study of *Moby-Dick*, been the figurehead of Donald Allen’s *The New American Poetry 1945-1960*, and spent sixteen years working on his Gloucester, Massachusetts-based epic, *Maximus*, which explored what his literary executor, George F. Butterick, described as “the conditions of the larger America” (xvi).<sup>93</sup> From several vantage points, Olson was a decidedly American poet, and current critical discourse often rightly reads Olson in relation to an American

cultural landscape: Carla Billitteri identifies “a nationalist belief that American experience provides the most favorable possible ground” for renewing society within the work of Olson, Walt Whitman, and Laura (Riding) Jackson (6); other recent monographs and articles have explored Olson’s Americanism and his role in fostering a “New American” poetics.<sup>94</sup>

In what ways, though, was Olson “absorbed by the subject of America”? For a time he was directly involved in the governmental attempts to define citizens’ behavior that James was resisting: from 1942-44, Olson worked alongside many other New Deal writers and artists at Foreign Languages Information Services (FLIS) in the Office of War Information (OWI). His work at OWI and, briefly, at the Office of Inter-American Affairs, involved “interpreting and ‘promoting’ the war for the benefit of the millions of immigrant citizens who were being counted on to populate the trenches and the assembly lines” (Clark, 78). Olson collaborated with painter Ben Shahn on a pamphlet, *Spanish Speaking Americans*, writing documentary poems such as “*Bataan—/ old Spain’s sun / dries copper skin / of Coronado child / holed up and killed.*” Susan Vanderborg has argued that this bilingual photo-and-poetry pamphlet “equated personal storytelling—lyrical commentary and personal photographs of soldiers and their families—with ‘evidence’ of a national narrative validated in the bodies of its citizens” (367). Olson’s work saw him helping to script that “national narrative,” using writing to name the terms of desirable American citizenship—work he also pursued in his next position, for the Democratic National Convention, when he was charged with ensuring that new citizens voted for Roosevelt’s re-election campaign.

While Olson was thus for a time complicit in a construction of citizenship that imagined certain kinds of acceptable behaviour for citizens, his growing awareness of the propagandist dimensions of his role led him to quit the OWI before the war ended. Over time, Olson experienced increasingly conservative attempts to revise the New Deal’s social policy, marked by a shift from employing writers and artists to employing advertisers: Olson, Shahn, poet Archibald



MacLeish, and Greek specialist Connie Poulos were phased or forced out by figures like Price Gilbert, Coca-Cola's vice president of advertising, who wanted more cheerful representations of war.<sup>95</sup> MacLeish resigned because he felt that "trying to help a self-governing people to govern themselves by seeing that they got the information" had come dangerously close to "the verge of propaganda" (quoted in Belgrad, 23); Olson and Poulos followed soon after, on May 18 1944 (Clark, 82-85). Olson, who had begun by wanting to use writing to communicate to his fellow citizens, had come to realise that he was being asked to use writing in order to misinform others.

The very factors that led MacLeish to resign led Olson to seek political change in creative ways rather than through governmental means. He explained his February, 1945 decision to leave politics and become a writer in his poem "The K."<sup>96</sup> Originally titled "Telegram," as though rejecting a position in Roosevelt's administration (were one to be offered), the poem began:

Take, then, my answer:  
there is a tide in a man  
moves him to his moon and,  
though it drops him back  
he works through ebb to mount  
the run again and swell  
to be tumescent I

The affairs of man remain a chief concern. (1997a, 14)

The monostich "The affairs of man remain a chief concern" signalled that abandoning politics did not mean neglecting social and political concerns: the poem assumed an attentive audience ready to take his answer. The "tide in a man" recurs in the later line "There! is a tide in the affairs of men to discern," indicating that poetry stems from the individual writer but concerns a group occupied by "the affairs of men." The writing poet is conceived as motivating an "I" who is responsible to and moved by larger forces both social and natural. The use of a poem to announce Olson's decision situated poetry as a way to "answer" contemporary social problems.

Olson believed that the artist might impact social life: around the time, he wrote to his former OWI colleague, anthropologist Ruth Benedict, “I regret we are not city states here in this wide land. Differentiation, yes. But also the chance for a person like yourself or myself to be central to social action at the same time and because of one’s own creative work.” Olson’s letter to Benedict aligned three key elements of what would become his projective vision of citizenship: an epistolary methodology, the recognition of political possibilities in creative acts, and an interest in the importance of the city space, the original locus of citizenship. Olson did not just hope, as his biographer Tom Clark has suggested, that “in some city state of the future [...] he might return to public life” (94); his writing, as “creative work” which could produce “social action,” attempted to realize that “future city state” through an alternative version of citizenship to the one his work at OWI/FLIS had ultimately propounded. Becoming a writer instead involved what Olson later named the possibility of “a poet, or a man who wld in fact write a republic [still so far as I can ‘hear,’ the real word for politics—*res politius populous puberte public*” (in Butterick, 1981, 505). “The K,” as a creative act, resigns its writer, un-signing him from governmental allegiance to resign him to work on the “affairs of men,” a creative *res publicus*—things common to the people.<sup>97</sup>

Olson’s turn from a “national narrative” of governmental duty towards what he saw as the fuller participation of writing a republic engages what critical theorist and citizenship scholar Charles T. Lee has described as “the third space of citizenship.”<sup>98</sup> Lee adapts that term, used by Gloria Anzaldúa, Homi K. Bhabha, and others, as a way to exceed Giorgio Agamben’s “rigid binary that divides humanity into political life (citizenship) and bare life (no rights, nonparticipation)” (58). James’ *Mariners* illustrates the insufficiency of Agamben’s position: to name the denial of citizen status to James as “bare life” does recognize an injustice but also obscures his agency, the meaning in the creative act that writes him into participation, political life, and even citizenship (from his own perspective, if not the INS’s). In addition to the limited set of

“juridical institutions or political acts” by which citizenship gets recognized, Lee identifies “a hegemonic cultural script that sustains liberal governance in reproducing a ‘normal’ and ‘proper’ mode of social life that interpellates how subjects should behave as citizens” (59).<sup>99</sup> Lee analyzes the experiences of undocumented migrant workers; he argues that in cases where juridical institutions do not recognize people as citizens, we can still see how individual acts produce claims to citizenship. The “third space” exists between legal citizenship and nonparticipation; it involves “lived practices by the abject that are neither transparently democratic nor directly counterhegemonic, and yet they interrupt the stagnant liberal way of life and reinscribe the cultural script of citizenship” (59). Olson’s development of a new poetics forms an attempt to interrupt such cultural scripts, using the projective potential of writing to imagine alternatives to fixed norms of cultural behaviour within America.<sup>100</sup>

Olson’s early essays after his turn from governmental work, and the poetry he was writing at the time, repeatedly invoked and questioned the concept of the citizen. “Bring the head ’round, keep the wind, citizen!” he admonished in “The Story of an Olson and a Bad Thing” (1997a, 180), later urging, in “Memory, Mind, and Will...”: “assert / yourself use / public service use / the citizen carry out / public policy” (603). These lines suggest that the citizen might be active within the public sphere, a valuable, assertive participant; at the same time, citizenship is cast as something which can be used by others (“use the citizen”), an instrument of “politicians including / leaders of service unions / who can tie up distribution.” Olson saw citizenship as caught within others control: in “A Po-sy, A Po-sy,” he warned Americans of their establishment-inflected status, “watch out, CITIZENS, they’ve / got you where it hurts” (107). Olson located the citizen outside the establishment yet constructed by it. At the same time, such outsider status might allow the citizen a position from which to act against the establishment: “wype it, / citizen, / get on with it” (107), he taunted, criticizing his reader-citizens for a lack of action.

Similarly, in a short poem begun in 1958 and continually returned to until 1963, Olson attempted “To Try To Get Down One Citizen as Against Another”:

To bug: an act of intelligence  
Where other less persons will  
Disorganize the air for city blocks with  
Their compulsions. (466)

Olson’s deployment of the hip slang of the day (“to bug”) morphs into an ironic commentary on acts of so-called intelligence gathering, cast as a means by which some residents “disorganize” the city for others. Such bugging is not seen as an act of governmental infraction against private individuals (although Olson was visited by FBI agents while teaching at Black Mountain College) but as a negative act one person perpetrates against another; more than an agonistic citizenship, Olson depicts an antagonism in which citizens are pitted in contest (Clark, 1991, 217-9). By attributing these offences to “less persons,” Olson suggests that these “acts of intelligence” cause a change in personhood rather than in citizen status. There are two significant implications of this: firstly, a suggestion that citizens are people rather than governmental categories; secondly, an argument that *acts* constitute the citizen, in positive and negative ways. Olson’s short poem counters the ill-defined governmental proscription of “un-American activities,” which was depriving individuals of the ability to belong and participate. In making repeated attempts to “get down one citizen as against another” though his five year drafting period, attempts signalled by the double infinitive “To Try to” that begins the title and announces the poem as process rather than pronouncement, Olson was trying to rewrite the citizenship rather than abandon it to government.

His continued engagement with the idea of the citizen led him to write citizenship into the imagined community of Gloucester in his several-hundred page epic, *Maximus*. “Letter 3,” ostensibly from “Maximus, to Gloucester,” considers the audience that the “I” might reach in a given geography:

I speak to any of you, not to you all, to no group, not to you as citizens  
as my Tyrian might have. Polis now  
is a few, is a coherence not even yet new (the island of this city  
is a mainland now of who? Who can say who are  
citizens? (1983, 15)

The Maximus who authored this letter was, Olson wrote in a notebook in 1961, “the person who addresses himself to the City” (in Butterick, 1981, 8). This speaking “I,” an individual who is not Maximus of Tyre but is linked to him—“my Tyrian”—invokes an open audience (“any of you”) that is also finite: the “any” does not constitute “you all.” As elsewhere in his writing, Olson seeks to avoid subsuming the individual within the group while preserving communal horizons, “a coherence,” “the island of this city.”<sup>101</sup> His lineation offers the possibility of an association between citizen and city-island while refusing legislative authority to name citizen status: “Who can say who are / citizens?” is an open question that implies, among other things, that no one should have such power of definition.

Both speaking and listening—expression and attendance—are presented as key to the emergence of polis and citizenship. Gloucester citizens are asked to engage with language, to be “a man or a girl who hear a word” and know it means “not a single thing the least more than / what it does mean.” In order for this to happen, a “knowing man of your city [...] a letter carrier, say” needs to announce “the conditions” of the local place, “the cut-water of anyone” (1983, 15-16). Olson hints at his own biography as “one tansy-covered boy” and as letter carrier, a reminder of the individual activity of finding out that *istorin* required. However, he does not claim an authoritative position in Gloucester: *Maximus* is his epic, but he is not its only participant, and while Olson invokes a pedagogic authority—the “knowing man”—he also brings in the “anyone” who might shape polis through their acts. The circulation of letters (modelled in the poem’s epistolary mode), a careful listening to others, and a conception of city-space as inhabited by active citizens and possessing a particular geography are the crucial elements of this “coherence,” with

the pun on “here” emphasising locale, not in the narrow sense of Gloucester, MA, opposed to other locals, but in the wider sense of the city-space more generally.

Where C.L.R. James offered an argument as to whom the citizen was or should be (a writer invested in membership of an American community), Olson’s writings identify a methodology for acting (rather than being) as a citizen. This methodology first emerged in “Projective Verse,” the influential statement of poetics Olson published three years after *Call Me Ishmael*. This essay was subtitled as concerning “prose and verse”; it allowed Olson to develop an epistolary conception of citizenship for both poems and letters, modes which became increasingly interchangeable within his work. “Projective Verse” developed *Call Me Ishmael*’s notion of “crew” into an explicit argument for “participant” behavior, human interaction, and citizenship.<sup>102</sup> Emerging through an exchange of letters with Robert Creeley and Frances Boldereff, and therefore epistolary in its process as well as its tone, “Projective Verse” was a response to the poetry of Pound, and in particular the *Pisan Cantos*.<sup>103</sup> One of Olson’s duties as Pound’s secretary involved taking corrected drafts of *The Pisan Cantos* to James Laughlin, Pound’s publisher at New Directions; he used the opportunity to copy down some parts (Hatlen, 130).<sup>104</sup> Rewriting Pound’s lines in his notebooks, Olson learned from Pound’s writing style as he shaped his own. As he would acknowledge in “Projective Verse,” the *Cantos* did not solve the problem of poetic composition, but “the methodology of the verse in them points a way by which, one day, the problem of a larger content and of larger forms may be solved” (1997b, 248). The *Pisan Cantos* were, Burton Hatlen argues, “the prototypical ‘projective’ text” (132). While Olson’s theory of writing emerged through his own early poems, his reading of other modernist poets (especially William Carlos Williams), and numerous letters exchanged with correspondents, it is Pound’s *Pisan Cantos* that most provided a case study for what might be possible—and what should be avoided. Beyond the formal, aesthetic

characteristics of the *Pisan Cantos*, Olson finds a methodology for a meaningful political stance: the active participant engaging with others in the political world.

Stephen Fredman has shown that “Projective Verse” aimed to create a “social poetics” (Gerald Bruns’ term); extending Fredman’s argument that Olson wanted to form a “community of resistant poets,” we can read “Projective Verse” as specifically outlining an alternative mode of citizenship predicated on individuals’ creative acts targeted towards others.<sup>105</sup> Olson identifies the work of his essay as, in part, “to suggest a few ideas about what stance towards reality brings such verse into being, what that stance does, both to the poet and to his reader” (239). More than a statement of poetics, his essay offers a theory of a community formed around writing which was oriented towards the phenomenal world, what the essay’s second section terms “reality outside a poem.” “Projective Verse” develops the criticism Olson made in “This is Yeats Speaking”—namely, that Americans were too passive before historical and present authority, traditional forms and forms of government or corporate, commercialised institutions; it offers a methodology (which Olson defined as “a way” and “a road,” 1997b, 398) for becoming active again through writing.

At the heart of such acts was a definition of writing as “energy transferred from where the poet got it [...] all the way over to, the reader”; projective verse concerned itself with questions of transfer, of the space towards which writing would project (1997b, 245). In the final sentence of his essay, Olson instructed the “projective poet” to go “down through the workings of his own throat to that place where breath comes from, where breath has its beginnings, where drama has come from, where, the coincidence is, all act springs.” Action, stemming from deep inside the individual, allowed for a connection with others; as Olson reminds us, “breath has a double meaning which latin had not yet lost,” since it bridges “place of origin [to] its destination,” from the inner workings of the body to others’ ears and eyes as sound and word (245). The projective

poet could “record the listening he has done to his own speech” through orchestrating space on the (typewritten) page, expressing for others what he has heard inside himself. The projective page was a record of a writer’s individual physiognomy for a reader.

Within this method, the ear has a dual role: the poem emerges within the writer though “the union of the mind and ear,” the poet’s ability to listen to his own rhythms; the ear is also the threshold space by which a poem enters another’s body. Olson saw the ear as connecting members of a group: when he described the poet’s role in a May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1955 letter to Robert Duncan, Olson turned to a “celtic” idea of the poet “stopping the battle, to get it down. [...] Holding up one’s hand, and everybody suddenly ceasing what they are doing, and lending ear!” (in Butterick, 1981, 140). An early draft of the very first *Maximus* poem, “I, Maximus of Gloucester, To You” (dated April 23, 1953) opens not “off-shore,” as the final version does, but “By ear, he sd,” a turn of phrase which links speaking and hearing, going so far as to suggest that one might speak “by ear,” a notion that has resonance for Myung Mi Kim’s engagement with both projective poetics and citizenship in the United States. Likewise, in a later poem, Olson exhorts poets “to build out of sound the walls of the city” (1997a, 600), suggesting a link between the hearing ear, the articulating breath, and city-space.

Like much of Olson’s writing, “Projective Verse” invokes a present audience, a “you” in thrall to the immediate piece of writing not as eavesdropper or spectator but as participant: “get on with it, keep moving, keep in, speed, the nerves, their speed, the perceptions, theirs, the acts, the split second acts, the whole business, keep it moving as fast as you can, citizen” (1997b, 240). The construction of audience within “Projective Verse” is, as critics such as Catherine Stimpson have argued, insistently masculinist, a band of “brothers” eligible for entry “inside the machinery, now, 1950, of how projective verse is made” (241). Yet Rachel Blau DuPlessis suggests this reference to the reader as citizen in the essay works as “the only exception” to Olson’s many “absolutely



gendered exhortations”; she reads this moment as a call for “citizenship in an alternative nation of poetry” (2006, 86).<sup>106</sup> Drawing on Kathleen Fraser’s arguments that Olson’s manifesto helped women break free of the “tidy, domesticated page,” DuPlessis recognizes both Olson’s “homosocial and gender-exclusionary subtext” and the open use of his manifesto by its readers, the fact that “fascinatingly, many women were inspired by this Olson essay. They could read through the homosocial narrative and block or transpose it” (84). Susan Howe’s finding of the “feminine” within Olson’s poetry offers one example of such transposition as she identifies aporias where he had sought instead to instill a male ideal (1993a, 180). Howe’s reading represents a revision of Olson which, as I discuss in Chapter Three, engages the construction of citizenship narratives through the composition of texts rather than via epistolarity, finding and exploiting “the presence of absence” through Pamela, the wandering shepherdess of Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia* who wanders into the 17<sup>th</sup> century *Eikon Basilike* and Howe’s *A Bibliography of the King’s Book; or, Eikon Basilike* (1989).

Rachel Blau DuPlessis, in her own transposition of the terms of Olson’s masculinist citizenship, likewise refuses to ignore the gender-exclusionary while equally refusing to be excluded by it. In so doing, she reveals the lack of fit between the ideal horizon of Olson’s project and his construction of its terms. Olson’s “Projective Verse” positions certain kinds of Americans in unequal relationships to citizen status, just as *Call Me Ishmael* had done in its reading of the African crew members of the *Essex*. That DuPlessis originally made her argument about “Projective Verse” in an essay footnote (1996) and later moved it to the main body of a book chapter (2006) neatly illustrates how ideas of citizenship are constantly being rewritten through and around poetry. Olson’s “Projective Verse” attempted to dynamize the citizen against instrumental definitions; his claim itself practiced exclusion, and so required rewriting by writers like Howe and DuPlessis.<sup>107</sup> As a footnote, DuPlessis’ claim argued with the main body of her

essay, which had linked the “citizen” of “Projective Verse” to “binary either/or questions” symptomatic of “both excitement and frustration [...] as if I was being exhorted and excluded at once.” Her book, *Blue Studios*, replaced that description of her reading process with the suggestion that women writers had managed to put Olson’s statement to use, a revision that enacted DuPlessis’ decision to privilege exhortation over exclusion. That she does so via the notion of the citizen, and despite the fact that she had earlier linked that notion to a “brotherhood or new citizenship of poetry,” suggests that DuPlessis recognized, perhaps even more than Olson, the possibility and value of a non-exclusionary citizenship articulated through poetry. She engaged in and extended the rewriting of citizenship scripts, a rewriting Olson saw as key to reimagining citizen status around active individuals, whom DuPlessis sees in “Manifests” as fundamentally but not rigidly gendered.<sup>108</sup> DuPlessis’ re-writing of her own and Olson’s positions is itself an example of the way a projective citizenship might operate through a reader writing in response to others’ written acts, turning the process of response into a taking of responsibility.

In “Human Universe,” written a year after “Projective Verse,” initially as a series of letters from the Yucatan, where Olson was excavating fragments of Mayan pottery, Olson more fully theorized his notion of the individual as active in the group space of citizenship. He described traveling on a bus in Mexico with “a people who are more or less directly the descendants of a culture and a civilization which is the opposite of that which we have known and of which we are the natural children.” The experience particular to these Mayan-descended individuals allowed them, or so Olson felt, a different relationship to the individual/group dynamic:

when I am rocked by the roads against any of them—kids, women, men—their flesh is most gentle, is granted, touch is in no sense anything but the natural law of flesh, there is none of that pull-away which, in the States, causes a man for all the years of his life the deepest sort of questioning of the rights of himself to the wild reachings of his own organism. (1997b, 158)

The spatial qualities of place, the contours of the uneven roads, led Olson to his own discovery (*'istorin*) that “touch” and “flesh” were absent from the American context. His sentences record the difference between flesh as “granted” and American “pull-away,” which leads not only to isolation from the group, but to self-doubt; to be unable to grant flesh to others was to be unable to know oneself. More than a compare-and-contrast of two generalized cultures, Olson was attempting to prevent U.S. “pull-away” by writing America into the Mayan social space through his own body brought into contact “by the roads”; he was also trying, through his projective epistle-turned-essay, to write Mayan social space into an American context which it might transform.

Significantly, Olson locates this “granted” contact outside the space of governmental and legal jurisdiction, responsible only to a “natural law” and to a man’s “rights of himself.” Olson, who briefly worked as an agent for Polish interests on the United Nations Security Council, would have been aware of human rights debates over the writing of the Universal Declaration, and his vocabulary here alludes to that wider context, intervening to suggest an alternative beyond the governmental.<sup>109</sup> Likewise, he responded to the atrocities of the concentration camps not by seeking legal redress but by insisting on the recognition that human physiognomy could connect individuals separated by geography and experience. In his 1953 piece “The Resistance—for Jean Riboud,” he wrote, “Man came here by an intolerable way. When man is reduced to so much fat for soap, superphosphate for soil, fillings and shoes for sale, he has, to begin again, one answer, one point of resistance to such fragmentation, one organized ground” (1997b, 174). The persecution of Jews and others in the concentration camps was, among other things, an offense against the body’s integrity. In naming the ways the Nazis visited “such fragmentation” on Jewish bodies, Olson shifted between using “man” to name individuals and “man” as a group term, linking suffering bodies to a group of witnesses, survivors, and others. The implication for all

individuals is that “It is his own physiology he is forced to arrive at”: the body becomes vital to individual identity, “this organism now our citadel” to which the individual “arrives”; at the same time, the individual never exists in isolation from a group, an idea suggested in the conception of the individual body as a citadel, a city-space.

Instead of legal institutions granting rights, Olson suggested granting flesh, individuals who “touch” either through skin or through words which communicate with the energy of syllables originating deep within human physiognomy. “Human Universe” ends by asserting “they were hot for the world they lived in, these Maya, hot to get it down: the way it was—the way it is, my fellow citizens” (163). To conclude with a reference to the concept of citizenship was not simply a rhetorical gesture; it was an attempt to link citizenship and social contact. Olson’s construction “the way it was—the way it is” seeks to bridge the forgotten past—the moment humans went wrong and started to “live long in a generalizing time”—and the contemporary moment, aiming to pull into the present across geography an alternative model for social activity. Across the em-dash, Olson tries to make the past *not* past, “was” coterminous with “is.” His final apostrophe, “my fellow citizens,” teeters ambiguously between naming the Mayans he was in physical contact with and the American context he was hoping to affect through writing. He casts citizenship as expressed through instances of touching, among which were the act of writing and reading as well as the physical proximity of flesh. In light of a projective poetics in which the page records the writer’s physiognomy, granting touch did not only have to involve physical proximity.

We should not ignore the imperial aspects of Olson’s written gesture, which effectively appropriates Yucatan space from an American vantage, repositioning its culture for American use. Though such repositioning might be an attempt to dissolve cultural and national boundaries in favor of a human universalism based on “natural law,” it necessarily extends American influence at the expense of other localities as Olson speaks for “these Maya.” However, as David Herd has

shown, Olson's letters reveal that "while in Mexico he well understood himself to be in an imperialized space" (387). Herd's argument that Olson was attempting "a poetic method capable of registering the relation between writing, bodies and geo-political space" (395) as against "a silence on the subject of complicity" helps us realize, in ways analogous to DuPlessis' realizations about the citizen's status in "Projective Verse," that American citizenship was being redefined within Olson's work as part of a move to situate the citizen beyond existing legal and bureaucratic definitions.

For Olson, rewriting the terms of citizenship involved emphasizing an individual's spatial nature and the act of *'istorin* as correctives to governmental definition. In 1953, the year he published the first ten *Maximus* poems and the year C.L.R. James was deported, Olson wrote to his old high school, Worcester Classical, to propose a gathering of his graduating class: "Some coming together of us, and you people of the Faculty, might be a via of making the point it strikes me this 25 year date might be made to signify: some sounding, like a gong, of what the local is when one is a 'citizen' of a city" (2000, 185). Olson's letter, an attempt "to signify" the citizen, revised both the classical idea of citizen as member of a city and contemporary notion of citizen-subjects owing allegiance to a nation. Against national allegiance, he placed the citizen in "the local," imagining citizenship as a set of social relations between individuals.<sup>110</sup> Lisa Lowe has argued that "U.S. national culture—the collectively forged images, histories, and narratives that place, displace, and replace individuals in relation to the national polity—powerfully shapes who the citizenry is, where they dwell, what they remember, and what they forget" (7). While citizenship is a legal status related to nationality, it can be affected, effected, and rewritten through cultural acts; Olson's citizenship claim in a letter to and about his high school constituted one such cultural act of rewriting. His vision of citizenship acknowledged an association with city-

space while conceiving of the citizen as actively social rather than passively determined in light of a governmental category.

Olson explains the logic of this writing-based citizenship in a letter to Ralph Maud, where he argues that neither his quasi-hermeticism nor his departure from political activity in the limited sense of electoral politics and party membership discounts him from citizenship:

I have been a person to stay at home; and possibly even so much so that I am “out”; and the more puzzled that such questions as Communism as a test of Loyalty (Americanism it must be which then is tested, yes?) loyalty to the United States? Or to the State of New York????

one doesn't any longer (with one's friends running for the next to the highest offices in the land, from the now gathering larger State than New York) quite know where these matters of membership or citizenship are

In fact, that the social is economic and that the political is ethical; and that education, so far as I can see, is as Plato was clear it was, the crucial preparation of the citizen for political life. (2000, 304)

In this rare instance of agreement with Plato, so often his straw man, Olson identified two dominant models for citizenship as it existed in contemporary America: first, the demonstration of loyalty; second, involvement in formal structures of government.<sup>111</sup> Both were problematic: loyalty begged the question of what was being “tested” and to whom loyalty was owed, especially within a federated country liable to pit one state's notion of citizenship against another's or against the federal whole.<sup>112</sup> Governmental positions and the party system likewise could lead to uncertainty about “matters of membership or citizenship.”<sup>113</sup> Olson's alternative was to see the “political life” of the individual citizen as an ethical position rooted in education. He replaced oaths of loyalty, the rhetoric of national identification, and notions of residence with a more complex version of citizenship by means of epistolarity. In writing to Maud, in writing “Projective Verse,” and in cohering “fellow citizens,” Olson expressed citizenship as an educative act, that “crucial preparation,” which began with individual physiognomy and projectively reached out towards others.

Olson was insistent about the means of achieving such “political life”: it was “solely poetry—and I mean a poetry not to be confused with the poetic” that offered the methodology (2000, 304). Whereas Plato exiled poets from the city as dangerous to its orthodox political functioning, for Olson poetry made citizenship possible in ways that government did not. His ideas align with Engin Isin’s exploration of the way poetics has a potentially transformative relationship to politics, citizenship, and city-space. Precisely because poetics originally “helped the aristocracy forge a specific identity and distinguish itself from groups that it constituted as its other,” poetics could also allow strangers and outsiders—those others—to reconfigure citizenship: poetics were a way of “making claims to the polis or becoming political” (2002, 90). For Isin, Plato’s fear of the “frightful possibilities” of transformative claims was what led him to banish poets, since poetics could voice “forms of alterity [that] are created dialogically and are open to reversals, reinterpretations, and contestation” (285), a set of processes evident within Olson’s understanding of citizenship. Ending his letter to Maud “ok? will you therefore sign here?” Olson opened a space for affirmation *and* revision, the act of signing as approval (writing) or dissent (writing back). That his questions tended to invite consensus rather than dissensus is a marker of Olson’s confidence both that he was right and that, were he not, others would feel his same confidence to assert otherwise; “please come back on me if you are interested,” he ended one letter.<sup>114</sup>

Beyond *ad hoc* epistolary exchanges, and beyond the writing and publishing of poems, Olson sought to formalize citizenship through epistolary within the city-space of Gloucester, in the form of Black Mountain College in North Carolina, and via such small magazines as *Origin: A Quarterly for the Creative*, edited by Cid Corman. To do so, he invoked and redefined the classical notion of the polis, the original site of citizenship, the “city state” Olson had hopefully written of to Ruth Benedict. The classical polis had specified rigid roles within Greek society and entailed military responsibilities: Weber influentially (if misleadingly) identified polis as “warrior’s guild” while

Faulks has recently explained that “the polis was considered as prior to, and constitutive of, the individual” (16-7), a quite different formulation of the group than Olson’s prioritization of individual activity. Indeed, writing in 1952, the year after *Origin* started and two years after beginning *Maximus*, Olson pondered how to adapt “polis” for an American topography, “even allowing that no such thing can be considered as possible to exist when such homogeneity as any Greek city has been displaced by such heterogeneity as modern cities and nations are” (in Butterick, 1981, 25). Olson sought heterogeneity, or claimed to: the son of an Irish mother and Swedish father, he wrote that his father “valued America, as immigrants do, more than the native” (1997b, 219). Against what civil historian David Ricci has termed “the ethnically homogeneous, and discriminatory,” nature of the polis (21), Olson wanted to recognize particularities without resorting to provincialism; he wrote early in *Maximus* that “Gloucester / is heterogeneous / and so can know polis / not as localism.” Olson’s polis was inclusive and projective, “a polis whose borders would be flexible enough to include multiple textual formulations of citizenship” (Vanderborg, 2001, 56).

Olson’s urgency in trying to form an innovative polis was a reaction to the totalitarianism of Nazi Germany and to other de-individuating systems at work during the 1940s and 1950s, from Soviet communism to American capitalism and mass-market advertising. He wrote to Corman that “both capitalism and communism breed” a problematic “spectatorism [...] as surely as absentee ownership” (1970, 103). In his 1940 review “Dostoevsky and the Possessed,” Olson argued, “when dictators offer us states in return for our manhood we too wonder smiling, fail to answer, the world turns, and there’s Guernica” (1997b, 131). Dostoevsky, like Melville, allowed Olson to contemplate “individual man in the social mass”; Dostoevsky’s Stavrogin was a cautionary tale of what happened when the individual got lost in the group, an instance of the static individual, whom Olson sought to make active, as “man, that participant thing” who might



“take up, straight, nature’s, live nature’s force” (103, 173). While Olson’s polis required a sense of the group, a granting of touch from individuals, it was not to be a collectivistic enterprise, not communism.

### Projective Citizenship: Polis is Letters, Writing

Beginning in the 1950s, Olson engaged in a series of experiments in the formation of citizenship groups: in and from Gloucester, MA; at Black Mountain College; and in the pages of *Origin*. Writing poems during this time, he eventually developed an epistolary methodology for his projective epic, *Maximus*, in which letter-poems invoke a community of addressees as part of a polis. As he wrote to the magazine editor and fellow Gloucester poet Vincent Ferrini in one such letter-poem, “you do meet someone / as I met you / on a printed page.” This epistolary poetics offered Olson a means of realising the “energy transfer” he had called for in “Projective Verse”; the letter was to prove the ideal mode for projective poetry. In so doing, it also provided him a way to reimagine the citizen: a projective citizenship, one in which individuals were continually reaching outwards, towards the group, through writing, could best be achieved in an epistolary fashion. Epistolary was not just a means of communicating his ideas of citizenship; it was a methodology for acting as a citizen. Through the epistolary, a reader could become a writer, a projective citizen in a polis that was not confined to one place but organised around what Olson called the “interchange” of letters.<sup>115</sup>

Olson’s exploration of letter-writing as a way to form a *polis* of citizens on the page first took shape in and around the magazine *Origin*, started by Cid Corman in 1951.<sup>116</sup> That Olson was given 31 pages in *Origin 1* and that the whole of *Origin 8* (1957) was devoted to the publication of his first book of poems, *In Cold Hell, in Thicket*, makes clear the extent to which he loomed large in *Origin*. It also loomed large for him: as an “OPEN” magazine that was a “FIELD OF FORCE,”

*Origin* put into practice the theories of “Projective Verse”; indeed, at one point, Olson admits that his description of it “is getting to sound altogether too much like the PV thing!” (3). In one of his earliest letters to Corman, Olson enthused, “that you have the will to make a MAG is a very fine thing, and is hailed, by this citizen, (especially, I suppose, that it is also BOSTON: by god, how long is it, that except for Harvard sheets, which is not boston, there has been SUCH A THING!”” (1970, 1). Olson incorporated himself in Corman’s project, by letter, as a citizen, a member of a community of writers and readers who were engaged in reshaping language and form, in order to interrupt the prevailing cultural script represented by stagnant newspapers (“Harvard sheets”). From then on, Olson strove to ensure *Origin* continued to offer “a series of principles for the governance of, any of us going in that common direction, today” (50-51), sensing the possibility for a group with trajectory—in other words, projective not only in the form of the work its members produced but also in its social dynamics. While a tension clearly exists between the rigidity of governance and the self-emergent poetics of “Projective Verse,” the presence of “a series of principles” within Olson’s phrasing to Corman suggests how seriously he took the quasi-constitutional aspects of *Origin* and the possibility that it might be able to re-articulate citizenship.

*Origin* offered a polis rooted in local particulars yet bound by no geography—“it is also BOSTON”—projecting from a particular place yet not constrained by it. Olson elsewhere described Corman and himself as “we late citizens of Boston & environs—,” contending

that the particular is a syntax which is universal, and that it can not be discovered except locally, in the sense that any humanism is as well place as it is the person, that another of Socrates’ crimes (who was improperly punished) was, that he did give polis its death blow when he cried, Be, a Citoyen, du Monde. (1970, 127)

The human is not about the self or the subject but “the person”—bodily nature (what Olson would call *proprioception*) plus *istorin*—and “place,” i.e. spatial nature.<sup>117</sup> Olson’s quarrel with Socrates’ notion of the *citoyen du monde* was that it made polis impossible because it discounted the “syntax” of the particular, privileging a traditional, normative grammar over a flexible, local one.

Olson's own poetics intervened in traditional grammar in order to intervene in social behavior; he critiqued the sentence as "completed thought," complaining that the ancient Greeks had used the sentence to "impose idea (to see) on act (dran, drama, to act)" (1997b, 255). The "alternative discourse" instigated by Olson's own writing was emphatically anti-conclusive, kinetic; in "Projective Verse" he followed Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound in defining the sentence as "first act of nature, as lightning, as passage of force from [grammatical] subject to object" (244). While the *citoyen du monde* and Olson's "human universe" both operated beyond nationalism, only the "human universe" bridged the locally particular and the universal whole. The notion of "Citoyen, du Monde" dealt a "death blow" to such radical particulars. *Origin* was, for Olson, a space that could extend the local outwards without the risk of "spread[ing] yourself like a pancake," to use Olson's phrase from *Call Me Ishmael*.

Corman's plan to include "the correspondence as well as the finished work of, men" (5) excited Olson; this interest in *Origin's* use of letters reveals the ways Olson came to understand the epistolary as a poetic mode that was the basis of "being as group with will." Olson did not consider letters supplementary paratexts to art, "not as of a notable"; he once wrote to Corman, "I was deeply disturbed by yr remark (2<sup>nd</sup> last letter) that you would expunge fr my letters all remarks but those on art!" (1970, 2, 4). To excerpt would have been to lose the full argument; the letter as a whole was a site for important thinking. Olson would frantically write to friends asking them to re-send letters he had once sent them; *Origin 1* concludes with a letter to Ferrini, asking him to return the original of "I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You," Olson's only copy. When Joyce Benson sent excerpts from a requested letter, Olson demanded the whole: "all or context has the meaning... it isn't only the quotable" (11/2/1967; *SL* xvii). It was just the content of the letters Olson wanted to reclaim; in putting letters back into circulation, he was utilising the other-

oriented mode of epistolarity, the ability of letters to project towards others as “a via of a person pushing.”

The letter provided the possibility of “interchange,” the same value Olson felt art provided, writing, “only as men are bred to think of expression as the only social act worth any interchange with another human being is there anything ahead but more of same” (1970, 102). Expression is here cast as an interruption to the cultural script through human communication. That Olson saw art in terms of expression suggests why he valued the letter so highly. As a “social act,” the letter functioned as a “Figure of Outward,” which Olson glossed as meaning “way out way out / *there*: the / ‘World’, I’m sure, otherwise / why *was* the pt. then to like write to Creeley / daily?” (in Butterick, 1981, 3). To reach out to the world (however cautiously staged by quote marks) through writing letters, daily if possible, was to create an “‘Outward’ [...] opposite to a / personality which so completely does (did) / stay at home” (3). As in the letter he wrote to Maud about loyalty, Olson here allays his anxiety over staying at home by emphasizing how writing connects an individual to the wider group.

For Olson, the letter was exacting as a form of expression: “Fact is, we have to, one to one, be more precise, in a real sense, than in such more generalized places” (1970, 18). That Olson has to qualify “we” as “one to one” reminds us that letters are not only exchanged between two people; they can be further circulated. Recalling a past letter to Corman’s attention, Olson refers to it as one “you wrote [...] to me or Cree. I don’t remember” (8). The letters these members of *Origin*’s polis shared circulated widely within that polis, and beyond it, finding an unanticipated readership. As Miriam Nichols has recently argued, “the epistolary form of *Maximus* and Olson’s rhetorical address to his ‘fellow citizens’ in poems as well as in letters to the Gloucester newspaper reach[es] for a broad readership of ‘citizens’” (21).<sup>118</sup> Such extended circulation happened both when letters were forwarded and when they were re-used within poetic works such as *Paterson* and

the *Cantos*, where Olson's one-time "fathers" William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound drew from their own mail and a medieval Italian postbag.

Olson understood that the epistolary involved more than a simple transmission of content from writer to reader, in part because even before its content was made public the movement of the letter between geographies was itself revelatory: "A letter, expected or surprise, is a lance, and the vizor slips," he wrote in "The Post Office," his biography of his father the mail carrier (1997b, 228).<sup>119</sup> Olson described his father's postal route as "the village to which he was crier and walking mayor. He was more intimate to the community, and the lives of all the people, than anyone else could be" (228). The circulation of letters increased the social interactions of a community beyond interactions of sender, messenger, and recipient.<sup>120</sup> Epistolarity called into being a future community, one that could not be entirely anticipated. Libbie Rifkin has discussed Olson's lectures as instances of community-formation, noting "Olson's insistence that 'we could talk forever' proffers his own logorrhea as the armature on which the 'we,' the 'future society,' might hang" (139). The letter was an ideal form for such logorrhea: his infamous, hours-long 1965 reading at Berkeley had to end when security closed the building; with a letter, Olson just had to make the next post—and there was always another post.<sup>121</sup>

Ralph Maud's suggestion that "Olson believed in letter writing [...] as a true political act that might create a polis, if anything could" (2000, xv) emphasizes the more-than-functional dimensions of the epistolary. The physical movement of the very first *Maximus* poem offers an illustration of such projective interchange: Vincent Ferrini sent Robert Creeley some Olson poems (including "I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You"), hoping he would publish them; Creeley rejected them in a letter to Ferrini, which led Olson to write a letter to Creeley, and this sparked an exchange of almost 1,000 letters between Olson and Creeley over the next several years (Butterick, lxiii). The original letter, in part because it was also a poem, reached unforeseen audiences,

generating more letters as it travelled.<sup>122</sup> Letters were the means of communication within Olson's polis—the technology by which Olson could write to Creeley and others, who could and did forward his letters to yet others. In “Definitions by Undoing,” he identified polis as “being as group with will,” explaining “that will is from the Sanskrit stem to fill or fulfill, and includes such words as plenus, plebes, po-pulus, publicus, thus our publis etc., and manipulus, thus manipulate” (11). Reaching back past Plato and the Greek foundations of Western ideology, Olson connected the wilfulness of “being with group” to the (writing) hand: in classical Latin a manipulus was a “handful” as well as a “unit of infantry,” joining manus, hand, to plenus, full, and by extension to the polis as “a filled up thing” (11).<sup>123</sup>

*Origin* had to be an epistolary polis, if it were to be a polis at all, because of the dispersed geographies of its contributors. Yet Olson's involvement in the civic space of Gloucester and in the running of Black Mountain College, NC (the alternative school where he was an instructor and the last Rector) suggests he saw citizenship and polis forming on the page even where a physical site existed for the polis. In “Obit,” his poem reflecting on the end of Black Mountain College, Olson writes: “‘It was a polis,’ sd his friend, ‘no wonder / you wanted to take part in its / creation’” (1997a, 426). Olson's poem had originally been a letter to his wife Betty, a former Black Mountain College student, and its adaptation from letter to poem multiplied its addressees from a single reader (Betty) to the potential readership of the poem. Linking creativity to citizenship, Olson imagines the polis extending beyond its geographic confines through projective writing: situating his own involvement with the polis in the reported speech of a friend, Olson expands the community involved in both letter and poem, increasing the number of people active in the polis, a move reinforced by his reference to the “400 or so” participants in Black Mountain College.<sup>124</sup> Olson tried to take the College “on the road,” albeit for financial as much as pedagogical reasons; although it remained a geographically-determined polis, “this hillside” and “this American place”

which “the quail, and the wild mountain aster, / possess” (426-8), its horizon was never only the local, as is evident from its curriculum and from the existence of *Black Mountain Review*, which started in 1954 and which was printed, at first, in Mallorca.<sup>125</sup> It was only half-jokingly that Olson described the College as “just the predecessor of the nation” (1978, 55).

Where Olson most fully realized both his polis and his projective conception of citizenship was in his several-hundred page epic, *Maximus*, begun in 1950 and continuously worked on until his death in 1970. In a letter to John Wieners in 1959, Olson declared, “I have spent 10 years already on the Maximus poem, and see no end to it yet, like; the conception & the creation of a society is the act of politics, is it not?” (2000, 267). Olson turned to the epistolary not just to structure his work but also to conceive and create a polis within and beyond that word, seeing the poem, like the letter, as “the act of politics.” *Maximus* combined the interlocutory possibilities of the letter, the geographical advantages of local particulars, and the pedagogical qualities of the poetic text.<sup>126</sup>

The first two volumes of *Maximus*, *Maximus 1-10* (1953) and *Maximus 11-22* (1956), consist chiefly of poems styled as letters. The opening missive, “I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You,” addresses both a personal recipient (Ferrini, in biographical terms) and the immanent cohering polis. At the same time, it multiplies authorial positions: the “I” is typographically set-off from “Maximus,” both appositively synonymous with him and apart from him. “Maximus of Gloucester” calls to mind “Maximus of Tyre,” whom Olson references in “Letter 3,” and so offers yet one more author-position ghosting this epistle. Furthermore, as this poem was originally an actual letter, written to Vincent Ferrini; this “I” and “You” are also Olson and Ferrini, with Maximus as code for Olson’s six foot seven, two hundred and fifty pound frame. The letter-poem’s eventual publication in *Origin* and later in *The Maximus Poems* opens yet more nominalizations for the “I” and the “you,” widening the circle of reader-citizens.<sup>127</sup>

The multiple recipient positions are part of the poem's attempt to inscribe audience, to engage the projective target of the poem within its poetic space. The use of an imperative locative—"And there!"—imagines the audience visualizing the sights the writer is currently seeing, as if both are within the same location. While Fiona Green has pointed out that letters, through "forming a closed circuit which comes between their senders and recipients [...] reinforce the distance that they may also seem to bridge" (2001, 78), Olson here uses epistolarity to co-locate epistolary citizens. The poem's use of white space presents a typographical equivalent to the speaking-writer catching sight of an event as the reader's eye flicks across white space:

And there! (strong) thrust, the mast! flight  
(of the bird  
o kylix, o  
Anthony of Padua  
Sweep low, o bless

the roofs, the old ones, the gentle steep ones (1983, 1)

Projective poetics here does more than record Olson's breath on the page; it tracks the cityscape, the eye moving right across the page to notice the flight of the bird then "sweep[ing] low" to "the roofs" of the city. The aim is not a concrete poetry that would offer a visual version of the scene—though in some places *Maximus* does tend towards such shaped poems, as when "Letter, May 2, 1959" evokes a tidal map (151)—but a connection between the "I" and the "You," who are separated by "Maximus of Gloucester" as much as communicating through him.<sup>128</sup> The poem recognizes the distance between sender and recipient—they are fundamentally not seeing the same thing—but tries to collapse it, to offer an analogous experience of looking. As a poem that opens "off-shore, by islands hidden in the blood," its geography involves a complicated relationship to space: "off-shore," the poem is situated off Cape Ann, as if in Melville's oceans; "in the blood," it takes place within the capillaries of individual bodies. In its movement from "I" to "you," from



off-shore to inside the body, this first *Maximus* poem explores how epistolarity connects human bodies in a communal space.

The letter-poem as the primary form for the *Maximus* emphasizes the urgency of one person speaking to another across distance. A letter has multiple trajectories, anticipating a communal group (an audience or readership) as well as a body of correspondence in which it is a constituent part; neither the letter's geographic reach nor the whole body of work to which it contributes can be predetermined. Olson's own title for *The Maximus Poems*, simply *Maximus*, lets its component texts exist both as poems and letters.<sup>129</sup> The baseline for *Maximus*, though, is the lineated, projective poem, in which the extension of the line draws heightened attention compared to a sentence within a prose letter. Olson understood the poet as having a specialized role within American discourse. In his argument for "the poet" in "The Gate & the Center" he wrote,

I made one physicist run, when I sd, quite quietly, the only thing wrong with yr teams is, you have left out the one professional who has been busy abt this problem all the time the rest of you and yr predecessors have been fingering that powerful solid, but useless when abstraction, Nature. (1997b, 169)

The "problem": "what happens BETWEEN things, in other words: / COMMUNICATION"; the missing professional: the poet, "the only pedagogue left, to be trusted" (170). Though letter and poem shared for Olson a spontaneous outward quality, and could share form (Olson's letters would break into lineation, his poems into prose), it was the role of the poet as trusted pedagogue Olson mobilized in *Maximus* as he sought to warn his citizen-audience of the dangers of those "who use words cheap." Writing *Maximus* as a series of letter-poems allowed Olson to claim the poet's pedagogical role, even as his process frequently relied on letter writing to generate the next *Maximus* poem.

Though Gloucester provided Olson (and *Maximus*) with a geographic locale, Gloucester was not simplistically a privileged polis: it remained capable of pejerocracy.<sup>130</sup> Crucial to the polis and the question of "who can say who are / citizens" was the active participation of citizens within

that polis (and, one might argue, of readers within the poem: if inherited forms like the sonnet involved speaking with another man's mouth, as William Carlos Williams claimed, the projective poem offered no predetermined instruction manual for reading; it worked against the cultural script of poetry as well as politics). Olson's castigation of Vincent Ferrini, the addressee and invoker of the very first *Maximus* poem, in "Letter 5," indicates the ease with which the local could become localism and the group could become Whitmanian mass. A quasi-farcical narrative, "Letter 5" revolves around Maximus and Ferrini failing to meet: "I'll meet you anywhere you say"; "I'll try once more to meet you (what about Sterling's Drug, is that where you are? Surely, not at the Library)"; "I begin to be damned to figure out where we can meet." Olson plays here with his city's geography, naming many of its landmarks as failed meeting places and so depicting Gloucester as a small place where one *could* "meet [...] anywhere you say" (26). At the same time, it is a space of uncertain limits, expansive enough for several failed meetings, not quite coterminous with its own geography. The poem concludes, "There is no place we can meet. / You have left Gloucester. / You are not there, you are anywhere / where there are little magazines / will publish you" (29). That Olson describes Gloucester as "there" rather than "here" indicates that it remains to be discovered, that the written Gloucester and the actual Gloucester do not map directly onto one another. In biographical terms, Ferrini had not literally left Gloucester's city limits, but his interest in publication over writing meant he was "anywhere" rather than conscious of "place." By contrast, Olson asserts that writing is "very precise to / the quarter it comes from" (29), connected (like weather) to its environment. Ferrini's transgression against precision and environment, his "scratch-me-back" mentality, exiles him from *Maximus's* Gloucester in an inverse version of Plato's banishing poets from his Republic: Ferrini was exiled for *failing* to be a transformative poet, for failing to educate Gloucester citizens. Such exile, however, was not



in the present time of the settlement of Cape Ann and in the present time of Olson's Gloucester, "April Today." The letter is entrusted by Douch to an emissary who "presented himself" and to whom he "said / take this letter." Historically, it is handed from writer to letter carrier and sent towards a recipient, "my wife"; in "April Today, Main Street," it appears beyond her audience, extended to unanticipated addressees by Olson's poem. The sending of that letter, "the first letter (after Conant's two) / to // home, / to England," has an effect in both 1639 and 1959, both dates equally "April Today," though "Main Street" exists only conceptually in the earlier time. The ambiguous temporality acknowledges the way epistolarity can merge different experiences of time, as can the letter-poem. Both connect people while acknowledging spatial and temporal disconnectedness; the epistolary form stitches together the time of the writer with the time of the reader, creating a time of the writer being read and the reader being written (to). In "April Today," the letter ultimately arrives at "this hour sitting / as the mainland hinge // of the 128 bridge / now brings in / what, / to Main Street?": linear temporality has been replaced by the "hinge" of contiguity, 1639 abutting 1959 and the apparition of the 128 bridge bringing in a threshold of uncertainty—not least, the uncertainty of addressees and community. To what is Gloucester now connected?

Olson's work on the *Maximus* from 1950 until his death in 1970 was his attempt to create and sustain polis beyond his own immediate contacts within the Black Mountain and *Origin* spheres, the writers included in *New American Poetry*, and the Gloucester haunts where he was affectionately dubbed "Professor" and within which he wrote insistently to the *Gloucester Daily Times* to advocate for civic interests. Psychologist Paul Goodman's 1950 essay, "Advance-Guard Writing: 1900-1950," which Alan Golding notes that Olson approvingly recommended to Cid Corman, suggested that "the essential present-day advance-guard is the physical reestablishment of community" as an antidote to "the crisis of alienation" in which "persons are estranged from

themselves, from one another, and from their artist” (375). The singular form was quite deliberate: for Goodman, the process of re-establishing a community of persons began with the artist setting out “*to write for them about them personally*” and then extending beyond a “small community of acquaintances” towards what he termed “integrated art,” which had a horizon larger than that of the small community, being able “to bathe the world in [...] a light of imagination and criticism” (376).<sup>132</sup> Goodman’s theory helps us to contextualise Olson’s own uses of poetry and writing to form community. Writing to Robert Creeley in June 1951, Olson mentioned that he had “knocked off a 2nd I Max letter for Vince’s latest hope: a magazine, there, Gloucester” (Butterick 816). This poem-as-letter already exists for Creeley and Ferrini but nervously awaits publication in Ferrini’s magazine, a “hope” for editor and author alike. That magazine’s community, “there, Gloucester,” might extend the intimate circle past Olson’s implicit “here.” Across its three volumes, *Maximus* likewise moves from accounts of intimate, small communities to take in a wider horizon informed by traditions from the Native American to the medieval Icelandic.

“Maximus to Gloucester, Letter 27 [withheld],” technically ‘belongs’ within letters 1-40 of the first volume of *Maximus*, between “So Sassafras” and “History is the Memory of Time,” but it was actually included in the second volume, where it asks us to read recursively, to return to the earlier letters we’ve “received” as readers, just as it opens with an act of return: “I come back to the geography of it” (1983, 240).<sup>133</sup> At the same time, this withheld letter projects outward, “coming / from all that I no longer am, yet am, the slow westward motion of // more than I am,” a wavering between inherited identity—the “Greek” knowledge that might “discriminate my body”—and the body’s pull to an extensive “more than I am.” Withheld, this letter hinges return and outset, working against the limited chronology of “strict personal order.” The letter is at once “[withheld]” and precisely the opposite, its visibility heightened by its claim to have been withheld; it unfolds with the force of revelation.

This poem contains Olson's famous dictum, "polis is / this," a further illustration of the relational elements of the letter-based polis: to interpret the deictic movement of the poem-letter and the polis we have to engage a multiple set of inter-related positions within which the poem could "belong." Although Rifkin argues that this deictic phrase (only) "works for a readership so close to the poet that they can follow his pointed finger" (49), the poem in fact seeks a less easy-to-anticipate readership, those who might receive it belatedly and become connected to the polis. The uncertain reference of "this" suggests that polis has to be understood as relationships between an undefined group of citizens, rather than being named as a fixed local space, politically stable jurisdiction, or pre-approved category.

An epistolary poetics allowed Olson to envision a fluid polis as part of his reimagining of the terms on which citizenship was constituted in America and in the classical city-state. Isin's argument that a connection of "being political with being a citizen and conducting oneself in the council and assembly is precisely the image of citizenship that the ancient citizens themselves would have strangers and outsiders believe" (111) reveals, like Charles Lee's "third space," that to allow juridical, governmental, or legal definitions of citizenship to be definitive, to be anything other than narrative attempts to construct an "image of citizenship," is to cede the individual's ability to shape citizenship and, perhaps, to act as a citizen.

We can read "Projective Verse" and the poems that resulted from it in light of Isin's theory of the "immanent associations of poetics, polis and politics" (285) in order to foreground the relationship between poetics—for Isin, "practices of creating, performing, and transmitting poetry"—and the individual's ability to transform a cultural script. Isin sees poetics arising at "moments where the relationship between citizenship and alterity is transfigured" (284). In Olson's case, "Projective Verse" offered a reanimation of the citizen that focused not on voting rights or the Constitution, but the individual's "rights of himself" as part of a communal group.

The affairs of men remained a chief concern; Olson did not offer a national republic but a polis which would, at the end of the *Maximus*, amount to “the initiation // of another kind of nation” (633). He attempted to replace restrictive, de-individuating oaths of loyalty with a polis that dynamized the individual body amid a crew, a social group writing together; such an attempt sought to delegitimize institutions, to get out from under the flag.

However, as C.L.R. James’ deportation indicates, Olson’s citizenship through epistolarity, founded on creative, projective acts of writing that sought to connect the one and the many, could all too easily be rendered ineffectual through legislation including the Internal Security Act and the Immigration and Naturalization Act. Where Olson’s critique of *Moby-Dick*, like his wider poetics, was free to reject institutions from Harvard to the U.S. government, James’ study had to be written within and in spite of the INS and the prison-like Ellis Island.<sup>134</sup> At the hands of such institutions James experienced what Donald Pease has called a “demotion to the status of ‘you’”; as a “secondary addressee” of the law he suffered a “loss of the power to speak as ‘I’ [which] also deauthorized the testifying phrases through which he could convey his claims before a court and invalidated his interlocutory privileges within the civil society” (xxvii).<sup>135</sup> Olson’s polis, reliant on the freedom to claim status as an interlocutor, was in a sense more “real,” more material, than the changeable myth of “the American way” as national identity—yet for James “what matters is that I am not an American citizen,” not free to be “that participant thing” Olson envisioned. A sinister double-meaning haunts James’ words, suggesting both the need for Olson’s alternative citizenship and the reason why it failed: the “I” is not an American citizen as long as the citizen is governmental only.<sup>136</sup>

Given this, we might, as Daniel Belgrad does, “wonder if art can do anything,” questioning whether spontaneous art of the sort Olson produced has failed given that “today, bureaucratic control continues to invade new ground in American life” (12). Yet we can read the existence of

*Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways* as a suggestion that the power of the Internal Security Act to “say who are citizens” did not negate James’ ability to construct meaning through writing, to practice citizenship beyond the juridical sphere. The Act negated James’ ability to have his written acts construct a sense of being within the American space to the extent that he was no longer allowed to “be” in America. Yet within the liminal space where Olson’s and James’ projects of writing citizenship both offer and fail to come to terms, we can find the fullest indication that writing and citizenship are communally-oriented: Olson’s failure to actually alter the terms of citizenship and James’ failure to write himself into legal citizenship succeed in making a claim “before” us—prior to and unavoidably in front of us—that a projective citizenship operates in wholly unanticipated ways, sustained only by our participation as unlike citizens reading and writing. Perhaps we can indeed “say” who are citizens as writers, and say so by continuing to re-script citizenship rather than keeping to the script of citizenship, that set of formulaic questions and answers in which we must decide, “Do you renounce allegiance to any other country but this?”

In the following chapters, I show how LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Susan Howe, and Myung Mi Kim have seen themselves as able to interrupt existing hegemonies of citizenship. They each draw on projective poetics in order to imagine other alternative versions of “the citizen”; in the process, they revise both projective poetics and what we might understand as U.S. citizenship. “Who can say who are / citizens?” is only part of the question: to interrupt the normative hegemony of legal citizenship and the prevailing understandings of national citizenship also requires that we examine who gets addressed as a citizen, what textual spaces the citizen exists within, and in what languages the citizen is allowed to speak.



## “Ellington was a ‘citizen’”: Lyric Community beyond Citizenship in LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka’s Poetry of the Sixties and Seventies

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. (14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, Section 1)<sup>137</sup>

### “Contact LeRoi Jones”: Citizenship Beyond Epistolarity

Charles Olson and C.L.R. James’ very different experiences of citizenship within the post-war United States of America suggest a key limitation to Olson’s citizenship through epistolarity: individual acts of writing could all too easily be negated by governmental decisions. It was not enough to “say who are citizens”; such speech remained subject to recognition beyond the would-be citizen’s written acts. Yet, despite the absolute decision of the law, James was at least able to cast himself as a citizen, to make a claim to citizenship that other citizens could recognize. In so doing, he wrote from what Engin Isin has termed immanent and agonistic categories of citizenship, the “strangers, outsiders, aliens and barbarians” (78) who narrate citizenship from external positions and so help citizens and non-citizens alike to redefine it.<sup>138</sup>

One test of the success of citizenship through epistolarity, a citizenship predicated on one writer’s address to others, is its ability to include “multiple definitions of citizenship without prioritizing them or excluding future qualifications” (Vanderborg, 2001, 25). We need to ask, therefore, what space Olson’s poetics left for those who were not like him, those he could not imagine. Olson’s epistles, whether styled as poems or letters, could be monologic, even when they considered themselves part of a dialogue, an invitation to “please come back on me if you are interested,” as he ended a 1959 letter to Elaine Feinstein.<sup>139</sup> His interactions with LeRoi

Jones/Amiri Baraka indicate, however, that getting back to him was not a straightforward proposition.

LeRoi Jones was key to Olson's poetry, one of his earliest and most enthusiastic publishers, and Olson influenced Jones' poetics, but Jones would ultimately reject Olson's terms of correspondence.<sup>140</sup> He differed with Olson over what he saw as naïve optimism on the part of the latter about racial prejudice. For Olson, a common humanity bound everyone together; on this basis, all were potential citizens equally able to enter into correspondence. For Jones, events such as the murder of Medgar Evers showed the naivety of this belief. He became increasingly convinced that "black" and "white" Americans not only experienced citizenship differently but *were* different in their history, culture, and race.<sup>141</sup>

The terms of the disagreement between the two reveal Jones' emerging conception of the possibilities and problems of citizenship, illustrating how Olson's citizenship through epistolarity was viable only to the extent that others agreed with his ideological leanings. After the election of John F. Kennedy in mid-November 1960, Olson wrote "The Hustings," a poem "to LeRoi Jones" who, promisingly, "spits out the Nation / for its lies" (1997a, 533). "The Hustings" was evidently epistolary, not only in dedication but also in being a response to Jones' challenge "to say why // one should continue / to live / in the United States" (534).<sup>142</sup> Writing somewhat unusually in short-line tercets and relatively conventional syntax, Olson used lineation to counter Jones' stance. Because the phrase "one should continue" is placed on its own line, it values residence in America, whereas Jones had actually posed a pessimistic question, a doubt. While citizenship through epistolarity allowed writers to express disagreement, Olson veers close to failing to address Jones' terms at all; he fails, in fact, to engage with Jones.

In affirming that "one should continue," Olson turned to a human universalism, describing how "Underneath the eyes // of the human race I see nothing / but the pasty-face of young girls

and boys / and the cock lifts / in my pants / to me woman's behind" (534). If the "human race" is potentially a lack, "nothing," it is also "nothing but" people, the very same people who might achieve the touch Olson admired among the Mayans. Olson's aggressive sexual imagery pictures his cock not just lifting to erection but, as if by some strange phallogokinetic process, transitively "lift[ing ...] to me" the female form, present only as reduced synecdoche, "woman's behind." This image offers a sexualized model of touch far removed from his earlier wish, in the poem "The She-Bear," to write a "praise for woman."<sup>143</sup> Olson remains seemingly unaware of any tension between this heteropatriarchal positioning of women and the universalism of "the human race" as innocent "girls and boys"; instead, he alludes to "Human Universe" with a claim that the sun "is neither soviet / nor capitalist" (535). Against political systems and national identities, Olson suggests a relationship founded on the human body, a physicality shared among all peoples. That assumption of shared physicality was what Jones had disputed in his own letters and essays.

At the end of the poem, Olson sets politics aside in favor of a physical meeting: "Leroi Jones // my name is Charles Olson / I live at Fort Square / in Gloucester Massachusetts // in the world" (535). Olson constructs himself as located within Gloucester but as part of a global dynamic. The naming of a locale, a "here" rooted in and radical from Gloucester, hopes to facilitate community and conversation, to constitute the "all," and Olson did meet with Jones on several occasions after writing this poem. "Please come immediately," he urges, "there is no need to worry / We shall all eat All is here." The Olsonian summons, the confidence that "all is here," could easily be seen as an act of arrogance, as it surely was an act of arrogation, an attempt to enlist Jones to Olson's ideology. Olson's epistolary poetics at least partly succeeded in bringing citizens together—but on what, and whose, terms?

As a response to Jones' writings in the late 50s and early 60s, "The Hustings" ignored larger forces of government and corporations that acted on the body of the American—ironically, the

same forces Olson had critiqued in *Call Me Ishmael*. In a 1963 essay by Jones that Olson read, “What Does Nonviolence Mean?,” Jones identified two such forces: the forcible movement of African bodies to North America during the Middle Passage, and the murder of African Americans in the United States, including that of Medgar Evers, leader of the Jackson, Mississippi branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Jones, in a piece that prepared the way for his subsequent articulation of a Black Nationalism, argued that “there has been a constant and unfailing effort on the part of almost every white man in America (and the West) to have his own qualified version of a black man exist, and not just any black man who might like to appear under his own volition” (1966, 134). The black individual in America was prohibited from self-identification, thwarted by a mass cultural forgetting on the part of whites and the “Negro middle-class” alike as to the history of slavery; worse, African Americans were met with silence in response to lynchings and racially-motivated violence. While not (yet) offering a rigid demarcation between “the white man” and the “Negro,” Jones already saw such delineation as a possibility. He lambasted the liberalism of political reformers like Roosevelt, who Olson had done so much to re-elect: “the socio-economic policies of Roosevelt’s New Deal were not meant to change the society, but to strengthen the one that existed” (136).

Olson wrote a letter to Jones in response to this article and a 1962 piece, “Tokenism”; he again sought a “human universe” rather than a division of humans into politicized or racialized categories, opening “My dear LeRoi: I see a world so large” (2000, 305). Arguing from a position that believed “No man could possibly ever represent other human beings”—a philosophical stance as much as a critique of representative democracy—Olson suggested he was “struck all over the place” in Jones’ writings as to “how much [what] you speak of as Negro has been only my own experience likewise” (305). Placing the “complex occasion” of his own body alongside Jones’, Olson claimed Jones’ experience described “any man’s who wishes to have had a life in

society which was more legitimate” (306). Olson united individuals with different cultural experiences of America, arguing that *all* individuals have shared, shareable experiences. This position erased from Jones’ original piece the violence that had motivated it—a violence from which white, and especially white male, bodies were free: lynchings, slavery, the denial of civil and human rights. Olson agreed with Jones’ denunciation of “the White Man,” seeing him(self) as that “same filthy bastard,” but disagreed “why in fact should the Negro be any specialist” when it came to “world-wide violence.” Olson’s stance hoped to transcend America for a more cosmopolitical vision of humanity; it left unanswered the different kinds of bodily violence that many in America suffered.

Olson cast his letter, like his poem to LeRoi and his wider correspondence, as an act of fellowship, signing off “not at all to argue. Solely to try to get in there where in fact I feel completely free too and want to get back to you with.” Even as he denies Jones’ particular experience of injustice as a black man whose identity is created against his volition by liberal whites, Olson tries to make sure both men might “feel completely free.”<sup>144</sup> Olson underscores the need for poetry to address political questions by speaking to others, and tries to make good on his aim of basing citizenship on exchanges of writing: letters and poems that project outwards towards an unanticipated audience. Olson and Jones, though, could not “feel completely free” in the same ways.

Jones did for a time correspond with Olson, through letters and poetry. The poem “From an Almanac,” which considers “this bizness, of dancing” (an Olsonian theme) is dedicated “For C.O.” (1995, 46). Yet a poem pointedly *not* addressed to Olson best signals Jones’ rejection of “C.O.,” his recognition that he was seeking a different audience. “Numbers, Letters” alluded to Olson’s “my name is Charles Olson / I live at Fort Square / in Gloucester Massachusetts // in the world” (535) in the assertive lines,

I'm Everett LeRoi Jones, 30 yrs old.  
A black nigger in the universe. A longer breath singer,  
would be dancer, strong from years of fantasy  
and study.

Much of Olson's poetics is present here: Jones adopts the Olsonian rhetoric of "the universe," situates himself in the tradition of the projective breath, references Olson's interest in dance, and invokes study, as Olson recommended to Ed Dorn, Jones' long-standing correspondent, among others.<sup>145</sup> The swerve from Olsonian ideas comes from the affirmation "black nigger," which registers how others see Jones, his attempt to transform a slur, and his claim to blackness as an adjective that could qualify or intensify the reclaimed "nigger" as a marker of self- and group worth. To be "in the universe" for Jones is evidently not the same thing as being "in the world" is for Olson. Writing lines that echo and rebut "The Hustings," Jones situates himself apart from Olson's experience of America.

"Numbers, Letters" is a sustained attempt to rethink the self in relation to others, questioning both the idea of home and the company Jones kept: "What was you doing down there, freakin' off / with white women, hanging out / with Queens" (1979, 71). The poem's self-reflexive mode suggests an uncertainty over identity. The opening lines, "if you're not home, where / are you?" (71), seemingly pose a straightforward question about where we might find Jones, a conundrum tied up with his becoming Baraka and leaving the Village for Harlem. Yet in addressing himself externally, "you" not "I," Jones complicates the roles of speaker and addressee, introducing at least two possibilities for the "you" position—Jones himself and a more generalized sense of "you"—as well as leading us to wonder who is addressing Jones/Baraka.

While there is nothing quite so schematic or orderly as a supposition in the poem of two distinct identities, Jones and Baraka, the eight occurrences of "you" in the first 11 lines indicate an anxiety about self/audience positions that is contemporaneous with Jones' self-creation as Baraka. While in his first two books this anxiety figured mainly as a potential loss of self-knowledge (as I

discuss below), after *The Dead Lecturer* Jones/Baraka began to harness that uncertainty as part of an attempt “to name the individual self while also searching for the essential basis of black group identity” (Muyumba, 26). His dramatic, poetic, and essayistic writings during the 1960s and 1970s marked an attempt to understand self-identity in relation to social organization and nationhood. If Olson knew he was at home in Gloucester and the world, there was no such security for Jones/Baraka; the title of his seminal 1966 collection, *Home: Social Essays* announced his attempt to bleed the private sphere into the communal one.<sup>146</sup> Part of this reach from home to the social sphere did involve letter writing and epistolary poetics, but Jones/Baraka employed different tactics than Olson: where the former was concerned with how addressees would respond to the oratorical self, Jones/Baraka investigated what constituted positions of speaker and addressee. Where Olson asked “who can say who are / citizens?,” Jones/Baraka deconstructed the “who.” In so doing, he also questioned the value and validity of citizenship.

In a 1961 open letter to “young Negro men,” Jones sought out those who might wish to “form some highly militant organization in the United States to contest the rise of Uncle Tomism, shallow minded white liberalism, racism” and other obstacles to black self-realization.<sup>147</sup> Jones’ letter acknowledges “the disheartening experience of native American citizenship,” faulting the “so called ‘legal machinery’” as “farcical at best” in achieving “any restoration of civil or human rights to native black Americans.”<sup>148</sup> Faced with a limited version of citizenship, Jones engaged in a letter-writing campaign that sought to create “this brotherhood by acting.” Jones remains uncertain as to whether the “experience of native America citizenship” can be recuperated or whether it needs replacing: “this brotherhood” does not clearly lie either within or outside citizenship.<sup>149</sup> What Jones was certain about was that militant activity, organized through writing, would provide a means to that (undecided) end. He was also certain of his own role within it:

those who saw the possibility for a coming-together along these lines were to “contact LeRoi Jones.”

While Jones aligned himself in the letter with “the newly independent peoples of Asia and Latin America” his particular concern was (male) black community. He saw two alternatives to the failure of citizenship: “organized militancy” and a social affiliation or brotherhood principally involving “young American Negro men” (although potentially including “intelligent, compassionate men of whatever race or nation”). These options, militancy and black brotherhood, set the tone for much of Jones/Baraka’s subsequent engagements with citizenship and nationhood in America. Within a few years of writing this letter, LeRoi Jones (already a change from his birth name, Leroy) was no longer; Amiri Baraka (later Imamu Amiri Baraka) had left the Village for Harlem, en route to Newark, the New Ark; he had parted ways with Olson, Dorn, and the other white poets who influenced his early poetics, and left his white, Jewish wife, Hettie, marrying a black woman, Sylvia Robinson (Amina Baraka).<sup>150</sup> What would remain constant during this period of transformation, through what William Harris termed his “cultural nationalist period” (1964-1975) was Jones/Baraka’s faith that art could offer a means for constructing a social collective in the face of State-influenced racism.<sup>151</sup>

In this chapter, I argue that Baraka’s idea of a meaningful collective, which he formulated in terms of Black Arts and Black Nationalism, involved turning aside from citizenship, even though he was writing and engaging in political organization during and in the wake of Civil Rights era successes like the Voting Rights Act (1965). For Baraka, the failure of citizenship stemmed from the ways citizen status privileged certain kinds of behaviour and appearance while devaluing others: as Evie Shockley has pointed out, “African Americans still were not fully enfranchised participants in the nation of which they were citizens” (2011, 3). If citizenship could not offer active participation, as Olson envisioned it might through his epistolary reimagining, then the role of art



might not be to recuperate the citizen, but to imagine conceptions of community other than citizenship.

Given Jones/Baraka's successes in the theatre and his prominence in the development and leadership of political organizations like The Black Arts Theatre and School, Spirit House, the Black Community Development and Defense Organization, and the Congress of African Peoples during the late 1960s, one might wonder why Baraka continued to write and publish poetry during the period: what could the poem offer within the political sphere that could not be achieved by theatre, which directly engaged audiences through spectacle, and institution-building, which saw Baraka help elect the first black mayor of Newark (albeit with mixed results) and nearly achieve the construction of Kawaida Towers?<sup>152</sup> In this chapter, I argue that the poem's lyric mode allowed Jones/Baraka to explore relationships between a speaking-writing "I" and a listening-reading "you" as part of a blurring of self and group that Baraka felt was necessary for communal, city-based social organization. On and off the page, his poems engaged readers and audiences in a self-reflexive process as they negotiate the construction of individual and group identities. In so doing, Jones/Baraka's poems allowed those who were being addressed to participate in the speaking that named subjects; they asked their speakers to adopt listening positions in which they became the subjects of address. While much of Baraka's poetry might seem to rely on strongly-defined positions of orator and audience, the poems I examine here use the lyric mode in order to achieve a reconsideration of these positions.

What is particularly radical about Jones/Baraka's destabilizing use of lyric speech and lyric address is that it predates a recent debate among critics and theorists which has sought to rescue lyric from New Critical-influenced ideas of authenticity, stable personae, and the unitary self.<sup>153</sup> This viewpoint, expressed most famously in Northrop Frye's claim, in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), that "the lyric poet normally pretends to be talking to himself or to someone else" (249),

dominated the 1950s and beyond. Such views echoed John Stuart Mill's classical formulation of lyric as "overheard," a mode in which the reader is not meant to be present.<sup>154</sup> By contrast, Jones/Baraka often engaged the kind of "poetic situation" Susan Stewart claims emerges when "actors become the recipients of actions, when speakers speak from the position of listeners, when thought is unattributable and intention wayward" (34). In "Numbers, Letters," positions of speaker and addressee become entangled: "I cant say who I am / unless you agree I'm real" (72); in these lines, the "you" constructs meaning for and as the "I," converting the supposedly stable lyric position of utterance into a complexly polyphonic, addressee-dependent position of listening. The vernacular idiom of "real" connotes both the existential concern—do I exist without your external judgment?—and an anxiety over authenticity: is Jones "real" enough to signify to a black collective? In so doing, the poem explores how the lyric self comes into being in relationship to the wider community.

The complex engagement with egocentrism and community in Jones/Baraka's poems of the sixties and seventies reveals what Joseph Lease has termed the "lyric 'I' [...] trying to become a political act, trying to 'get to the we'" (395). Key to Jones/Baraka's poetry, though, is also an attempt to get the "we" to the "I." While often characterized as a mode of "subjective introspection" (Jackson and Prins, 523), classical lyric is more properly identified as being addressed to someone, whether reader or listener, implicit or explicit (Culler, 204). The lyric mode foregrounds the ways language engages "structures of identification and displacement before the consolidation of subject positions" (205); it is less concerned with an isolated speaker—except in what Aldon Nielsen terms "the artifactuality of the lyric according to New Criticism" (1997, 33)—than acted as what Jeffrey Walker has called an "instrument of ethical *paideia*," a creative act with which an audience is expected to engage (Culler, 204). That is, the lyric might properly be

recognized not as the utterance of a monologic narrating Self but as a dialogic situation of trying to construct a multiple, fragmentary self-in-relation-to-community.

I use the term “lyric community” to indicate that Jones/Baraka employs a model of the lyric opposed to the New Critical idea of the poet/persona engaging an intimate addressee in a closed circuit the reader can only observe. The term comes, in part, from Barbara Carr Vellino’s chapter sub-heading, “Unclosing the Lyric: Towards a Communal Form.”<sup>155</sup> Carr focuses on the possibility of the “conversation poem,” reading Brownen Wallace’s “talking lyrics” in light of Olson’s critique of the “lyrical interference of the individual as ego.” For Carr, this move to the communal has a wider context: “we are witnessing a revitalization of lyric, contingent upon its capacity for the dialogic already implicit in its origins as an embodied form” (306). That we are witnessing this revitalization, however, does not mean it is taking place only now, in the late 20<sup>th</sup>/early 21<sup>st</sup> century: part of my claim for Baraka’s work is that he was engaging in such dialogic practice within the lyric mode during the 1950s and 1960s. While Jones/Baraka does employ a style at times that riffs on conversation, including conversations with his (former) self, my interest in this chapter is in the subject positions of “I,” “you” (singular and plural), and “we” as they become difficult to identify (with). Such problems of identification are foundational to what I would see as “lyric community”: the lyric mode’s interpolation of (readers as) speakers and listeners drawing attention to questions of group, as well as individual, identification.

What sort of “Citizen” was Duke Ellington?

Jones/Baraka’s poetry and organizing during his cultural nationalist period sought to offer “a new cultural frame of reference, a new genealogy, one that is African in its origins and Afro-American in terms of his own specific placement in the world [...] as a United States ‘citizen’”

(Fischer, 65). Fischer's scare quotes around 'citizen' are apt: they reference the long history of African Americans being treated as second-class citizens, and acknowledge Baraka's hesitations about U.S. citizenship.

Jones' engagement with citizenship can be seen from *Blues People* (1963), a text which is well-known for tracing African American identity through a genealogy of the blues, but which also traces the history of African American citizenship—or, rather, of its absence. Jones makes clear on the first page that citizenship is his primary concern: “the path the slave took to ‘citizenship’ is what I want to look at” (ix). The quotation marks around “citizenship” signal it as a contested term within his genealogy. Emancipation represented the “freeing” of the African American, the transition from slave to freedman, but it did not offer citizenship: while the “freed [white] serf” was able to “function as a *citizen*, a man,” the African American freedman was “always apart,” always “*ex-slave*” (4). *Blues People* returns to the Greek and Roman origins of citizenship in order to critique American limitations on African American citizenship: although neither Greek nor Roman slaves had “the rights of human citizenship,” nonetheless “these slaves were still human beings.” By contrast, Africans in the New World were “not even accorded membership of the human race” (2).<sup>156</sup> *Blues People* opens with the premise that citizenship is founded on human rights; America is unique, for Jones, in placing non-citizens outside humanity.

The path to citizenship that *Blues People* outlines does not, surprisingly, involve political agitation (the Underground Railroad, protest marches); Jones only once mentions the right to vote, and when he does it is in terms of a *de facto* restriction of black citizenship, “this period of legal subversion of the Negroes' rights as new citizens” (53).<sup>157</sup> To think of African Americans as “new citizens” was to suggest they were outside American citizenship, to equate them to naturalized immigrants—an acknowledgment of the lasting effects of the forced transport of Africans to America, a suggestion that African Americans were always seen as immigrant, even when “native”

born. Such was the impossibility of citizen status for African Americans, Jones conjectures, that “the poorer Negro never even considered the idea of citizenship as something that could be extended in this country to a person with a black skin” (136). He argues that citizenship was an aspiration mainly for the black middle class, tied to the forgetting not just of African heritage, but also African American history, from slavery through the Civil Rights era.<sup>158</sup> In this view, citizen status is synonymous with not-black.

The genealogy of citizenship that *Blues People* traces involves the development of an art form that is particular not to African but to African American experience: the blues. Jones does not offer a teleological, triumphant narrative from slave to citizen. To be a citizen was not necessarily to have achieved heightened status because it also involved cultural erasure, the kinds of cultural forgetting Jones would lash out at in *Home*. The chapter “Swing—From Verb to Noun,” explains:

Duke’s sophistication was to a great extent the very quality that enabled him to integrate so perfectly the older blues traditions with the “whiter” styles of big-band music. But Ellington was a “citizen,” and his music, as Vic Bellerby has suggested, was the “detached impression of a sophisticated Negro city dweller.

This account of the relationship between blues traditions and big-band orchestras uncovers some of the tension for the black artist accepted as citizen. Ellington succeeds in integrating African American tradition rather than merely adopting white forms, yet in so doing he becomes “detached” (162). As with *Blues People’s* first reference to citizenship, the scare quotes around “citizen” are a hesitation about the costs of claiming that status: “the people who were beginning to move towards what they could think of as citizenship also moved away from the older blues” (143), Jones argued. Noting that “a freedman could not have created” the music Ellington did, Jones values the band leader’s achievements yet recognizes an absence, the loss of what the “freedman” could achieve precisely because he did not have to engage with the (white) requirements of citizenship (161). Elsewhere, Jones was more scathing: “the new citizens had got their wish [...] the Afro-American musical tradition seemed indistinguishable from the commercial

shallowness of American dance music” (174). Citizenship increasingly figures within *Blues People* as a betrayal of roots and of identity, a lack rather than an achievement of equal participation within America.

In offering this version of Ellington, Jones was engaging a wider debate on integration that had repercussions for citizenship and the development of Black Nationalism. Jones/Baraka’s decision to move to Harlem and Newark was a vote for separatism, a suggestion that full African American involvement in the United States was impossible. Howard Professor Arthur P. Davis, writing in *Phylon* in 1956, argued the counter-view: “In practically all states Negroes can now vote without risking their lives; and though the Till Case may seem to deny it, lynching is a dead practice [...] the country has committed itself spiritually to integration” (141).<sup>159</sup> For Davis, the speed with which the United States had adopted this outlook meant that the black writer was still caught in pre-integration mode. While Davis lauded such “protest” poetry as Gwendolyn Brooks’ *A Street in Bronzeville*, he felt that “the Negro writer has been forced to seek fresh ways to use his material” and had further to go (143); the model he offered was Melvin Tolson’s shift from *Rendezvous with America* (1946) to *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia* (1953).<sup>160</sup>

Davis repeatedly invokes a plural pronoun in an attempt to speak about black writing in ways that integrate it with American writing more widely: when he refers to “a few of our poets” (144) he is speaking of black authors, but by the time he speaks of the effect on “Negro literature” of a series of crises which have “each [...] in turn produced a new tradition in our literature” (145), the “our” is more equivocal, an attempt by which to rhetorically achieve his “hope that the Negro will move permanently into full participation in American life” (145). By contrast, Baraka sees this move as a danger: *Blues People*’s final reference to citizenship is a dig at “the speakeasy-Charleston-Cotton-Club set of white Americans, who had identified jazz only with liberation from the social responsibilities of full citizenship” (188). These white Americans, patronizing black forms, are

ignorant of and complicit in the Jim Crow mentality that frustrates African American citizenship. Both the white South and the “Cotton Club set” link black skin to a status outside that of the citizen; “liberation” is not about a case for freedom but an assumption of irresponsibility. The innovative possibilities of jazz have become grounds for constructing African Americans as less than full citizens. If Jones had set out to trace the path from slave to citizenship, he ended up somewhere else; citizenship had taken on at best a deeply ambivalent connotation.<sup>161</sup>

Throughout *Blues People*, Jones envisioned artistic practice as offering ways to lay claim to (or forfeit) identity as a citizen: Ellington was both a citizen and only a “citizen” because of his movement away from older blues traditions. In this formulation, artistic practice becomes as meaningful as legal status in recognizing citizenship; it demonstrates Jones/Baraka beginning to move away from state legitimation of citizenship. His stance was echoed by Malcolm X: in a speech at the Founding Rally for the Organization of Afro-American Unity (June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1964), X identified “African personality” with avoiding “copying some European cultural pattern”; X lauded the African American ability to improvise, “the only area on the American scene where the black man has been free to create.”

Improvisation, as both artistic and cultural innovation, was not simply an aesthetic credential, but could have effects in the political arena. For X, as for Baraka, the African American innovation would lead to political structures that empowered Blacks:<sup>162</sup>

He has shown that he can come up with something that nobody ever thought of on his horn. Well, likewise he can do the same thing if given intellectual independence. He can come up with a new philosophy. He can come up with a philosophy that nobody has heard of yet. He can invent a society, a social system, an economic system, a political system, that is different from anything that exists or has ever existed anywhere on this earth. (87)

Artistic freedom alone would not guarantee the “political system” that would alter power dynamics for African Americans; this passage forms a small part of X’s lengthy speech documenting the practical steps needed for organization. Nevertheless, it suggests, as *Blues People*

had the year before, that artistic practice did not exist apart from political activity; it could be, quite literally, avant-garde, a means for conceiving new structures through improvisational creativity and so achieving substantive political change.<sup>163</sup> Though blues and jazz were seen by some whites, negatively, as “a liberation” from citizenship responsibilities, they could be seen, positively, by black artists as a way to achieve a different, more meaningful citizenship—or something other than citizenship.<sup>164</sup>

X’s speech privileged music (“the horn”) rather than literary forms as the African American mode *par excellence*. Jones himself had crushingly dismissed black literature in a 1962 address to the American Society for African Culture, “Myth of a Negro Literature.” His central quarrel with African American fiction was his perception that writers like Phyllis Wheatley claimed a status apart from other blacks as “the ‘best and most intelligent’ of Negroes” (107), their own singularity emphasized at their fellow blacks’ expense even as their writing, limited by aspiration to “white” standards, remained mediocre. In many senses, this challenge is not dissimilar to his hesitation over Ellington in *Blues People*: the black artist had given up her identity in order to become successful, to become a citizen, to become white. Jones/Baraka’s challenge, as he entered the second half of the 1960s, was to create a poetics that avoided replicating this pattern. Although his essay writing and his numerous plays often take precedence in critical examinations of this period in his life, his persistence in writing and publishing poetry suggests that he saw it offering something the theatre and the lecture could not: the destabilizing potential of the lyric mode.

By the late 1960s Baraka had developed X’s formulation into a theory of the “Black ‘Aesthetic’” in which “the new poetry is structures of government & shapes of cities” (122). This argument foregrounded city-space more than the citizenship that might connect to it. (By contrast, Olson had exploded the polis and the city-space in order to articulate a meaningful citizenship.) “Our art shd be our selves as self conscious, with a commitment to Revolution,” insisted Baraka:



the possibility of a group identity denoted by “our” was dependent on a sense of the individual self and on cohering the individual self as “our selves” through self-reflection. The ends of such art were revolutionary in their hopes of social transformation: the overthrow of existing modes of art as well as of existing political structures, by militant activity if needs be (although David Smith has argued that “Baraka's conception of revolutionary politics has focused on the power of rhetorical gestures: the power of language itself to transform social reality” [Smith 245]). The poetry of the Black Aesthetic would work beyond the “uncommitted LITERARY intelligence” (119)—the writers Jones had identified in “Myth”—and towards a meaningful change in race-based power relations as part of an incipient Black Nationalism which involved destruction as much as creation—hence the title of his essay collection, *Raise, Race, Rays, Raze* (1971), in which these claims appeared.

To consider the relationship between the “LITERARY” and “structures of government & shapes of cities,” we need to examine not the ways Baraka’s poetry effected change within the environments in which he engaged—the Village, Harlem, Newark—but how his poems constructed a series of conjectural subject positions and communities, razing existing social relationships in order to raise new alternatives.<sup>165</sup> Attacking the illegitimacy of governmental definitions of the citizen, Baraka sought to write a lyric poetry that could transform collective (black) relations. The lyric mode offered Jones/Baraka what the blues offered John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, and their listeners: a path to citizenship through art—provided one did not end up “detached,” yielding to integration. In displacing subject positions before they could coalesce, lyric made possible a re-conception of the identity positions on which citizenship relied, the grounds upon which relations between citizen and state were based.

Music theorist Adelaida Reyes has assessed the social implications of blues and jazz, showing how “the music of an originally debased minority not even entitled to call itself American [became]

the music of the whole” (87). For Baraka, that whole was compromised, a “citizenship” fraught with problems. *Blues People* names the paradox of the “slave *citizen*,” an acute bind in which African Americans were entitled to full citizenship yet citizen status risked the erasure of a formative history of slavery that conditioned blackness as an aesthetic, political, and experiential identity.<sup>166</sup> Lyric’s capacity to call into question subject positions offered a means to make visible this paradox and even imagine solutions to it, to get the “we” into the “I” and vice versa while reconsidering who “you” singular and plural were.

### “Poems Like Fists”: The Lyric Poem’s Political Acts

In a review essay on poetry included in *Home*, Jones/Baraka doubted whether poems had political agency: “where what we are faced with [in a poem] is the *act* of ‘protest,’ certainly a picket sign, or a pistol, would do much more good” (122).<sup>167</sup> In this formulation, a poem that is equivalent to an act of protest is less effective than it. The poem that seeks to “transform social reality” has to be more than picket sign or pistol. This relationship between poem, protest, and progressive or militant political action concerned Baraka repeatedly during his cultural nationalist period. The essay “The Fire Must be Permitted to Burn Full Up,” an exploration of “Black ‘Aesthetic,’” ends with the exhortation:

Build a house, man. Build a city, A Nation. This is the heaviest work. A poem? One page? Ahhhh man, consider 200,000,000 people, feed and clothe them, in the beauty of god. That is where it’s at. And yeh, man, do it well. Incredibly well. (1970, 123)

Here, as in his statement in *Home*, Baraka seems to situate the poem outside the kinds of direct action he engaged in when campaigning for Kenneth Gibson’s mayoral election or pushing for the building of Kawaida Towers.

Rather than take Baraka's exhortations to build houses and cities as a caution against writing poems—he did both things, breaking ground on Kawaida Towers in October 1972, the year he published *Spirit Reach*, a work logocentric enough to assert “these words / are part of God's thing. I am a / vessel, a black priest interpreting” (212)—we might instead wonder why Baraka deliberately places poetry in dialogue with more obviously direct forms of community-formation: the picket, the riot, the campaign, and civic organization. Given Baraka's own organization and institution-building, and his turn to writing plays during the period, his poetry can seem of lesser significance, instrumental at best.<sup>168</sup> Jerry Gafio Watts goes so far as to argue “one need only read what Baraka wrote during the Black Arts movement to see the decline in his artistry once black nationalist politics became his primary stage” (7). Meta DuEwa Jones offers a more insightful analysis of what it means to “read” Baraka's poetry during this period when she argues that “improvisations enter the work at the level of composition—regardless of whether printed versions of his poems are a present feature in his live and recorded performances” (251). She sees Baraka's poetry from 1965-1974, particularly works like *It's Nation Time*, as exploring the possibilities of performance without fully departing from the conditions of the page; both when performed and when read silently, these works rethink questions of audience and action. Charles Bernstein's claim that “performance, in the sense of doing, is an underlying formal aesthetic as much as [...] a political issue” (7) might fruitfully lead us to re-consider what is ‘done’ through Jones/Baraka's poems, and how.<sup>169</sup>

An argument that might have influenced Jones/Baraka to value the poem's potential for action, its “sense of doing,” comes from an unlikely source: his sentencing for gun possession after the Newark riots of 1967.<sup>170</sup> Judge Knapp, presiding, read into evidence Jones/Baraka's poem “Black People!” published in the *Evergreen Review* after his arrest but before his trial. It included the lines:

All the stores will open if you  
will say the magic words. The magic words are: Up against the wall mother  
fucker this is a stick up! Or, smash the window at night (these are magic  
actions) smash the window at daytime, anytime, together.

These lines' "impulse to mobilize language as a weapon" (Smith, 246) were particularly disturbing to Knapp as a utopian fantasy in which blacks could "make a world we want black children to grow and learn in," a world predicated on the death of whites: "we cannot do this unless the white man / is dead" (135). Knapp treated the poem as if its words were actions: reading it into the court record, he named it a "diabolical prescription" that "causes one to suspect you were a participant" in the riots. Additionally citing a speech Jones/Baraka had given at Muhlenburg College, Knapp privileged his words rather than his alleged gun possession in passing sentence: the former literally comes first in the trial transcript.

Knapp offered a limited, literal reading of the poem. Yet the community and future imagined in "Black People!" is conjectural rather than actual. The two conditionals that hope for the freeing of goods from white ownership ("the stores will open if you will say the magic words") distance that event from coming to pass: it is doubly conditional. The poem depicts the "black people" of its title as having chosen a path other than violence, albeit against the speaker's advice. It ends prefiguring black children, grown older, who "look in your face and curse you by pitying your tomish ways." That the future generations will need to curse adults, pitying their white-friendly behavior, indicates that the poem sees itself as neither prescription nor action: in the future, black behavior will still need to change. The poem therefore concludes by disbelieving the realization of its own utopia: while it asserts "Just / take what you want," the poem sees that stance as fantastic.

What is significant about Knapp's reading of "Black People!" is Jones/Baraka's reaction, his awareness within his sentencing that a poem's fictive construction of possible community might be treated as descriptive. Immediately following the reading of the poem, he asked, perhaps disbelievingly, "Are you offering that in evidence?" He repeatedly interjected to reclaim his

work—“Let me read it”; “You mean, you don’t like it”—and to make explicit the ramifications of Knapp’s strategy: “I’m being sentenced for the poem, is that what you are saying?” His utterances enter into the official record the effects of writing and publishing a poem: they maintain that the poem, not the convention, has directly led to his sentencing. When Knapp formally announced his “conviction for the unlawful possession of two revolvers.” Jones/Baraka quickly added “and two poems” into Knapp’s sentence. Jones/Baraka claimed a voice not by disagreeing with Knapp’s right to read the poem into evidence, but through asserting the significance of that strategy: he made clear that his poetry constituted action.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Jones/Baraka’s poetry went through a number of shifts that have led critics to compartmentalize his poetry, to identify a series of different periods. What links Jones/Baraka’s writing during this transitional period in which LeRoi Jones reinvents himself as Amiri Baraka en route to Communist-influenced, revolutionary texts such as *Poetry for the Advanced*, with its paragraph-long epigraph from Lenin—is the attempt to understand the relationship between poem and world, typically figured as a negotiation of the speaking and listening positions of “I,” “you,” and “we.” That Jones/Baraka’s poems repeatedly envision a communal audience can be seen from the titles of his first two books, *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note* (1961) and *The Dead Lecturer* (1964). Both imply an interest in the transmission of (cultural) meaning to an audience: the title of the former suggests a writer beginning an extended epistolary account of his life for those who will find his body; the latter imagines the (dead) writer being able to speak, a “lecturer” even after death, or, as in the poem “I Substitute for the Dead Lecturer,” be spoken for. To substitute for the dead lecturer is to simultaneously assume the place of the dead and the professor; Jones’ book tries to reconcile the two, to retrieve the ancient while interpreting in the present, all the time wondering whether “these wan roads / I am pushed to follow, are / my own conceit” (2000, 70).

While these first two books often concern the egocentrism of “my own conceit,” at times the crisis of the self they depict—“my stewed black skull, an empty cage of failure” (70)—is also a communal crisis, as can be seen from “Notes for a Speech,” which concludes *Preface* and effectively bridges the two books. The opening statement, “African blues / does not know me,” positions Jones, imagined author of this extended suicide note, outside both African and American sociality. The two-word line “African blues” is an oxymoron that underscores how far Jones is alien to his African ancestry; as he quipped in *Blues People*, “undoubtedly, none of the African prisoners broke out into the ‘St. James Infirmary’ the minute the first of them was herded off the ship” (1970, xi). Yet to be estranged from “African blues” might also mean being estranged from citizen status, as an African in America. Even where African Americans were inside citizenship, their status was conflicted at best, a surrender to white ideology at worst. A similar gesture of double-alienation also concludes the poem:

Africa  
is a foreign place. You are  
as any other sad man here  
American

The speaker, unknown to “African blues,” realizes his ignorance of Africa. His epiphany marks a shift from “I” to “you” in which he no longer speaks for himself, but to himself as part of a wider, failed collective. For Jones, who would later write “America / Maybe you need to be / investigated / for yr unamerican / activities” (1979, 283), the adjective “American” was far from positive. Rather than a euphoric claiming of “American” identity and potential citizenship as the reward for (im)migration, this collective status is de-individualizing (“you are / as any other sad man here”) and desultory. Beginning with “African” and ending with “American,” the poem takes place within an experience of hyphenation that amounts to displacement. As a book, *Preface for a Twenty Volume Suicide Note* concludes with a disavowal of self- and group identity that performs the “suicide” of the title.

At the same time, the pluralizing of the collection's titular *Note* into the final poem's title, "Notes for a Speech," anticipates a future address, announcing that more must be said. The transition from these first two volumes into *Black Magic* (1969) marks a decided shift to a poetics built around the deferral of self/addressee positions. Jones/Baraka revisited the same historical trajectory he traced in "Notes for a Speech" in "Three Modes of History of Culture," the first poem of the "Sabotage" section that opens *Black Magic*. That poem describes, in an elegantly condensed stanza, the sweep "From heavy beginnings. Plantations, / learning/ America as speech, and a common emptiness" (53). To take one's place within America as an involuntary geography involves understanding how to wield speech, an attempt to find out what might be "common" to black identity within America and how "emptiness" might be rehabilitated. The poem's speaker is not referenced until the last few lines; instead, a collective designation "we drummers" in the first line assigns the poem to a group cohering around musical production. The repeated phrase "make your way" addresses the group, though is uttered by no clear speaker, functioning as a disembodied imperative command that wants to rouse the drummer-collective. When an "I" emerges, it is only to reaffirm the group: "I've come from there too." The poem's final movement, although predicated on repeated reference to this narrating "I," works to dissolve self-identity so that "my eyes and hands and mind can turn / and soften, and my songs will be softer / and lightly weight the air" (4). The "I" is given up to the ether; it joins the drumming that opened the poem in providing a baseline for collective experience. The exploration of what is common and what is empty involves a renegotiation of self-identity and group formulation through the displacement of address and utterance, a poetic concern that will dominate the three sections of *Black Magic*.

Jones/Baraka's poetry of the 1960s and 1970s does not take the collective or "common" for granted, though his ideas of Black Art have been cast as essentializing. "Poem for HalfWhite College Students," in the third section of *Black Magic*, "Black Art," seems to take mixed race

students to task for their fraternity with white classmates, asking them “who are you” and “Can you pop your fingers to no / music” as it wonders “Are you white or / black, or does that have anything to do / with it?” (1969, 120). Yet the interrogation of black and white identities offered by this poem is not as dualistic as these lines might suggest. The poem’s opening foregrounds the inter-reliance of self and other, speaker and addressee positions: “Who are you, listening to me, who are you / listening to yourself?” These lines construct identity as a reciprocal status re-articulated in a speaking-listening relationship; the “you” that encloses the “me” through listening is redefined in that engagement. As in “Numbers and Letters,” the listening addressee is also charged with speaking their identity.

While the first person is not mentioned in the poem after this point, it remains a self-reflexive shadow complicit in the construction of its addressees’ identity: “The ghost you see in the mirror, is it really / you”? If the suggestion here is that the “halfwhite” student’s leaning towards whiteness rather than blackness betrays the self, that suggestion’s phrasing as a question leaves open the possibility for self-definition rather than mandating an ideal blackness. As such, ghostliness might either be an image of whiteness or the haunting presence of black identity that can displace “white” subject positions. “Ghost” also puns on “spook,” which had entered into the American lexicon in the post-war period as derogatory slang, first to denote a “frightened Negro” and then for any black person. In this reading, to see the “ghost” in the mirror was to see one’s own blackness as already constructed by a white gaze.<sup>171</sup> As the poem dramatizes the risks faced by black students who lean towards white behavior—“you might be surprised right out the window, whistling dixie on the way in”—it also suggests how uncertain collective identity is: with the agents of “surprise” withheld, we cannot be sure whether a “black” or “white” student will take offence at the strains of Dixieland emerging from a “white” or “black” mouth and remove the offending student. Both subject positions are constructed within the poem through reciprocal and



incompatible engagement between the self and the group, between a set of speakers and addressees who become, at times, indistinguishable.

As a warning to “HalfWhite college students” against overly “white” behavior, “Poem” might also function as a self-caution, Baraka charging a former self, as Jones, with over-reliance on the Western canon; as such, the poem is addressed not externally, to others, but internally, to the self, preventing its consolidation.<sup>172</sup> William Harris’s comparison between Baraka’s and Coltrane’s work helps explain the kinds of radical experimentation, the formal and thematic violence, Baraka aimed at: “by playing the notes backwards and upside down Coltrane was searching for a new non-Western self among the rubble of Western forms, a new arrangement of notes that would be the source for a new definition of reality and ethnic identity” (14). Where Jones/Baraka differs from this version of Coltrane, however, is in his attempt to go beyond the self by dissolving the boundaries between speaker and addressee. One of the faults he found with Western forms was their solipsism: he saw “egocentrism as the result of acculturation into whiteness” and so “black communality carr[ied] the weight of a wished-for release from egocentrism”—a release, I would argue, that he achieved through deferring the resolution of the lyric self, the lyric addressee, and the plural collective (Mackey, 36).

Such a strategy has much in common with a long history of the lyric: Sarah Kay has shown that troubadour lyrics employed a postmodern subjectivity *avant la lettre*, deploying performance modes in order to have the first-person speaker assume a variety of positions, which served not to create a stable self but to render identity protean, such that “subjectivity is inseparable from rhetorical complexity” (Kay, 49). Within poems like “Poem for HalfWhite College Students,” the possibility of identity is both professed and forestalled. To refashion the lyric in this way was to encourage a kind of self-reflexive practice within readers through modeling it on the page: the self, unsure of itself, helped the group to question and decide upon its own identity. However, as I

show in my readings of *In Our Terribleness* and *It's Nation Time*, the displacement of lyric subject positions could also be used to reify group identity: Baraka's invocation of the role of poet-prophet led to monologic interpretations of how group roles should be defined.

## Nation Time and Communal Identity

The tension between a group open to difference and one with a strong, fixed identity can be seen from *In Our Terribleness: Some Elements and Meanings in Black Style*, produced with photographer Billy Abernathy. A "genre-blurring manual for daily life" (Shaw 549), *In Our Terribleness* combined Abernathy's portraits of blacks with Baraka's prose and lineated statements on black life and culture, statements that variously animated the individuals Abernathy's lens captured and exhorted readers to "social organization" and the "communal" (1970, 119). The subtitle suggests that the text aims to be more suggestive than anything else, a commentary rather than a manual. The book's first pages announce a project in which self/other distinctions become elided: "If I have said anything of value, all praises due to you, Black People. / There is no you there is no *me*." To do so involved re-examining both speaker and addressee through a process that was literally as well as conceptually reflective.

The epigraph-like poem "Revelation" indicates Baraka's desire to incorporate reflection within collective organization. Commanding readers to "LOOK AT THEM" ("the Pictures"), "Revelation" asserts that the effect of such looking is "force / at YOU," suggesting that a new awareness of the self will emerge from seeing others. Such a process is modeled by the book's silver half-title page, which functions like a mirror to present the reader with her own image. Most obviously, this allows the reader to enter into the "our" of the title, to become a part of the work's communal horizon. In so doing, the book transforms the reader from recipient of images to one

among the images. The reflective half-title page allows for unpredictability within the community of “terribleness”: as the viewer’s face changes, so does the conception of communal identity; the collective remains open in its membership, albeit only open to a “Black” identity. More than simplistically including the reader, the half-title’s mirroring effect postpones a determinate sense of the Black “our”.

Baraka includes within *In Our Terribleness* a conversation with his former self as a way to demonstrate how the mirrored reader might change, and change social organization:

I hear you and see you too brother jones  
from the year 1968 talking to me,  
My long departed ancestor  
The sounds and images are here where  
you left them. All for us

This conversation invokes melopoeiac and phanopoeiac poetic dimensions, a suggestion that re-conceptualising the self involves considering “how you sound” (to take the title of Baraka’s well-known statement of poetics) as well as how you look. In the early pages of the book, Baraka exploits the interior/exterior dimensions of looking: “an old man looks one way / (dig it, the language) An old man *looks one way*—his yng son / *looks another*” (8). The ambiguity of looking (glance/resemblance) allows him to signal the role of language in constructing and understanding individual/group identity. His captions and poems, which significantly outnumber the pictures, are a means through which to occupy more than one subject position, a means for considering how the black reader-viewer-listener looks at and to others. While Shaw is right to claim that *In Our Terribleness* manages to “literalize the rejection of universal liberal audience standards that coincided with [Baraka’s] move to Black Nationalism” (547), it does not, I would argue, prescribe one version of black community. What Shaw calls the “circuit” from “black to black” (Baraka’s phrase) in fact tests the synonymy of the two blacknesses (548).<sup>173</sup>

The formation of black community, as envisioned within *In Our Terribleness*, involves a shift in which “talking to me” becomes giving words and images “all for us.” This community comes together through disavowals and destructions, including reframing “terribleness” as a virtue: “*Terribleness*—Our beauty is BAD cause we bad.” *In Our Terribleness* engages with a process Charles Fuller Jr., writing in *Liberator* in 1967, termed “socio-creative art [...] a manner of self-expression and artistic form born directly from the collective social situation in which the Afro-American found himself in this country” (9). In other words, the writer’s self emerges from an awareness of group identity and affiliation, from a set of shared experiences of contemporary America. For Baraka, socio-creative art must also be socio-destructive, given that “these cities are ugly. We know they are examples / of white art. white feeling (?). So are the laws, the rule(s), the ethos” (137). White strictures and structures must be disavowed, destroyed, or inverted—“good” citizens becoming “bad” and “terrible” ones, or not citizens at all—in order to articulate Black Art and Black Nationalism. As Baraka’s poems “locate social conflict within the topography of the lyric ‘I’” (Lease 395), the “I” becomes less a “representative man” than a means of articulating the kinds of struggle the social group must engage in order to form membership.<sup>174</sup> Within *In Our Terribleness*, Baraka uses photographs to construct black readers/listeners as an exemplary community that nevertheless remains open to redefinition and alteration. His book offers more than a rhetoric; it is a model for creating forms “bigger than the individual” (46) as it presents on the page the kinds of (self-)gazing and (self-)listening it expects from blacks.

The focus within *In Our Terribleness* on city spaces might tentatively suggest that citizenship, conceived as membership within city-space, is still of use to Baraka’s poetics and politics. This book repeatedly urges reclamation of the urban: “All the cities are for rent.” declares Baraka, “we will rent them to ourselves” (87-8). In contrast to his earlier ideas of taking property from whites, here he advocates subverting the cultural logic of white capitalism through a statement that is only

part-parodic of white corruption: blacks are to use economic means to achieve social organization and communal identity within the city, figured as “institutional space and territorial space” (88). Such reclamation is not only practical, a way to achieve economic and social independence, but also ideological: “We move from the single to the many / to the larger the city, the nation” (46). As Jones had put it in *Blues People*, the migration to the city was where “the *Negro*, now, becomes more definitely *Negroes*,” achieving collective identity through city-space (96).<sup>175</sup> Just as the self comes into meaningful existence within a group it helps to shape, the group organization within the city allows for a redefinition of national (and, eventually, transnational) spaces.

Baraka’s statement that “Politics is a subbranch as definition / of ACTIVITY within the total” (112) finds a corollary in Engin Isin’s claim that “being political arises *qua* the city” (2002, 50). “The city” not only names a designated urban space—Newark, Gloucester, London—but also a condition that “relentlessly provokes, differentiates, positions, mobilizes, immobilizes, oppresses, liberates” (Isin, 2002, 284). In calling the city a “difference machine” (1)—that is, a means or technology through which difference can both be produced and interpreted—Isin understands citizenship as a problem of immanent and exterior behavior: “for centuries, classification struggles raged over categories and classes of citizens and their strangers, outsiders, and aliens” (78). For Baraka to invoke “the city” in *In Our Terribleness*—precisely at a moment when he was attempting to reconceive Newark as the New Ark and to lobby for the building of Kawaida Towers against the opposition of the North Ward **Citizens** Council—was to acknowledge the contestatory struggles around group identity which he faced both experientially and theoretically. In these contestatory struggles we can find an articulation of Black Nationalism in terms of the citizen as city-dweller, someone who enters into a group identity through residence in, and engagement with, a given urban political space. We must, though, give full weight to the absence of citizenship as a term within *In Our Terribleness*: what Baraka outlines here might be like citizenship, or at least like

the citizenship particular to the condition of cities, but it is not U.S. citizenship, for reasons that are cultural as much as they are political: Baraka does not want to follow Ellington's path. The term is noticeably absent from his poetry during this period, and the *Selected Poetry of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones* (1979) contains only a single reference to "citizen," a sarcastic description of "all the painfully intelligent citizens / I've forced myself to love" (55).<sup>176</sup> That slant on the citizen echoes the hesitation in *Blues People* over what one might have to give up in order to become a U.S. citizen.

While city-space is for Isin a site of difference, Baraka's conception of the "communal" within *In Our Terribleness* remains in many places markedly homogeneous. The city is not only imagined as black, but as a certain kind of black: middle-class professionals are excluded, and women enter into *In Our Terribleness* in circumscribed ways:

Hey, man, look at this woman.  
She is fine. Fine.  
I cant say nothing else.

We need to give her something

The Black woman remains passive, subject to the male photographic lens and the male pen—she is outside the "we"—even within a work that aims to reclaim civic space. Though we might, via Howe, try to look for the presence of voice in the black woman's linguistic absence, her challenge to male control of speech—"I cant say nothing else"—to do so we have to go beyond the terms that Baraka himself allows. While *In Our Terribleness* offers a potentially open community, an incipient black identity achieved through self-reflection and looking at others, it does so within certain ideological limits.<sup>177</sup>

What Baraka articulates during this period mobilizes through city-space but is not citizenship; he constructs a collective predicated on a version of ethnic identity which presupposes cultural values and modes of artistic production (i.e. no Phyllis Wheatley; Duke Ellington doubtfully)

rather than the displacement of subject positions he had attempted in much of *Black Magic. It's Nation Time*, published in the same year as *In Our Terribleness*, further reifies a singular vision of the Black Nation even as it dissolves boundaries between “I,” “we,” and “you.” This slim collection, comprising three poems, begins by castigating blacks for the ways they cede their self-identity to ideals that are essentially “white”; it next imagines an alternative, transcendent version of the self constructed through engagement with group identity; and it concludes by calling the Black Nation into being through collective utterance. In reading this work, I want to suggest that Baraka’s dialogic lyric project falters because the transcendent version of the self and the resulting collective voice do not contain the differentiated many but a unity—a lone voice.

The title of the first poem, “The Nation is Like Ourselves,” might promise a celebratory explanation of national identity as coterminous with collective self-expression rather than state imposition; within the context of the oppression of African Americans in 1960s and 1970s America, such an affirmation of the Nation/self overlap could have been both radical and triumphant. Yet the opening lines, which restate the title’s proposition, complicate the comparison between the individual/group and the larger national structure. In the first line, “ourselves” slightly fragments into “our [separate] selves” while the appositional “together” is set off by a comma which sets apart the selves who might form the Nation:

The Nation is like our selves, together  
seen in our various scenes, sets where ever we are  
what ever we are doing, is what the nation  
is  
doing  
or  
not doing  
is what the nation  
is  
being  
or  
not being

(1979, 190)

Having appeared to speak from the communal position of the Nation, the poem immediately shifts viewpoint, framing an exterior look at “our selves” as “seen in our various scenes,” a phrase which references Fundi’s photographic captures in *In Our Terribleness*. The argument in these lines is that the nation exists in direct correlation to what its individuals do: individual acts, collectively-oriented, construct the nation. Yet the negations and near-tautologies of the first three lines, across which “the nation” amounts to “the nation,” suggest that, while it might be “nation time,” the nation has yet to be understood. In his move to understand it, Baraka imagines a “nationfying” that condemns and excludes certain modes of blackness.

“The Nation is Like Ourselves” positions black claims to nationalism as weak supplications: “Our nation / a people without knowledge of itself” is all too reliant on requests made by the disenfranchised black to “doctor nigger,” “lawyer nigger,” “liberated nigger”—the same middle class Jones criticized in *Blues People* for their compromises and cultural forgetfulness en route to becoming “citizens” (190-1). Briefly scathing, the poem runs aground amid such supplication: “please lib lib lib / you spliv er ate / US, we you, coo-” (191). “US” here invokes the damage done by the “professional niggers” who stutter and splinter liberation; it also suggests US, Maulana Karenga’s West Coast Black Nationalist organization, and thus makes a specific charge of betrayal (Woodard, 72ff). The critique of the nation as “like ourselves” is that black individuals have identified not with the collective but with the type of the “best and most intelligent” mentality that Jones had argued held back African American literature: success stories who “commit the actual take over of / yourself,” preventing self- and communal identity (191). The nation realized in such terms can never be anything but “like” ourselves, only a similitude, too closely aligned with white egocentrism.

The poem’s scorn for upwardly-mobile middle class blacks—“the newest negro to understand that theres no black / no white / only people”—stems from the consequences their behavior has



for others; the “we” cannot be anything other than this limited “you” and is left to beseech and aspire, “please mr ethnic meditations professor profess your love for black / people we waiting” (192). The consequences are driven home in the poem’s final lines, “you are our nation sick ass assimilado / please come back / like james brown say / please please please.” Worse than Ellington’s integration, which was at least an impression printing African American culture on white taste, the assimilation of “mr celebrity, mr nigger in the treasury department / mr disc jockey for the mournful cash register of the nigger soul” is not only “sick” but reduces each member of the nation to “mr all of us” while committing economic exploitation.<sup>178</sup> In the poem’s conclusion, the only vocalization available to the black speaker is the plea, repeated in vain. That “the nation is like ourselves” has become a cautionary tale.

The middle poem in the collection, “Sermon for our Maturity,” offers an alternative to the problematic replacement of the “we” with the individualistic (rather than social) “you.” Invoking a spatio-temporal register that is at once animistic and cosmological (“we are the suns children”), “Sermon” stretches what Baraka elsewhere terms the “official outsider” status of Black identity to extreme ends:<sup>179</sup> “Praise your ancestors thru whom / you came to this planet / attached to a chord from beginning / to now.” This formulation, an allusion to non-Western origin stories, is also an analogue for the way the Middle Passage conferred on Blacks an other-worldly status; positively, it connects them both to a rich heritage and to an ancestral music that crosses time but, as Jones/Baraka noted elsewhere, it positioned them beyond American values. Where the legacy of the Middle Passage meant that African Americans could at best be “new citizens” (as *Blues People* argued), Baraka’s vision of an inter-planetary migration transforms that legacy by requiring no citizenship. Instead, it founds the collective on an originary artistic act, the “chord” that resonates across time and space, tying African Americans back to their ancestors and forestalling cultural forgetting. Identifying a “you” that exceeds categories of the self—“we grown past animals / We

been humans” (196)—the poem voices “ourselves” through maturing past the professional aspirations of “The Nation is Like Ourselves.”

The interrelation of the deity-like “you Negro” of the poem and the national community represented by the “we” takes place through a series of telescopings between the cosmic and the bodily, the veins and the planetary: “Language at celestial altitudes sounds / like bloods scattin at hightempos” (197). “Sermon” charges the Black collective with the kind of improvisation Malcolm X had seen at the root of political activity. Lines like “Heaven got to grow to have you in it” riffs on the dozens, themselves a skillful deployment of language to communal ends, while allowing the dozens a quasi-spiritual end, pointedly indicating that blackness exceeds the limitations of Paradise.

It is only after this intermingling of space and blood, you and we, that “Nation Time” arrives: the final poem, “It’s Nation Time,” heralds “one strong fast black energy space” (198). The poem in the collection that most approaches the condition of music, with lines like “Sing a get up time to nationfy / singaa miracle fire light” (199), this poem promises to complete the evolution begun in the rejection of “professional” values at the outset of the book. To turn nationalism into a verb, “nationfy,” engages in a “verbal privileging” that, Nathaniel Mackey has shown, “linguistically accentuates action among a people whose ability to act is curtailed by racist constraints” (268). The action that “It’s Nation Time” accentuates, however, is predicated on a monologic version of the previously diffuse community that Baraka’s poems had allowed: the group sings with one voice, relying on a single origin story—provided in “Sermon for Our Maturity”—rather than on any ability to displace subject and identity positions. The communal assembly imagined in “It’s Nation Time” was realized in political discourse through politician Jesse Jackson’s adoption of the phrase at various political hustings; as Meta DuEwa Jones points out, “the poem’s anthem-coining qualities and circulation value” are evident from those words’ existence beyond the space of the

book (247). However, the movement of the phrase out of its poetic context into its status as chant or slogan also marks a reification of subject positions: the politician-orator names the script, which the community learns as a symbol for action. Call-and-response as a mode could, like the dozens, offer a means for a group to come together around polyphonic utterance, written or verbal, but “It’s Nation Time” is predicated on collective univocal speech.

The final lines of Baraka’s poem indicate this return to the speaker/audience model. The refrain “it’s nation time” stretches out, in a formal rhyme with the theme of growth and expansion in “Sermon,” to become “it’s nation time eye ime / it’s nation ti eye ime.” Heard, this elongation writes the “I” into the time of the nation. Read on the page, “i” appears in “time” alongside the seeing “eye” that recalls the external “seen/scene” of “The Nation is Like Ourselves” as well as the gaze foregrounded in *In Our Terribleness*. The aural/visual shift again equates seeing and self-identity, but it also alludes to the need for an “I” to guide the nation. Although *It’s Nation Time* has moved away from the solipsism of bourgeois professionalism, it ends rooted to the articulations of one particular Imamu, the poet-prophet-preacher who calls forth the group: “come out niggers come out.” This making visible of the enunciating figure becomes even more pronounced in the performance of the poem, in which “Baraka begins to develop a kind of elocutionary athleticism, shaping his breath and body to the demands of extended litanies of envisioned power” (Benston, 221). Performed, the poem is as much about Baraka as about the Nation; at best, it articulates *Baraka’s* version of the Nation and the black collective.

In moving away from the poetry of his cultural nationalist phase, Baraka would maintain the importance of the relationship between self and other, speaker and listener: in the introduction to *Hard Facts* (1975) he would assert: “The poetry, art, or writing reveals the class stand, and attitude of the writer, reveals the audience to whom the writer and artist address themselves” (236); he insisted that “the question of audience is key, is central to the work” (237). Yet this Mao-

influenced Marxist-Leninist perspective sees the writer as securely in possession of the “I” subject position; the audience is privileged as an audience rather than as potentially able to speak or affect the speaker; furthermore, this audience is only revealed through writing, rather than constitutive of writing. While it may be an oversimplification to claim, as Jerry Gafio Watts does, that “Jones’ nationalist vision was brought to Afro-Americans, not derived from them” (167), Jones/Baraka’s poems often based their displacement of subject positions on the presence of an authoritative interpreter. *In Our Terribleness* positions the reader-audience within the reflection of the silver half-title page while Imamu Amiri Baraka remains apart from the reflection, securely on the title page. “Afro-American Lyric” proceeds through a series of imperatives which encourage the audience to “think” and “study” while all the time the “I” remains unchallenged, present even though obscured.

Such a stance may reflect a wider problematic within the formulation of a Black Nationalist Black Aesthetic. Wahneema Lubiano has argued that, despite the potentially transformative interventions of Black Nationalism into the production of identity, a role often taken by the state, the Black Arts movement tended towards “particular imperatives” which actually constituted “statelike activity in the cultural realm” (2002, 162). Black Arts was able to offer alternatives to a unitary American subject conceived as not-black; however, in basing their notions of blackness on an “opposition to white racial hegemony [which] legitimizes and privileges black nationalist imaginings,” Black Arts thinkers devised a “nonstate romanticized subject” who was as resistant to critique, and therefore to flexibility, as the dominant popular and government notion of American identity during the period—in effect, a subject which followed statist models, rather than displacing the consolidation of identity.

While Baraka’s involvement in producing a (male, “working-class”) romanticized subject stemmed from his self-designation as cultural interpreter, as Imamu, it also stemmed from his

willingness to accept others' simplified versions of his potentially destabilizing poetics. For instance, his famous formulation in "Black Art" that "we want poems / like fists beating niggers out of Jocks" (1979, 105) became, in Larry Neal's essay "The Black Arts Movement," the definition "poems are fists" (58). Baraka's position, writing an unlikely similitude into his conception of poetry's militant role, asks for an act of comparison which makes possible a negotiation of the poem's role within the political sphere. Neal's more straightforward version rigidly defines what poetry must be. Consider, too, the opening of "Black Art":

Poems are bullshit unless they are  
teeth or trees or lemons piled  
on a step. Or black ladies dying. (1979, 106)

Neal glosses these lines as a demonstration that "poetry is a concrete function, an action," arguing that "ethics and aesthetics are one" for Black Arts<sup>180</sup>: poems, and artistic works generally, represent "the will toward self-determination and nationhood," both through their artistry and through the institution-building of their creators (58).<sup>181</sup> Yet there is more to Baraka's lines than Neal reads into them: the four alternatives offered for poems pluralize the kinds of "concrete function" the poem might have. What unites these disparate elements is that they are passive happenings within the world: the human body, the ecosystem, the residential space, the racial consequence of contemporary United States politics. Although the "teeth" at the start of the list promise aggression, the failure of such action to come to fruition is arguably complicit in "black ladies dying." Baraka's *ars poetica* unfolds an intricate role for poetry within the social space, one in which poems achieve little but must *be*, as the double use of "are" in the first line suggests. "Poems are bullshit unless they are"; that is, the emergence of the poem into existence, rather than a concrete definition of what the poem is or does, constitutes the potential for social action, though offers no guarantee that social action will result.<sup>182</sup>

Lyric community most successfully emerges in Baraka's poetry where egocentrism is subject to investigation. While Baraka's lyric mode does not return to persona—the "I" in Baraka's poems is, like the "you," typically plural, divided as well as divisive—"It's Nation Time" is not alone in constructing an authoritative position through which the displacements of subject positions are univocally mediated by an interpreting figure, often a version of Baraka. Within lyric's long history there is a precedent for the deferral of interpretation, what A.C. Spearing has termed "subjectless subjectivity." In this view, the lyric mode's "narrating 'I' is not constituted as a self or a character at all, but is merely the function of the process of narration" (154). One might argue that tasking Baraka with the displacement of subject positions and the refusal of interpretation would remove the author-function too far; at times, it is precisely Baraka's performance as Baraka that fosters communal action. Yet the costs of too narrow a definition of black identity are high: Michelle Wright has suggested that "attempts to impose a homogeneous and/or heteropatriarchal norm onto Black subjectivity return us to the same unyielding and theoretically suspect discourses that first produced Black Others" (229).

While Jones/Baraka's revision of Olson's citizenship through epistolarity offered a necessary correction to the former's insistence on common humanity, regardless of differences in experience, it failed to find an alternative that could allow for the expression of difference—despite setting out to do so in its lyric mode. Baraka's critique of U.S. citizenship exposed hypocrisies, gaps between the rhetoric and the experience of rights. However, in ultimately neglecting "citizenship" as a term, Jones/Baraka ceded both to the U.S. government and to middle-class, capitalist ideology the opportunity to "say who are citizens." Clearly, the citizenship that was being offered to African Americans was not a significant enough citizenship; as Adolph Reed Jr has shown, "civil-rights egalitarianism demanded that any one unit of labor be considered equivalent to another, and that the Negro be thought of as 'any other American'" (49), a move that effectively negated black

identity just as the separation of African Americans from constitutional protection had for so long negated the black citizen. At the same time, citizenship remained the condition upon which membership of, protection by, and involvement in the state was predicated. Citizenship might not have been a guarantee of equality—Baraka’s own experience of his trial is evidence of that—but it allowed at least a modicum of protection; it assured what Hannah Arendt called “the right to have rights” and, as Selye Benhabib has argued, “the loss of citizenship rights” can be “politically tantamount to the loss of human rights altogether” (2004, 50).<sup>183</sup> Jones’ original criticism of citizenship within *Blues People* was that it failed to allow for difference, rendering a kind of equality that was actually an assimilationist integration; however, his own position offered a very similar, albeit corrective, norming.

Jones/Baraka’s poetics offered a model for lyric community which could replace the consensual and flattening egalitarianism of civil rights rhetoric with a more disruptive, subject-to-question mode of negotiation: a way of speaking in which speaking became a contestatory activity. This mode, though, yielded to a traditional oratorical model of speaking at audiences, with Baraka inscribing onto the wider community his ideals, variously excluding gays, Jews, women, non-blacks and middle-class blacks from the nation and from “social organization.”<sup>184</sup> As Komozi Woodard has shown, Jones/Baraka was able to pragmatically work with members of the North Ward **Citizens** Council and other “white” Americans to achieve social advances, even when betrayed by them.<sup>185</sup> His poetry, however, too often offered a narrow version of such political activity. “When We’ll Worship Jesus” (from *Hard Facts*) jokes that blacks will come together around Christ only “when jesus blow up / the white house” (1991, 251). What is written here as a communal activity actually restates a personal agenda, outlined in a 1966 interview: “the *energy* I put into [*A System*], if I had put the same energy into devising a method to blow up the White House, it might have been much more beneficial to my people” (Reilly, 15). Where the self becomes a metonym for the

communal, the “representative man,” the possible versions of citizenship decrease. Jones/Baraka’s sense of “my people,” like the construct “the people” I examine in the following chapter, was itself a norming measure.<sup>186</sup> As Baraka moved further into his Marxist phase, his certainty that his role would be to speak to and for the working class grew, and it is arguably only with *Wise, Why’s, Y’z* (1995) that his work has once again returned to the more radical possibilities of the lyric mode.

If abandoning citizenship cedes too much territory to the state, what might poets do or say about the status of the citizen? Poetry offers to citizenship the possibility of reformulation, of difference-within-citizenship; that is, it offers ways of conceiving citizens beyond homogeneity. While lyric can be a privileged mode for such difference, it is no guarantee of it. Olson’s citizenship through epistolarity had proved ineffectual and risked imagining only federated individuals speaking on their own terms instead of shaping each other’s ideas. Jones/Baraka’s turn from citizenship towards a national collective failed to cohere the Black Nation and left the citizen to be defined by others. For Susan Howe, another inheritor and reviser of the projective verse tradition, an answer lay in a poetics that could explore the ways historical documents constructed narratives of citizenship. In this view, reimagining citizenship involved tracing the ways historical texts had defined the citizen, and showing how such definitions were always already acts of rewriting and, indeed, fragmentation. As my next chapter argues, Howe examined American citizenship from beyond American boundaries: from Puritan England, as the citizen emerged from subject status. In making visible a textual logic for citizenship, she situated written acts at the heart of citizen status without insisting on authors as authoritative interpreters of “the people.”



“The subtle workings of the Body Politic on every citizen”:

Citizenship through Text in Howe’s *A Bibliography of the King’s Book*

Where parts of the message must have disappeared

With time but also through violence, errors in transmission

—David Herd, “*Sans papiers*”

### Can a Creative Act be an Act of Citizenship?

A central conviction in this dissertation is that poetry might less *be* about citizenship than *go* about citizenship; that is, the works I read in these chapters demonstrate that the poetic text can imagine alternative modes of citizenship to those scripted by government, jurisprudence, and even by familiar modes of dissent such as marches and protests. Olson’s *Maximus* not only theorised citizenship in terms of discrete individuals communicating as part of a “group with will”; it offered an epistolary mode for acting as such a citizen. While Baraka’s cultural nationalist stance effectively rejects citizenship as a useful status, preferring an ethnocultural affiliation, his inclinations toward reclaiming city-space and reconceiving ideas of community can allow for a reconception of the citizen. The link he makes between artistic production and citizenship leads to a radical use of lyric as part of an argument that acting differently than oneself—existing outside one’s subjectivity—disrupts existing scripts of citizenship and allows for different modes of relating to others.

In this chapter, I argue that Howe likewise offers a version of and methodology for citizenship, which for her is predicated on the way citizenship is governed by text(s) as well as structured by government. As with Olson and Baraka, she demonstrates how the poetic text can function as what Engin Isin and Greg Nielsen call an “act of citizenship”: an unscripted practice or event outside already-sanctioned activities of citizenship (voting, jury service, military service) which realises an individual’s agency as a citizen precisely because it questions existing norms of

citizen-government relationships (2008, 2).<sup>187</sup> In this version of citizenship, the status of citizen is not dependent on *demos* or *ethnos* but on acts themselves; such acts are distinguished from “actions” as being unprecedented, unpredictable and as having consequences that cannot be anticipated; by contrast, we know what the results of voting will be as an activity, even if we don’t know the name of the winners and losers in advance.

In responding to this development in citizenship studies, Melanie White has asked, “can an act of citizenship be creative?” My argument in reading Susan Howe’s *A Bibliography of the King’s Book; or, Eikon Basilike* follows from this to suggest a creative act can be an act of citizenship—and sometimes must be. White argues that, in order to be creative, “the citizen must overcome the force of habit by provoking [a] genuine encounter that poses the problem of how to act”; essential to creative acts of citizenship is the need to “affirm the unforeseeable and contingent” and “to disrupt the static and sedimented dimensions of human action” (2008, 46).<sup>188</sup> Creativity functions within the sphere of citizenship in order to take us beyond *habitus*; for White, the creative does not exist only within the artistic arena, but my own aim is to draw attention to poetry as politically creative (in her sense), as registering and responding to wider socio-political concerns.

That Howe’s work engages disruption has been long acknowledged: “Howe’s innovations on the page, her sculptural sketches of signs” constitute what Rachel Blau DuPlessis has called “a poetics of her responsibility to and in this multiple struggle” for social place and political power (1990, 128).<sup>189</sup> For instance, her use of lexes that seemingly exist outside ‘English’ (“thieft,” “thorow”) while working to extend its semantic and historical reach involves a rethinking of what tales get told and in what language. Her experiments with the written page, including diagonal lineation, overlaid text, and visual citation likewise intervene in “the force of habit.”<sup>190</sup> As with other poets writing in a projective vein, her poems emerge not from a prescriptive (formal) demand, but through a contingent engagement with content; in Olson’s case, the poet’s body; in

Howe's, an historically-minded reworking of archival documents and of gendered access to those documents—what Grant Jenkins has termed a “clear-cut mission of rescue” which nonetheless “require[s] more than a liberatory or redemptive narrative” (160).

At the same time, White's caution that “one cannot claim to be performing a creative act of citizenship beforehand, for this suggests that a genuine encounter has not occurred” (55) should give us pause to reflect before too quickly assuming a link between Howe's work and (creative) citizenship. Even though Erkan Ercel has argued that “act[s] of citizenship through the mediation of art [...] do not have the burden of being ethical themselves or responsible towards policy or laws” (in Isin, 2008, 297), Charles Well's reading of *Antigone* defines an act of citizenship as one that “disrupts and undermines the stability of the laws that determine the limits of the body of citizenship” (in Isin, 2008, 76); we can expect poetry on occasions to intervene in such laws, albeit in complex ways that are not primarily jurisdictional or governmental. In order, then, to read *A Bibliography* as an act of citizenship, we have to locate how Howe engages with and seeks to alter the limits of citizenship while also, as White argues, continuing to write the unpredictable into the narrative.<sup>191</sup>

What, though, constitutes Howe's “creative act,” and how is it more than creative—how does it intersect with citizenship? Given that for Howe “the idea of the printed book appears as a trap” for many writers, particularly women (Howe made this comment of Emily Dickinson), unpredictability must affect cultural expectations as well as literary technologies (1993a, 170). A number of Howe's works lend themselves to analysis in terms of both the citizen and the printed book, particularly during the 1980s: *The Liberties* (1980), which takes its name from a part of Dublin, directly considers city-space and the lives of Dublin citizens, including Jonathan Swift and Esther Johnson;<sup>192</sup> *Pythagorean Silence* (1982) considers communities cohering around relationships to knowledge; and *Defenestration of Prague* (1983) concerns the Ireland/Northern Ireland division by

examining Prague in 1617. Yet I want to turn to a somewhat unlikely text—unlikely both for my argument, and for Howe to have written when she did—in order to consider citizenship in terms of creative acts.

*A Bibliography of the King's Book; or, Eikon Basilike* (1989, 1993b; hereafter, *A Bibliography*) splices words and phrases from a range of works including *Eikon Basilike* (1649), *Patriarcha* (1680), *Arcadia* (1590), *A Bibliography of the King's Book* (1896) and *The Personal History of David Copperfield* (1850). The 1896 text by Edward Almack from which it takes its name was an attempt to survey and adjudicate the critical leanings regarding the authorship controversy over *Eikon Basilike*, purportedly written by King Charles I and published as such after his execution in 1649. As Howe reveals in the foreword to *A Bibliography*, John Milton made a counter-claim, in *Eikonoklastes* (written on behalf of the new Puritan government) that the *Eikon* was invalid, in part because of the inclusion in several editions of a non-Christian prayer “stol’n word for word from the mouth of a Heathen fiction praying to a heathen God; and that in no serious book, but the vain amatorious Poem of Sir Philip Sidneys Arcadia” (1962, 362).<sup>193</sup> Howe’s *A Bibliography* discusses texts that were composed from other texts; its also engages in similar disassemblies, pulling language, image-sets, narratives, and ideas from one text before pasting those fragments into new combinations, staging unlikely encounters that are moments of what she elsewhere terms “collusion or collision with History” (1990, 33).<sup>194</sup>

Through citing text from one book in another, at times through physically cutting and pasting it,<sup>195</sup> Howe calls into question what we understand a book to be: *A Bibliography* both is and is not an index to works concerning the early 17<sup>th</sup> century *Eikon Basilike*, a text which existed in many different editions and which is therefore already difficult to define as a fixed book. Uncertainty over the *Eikon*’s credentials leads to and results from a series of problematic encounters, firstly between texts and secondly between readers and texts. Such encounters serve to question

authorship and authority, leading to an argument about sovereign status and citizenship. While these problematic encounters are staged within *A Bibliography* itself, they are also physically manifested in the ways one literally has to turn “Howe’s” book upside down to decipher a page; as one ceases to be “static and sedimented,” Howe’s *A Bibliography* upsets the “force of [reading] habit”. Such minor disruption does not, of course, constitute an intervention in the script of citizenship, but it does suggest that Howe’s version of projective poetics innovates with the ways readers encounter texts and authors.

In many ways, *A Bibliography* is essential to understanding Howe’s poetics; in an interview with Edward Foster, Howe explained that it brought together her key areas and methods of poetics:

all my thinking about the mis-editing of Dickinson’s texts, George [Butterick]’s careful editing of Charles Olson’s poems, all the forgotten little captivity narratives, the now-forgotten *Eikon*, the words *Eikon*, *Eikonoklastes*, and *regicide*—all sharp vertical sounds, all came together and then split open. (1993a, 175)

This characterization of *A Bibliography* recognizes the twin pulls of Howe’s work: to take apart and to put together. Where Olson had sought to get deep inside his own body into order to then extend outwards towards others, Howe goes outwards towards others’ texts (often historical and “now-forgotten”), mining fragments from within in order to create her “own” texts that “c[o]me together and then split open,” dispersing rather than integrating others’ words.<sup>196</sup> Howe’s work does not employ strategies of citation as a way to direct us towards sources—as *The Cantos* does<sup>197</sup>—nor obscure citation in order to assert the “originality” of a new work that is emergent from but independent of its sources—as, for example, Ashbery’s *The Tennis Court Oath* does. Instead, her work explores how the collision of textual elements results in a textual undecideability that problematizes authorship without entirely disregarding the author. Faced, for example, with the overlaying of text, we have to decide which meanings to prioritise based on “strategic reasons” (McHale, 210); in so doing, we observe a disavowal of authority by the “author” and implicate ourselves in creating (or resisting) authoritative readings. Howe utilises “the lyric not as a reaction

against patriarchal tradition, which would simply, in opposing it, reify its power” (Jenkins, 178); she combines disparate textual elements in order to model unexpected encounters which challenge meaning.<sup>198</sup>

*A Bibliography* marked an innovation in Howe’s composition process and the ways she arranged her verbal-visual pages. It shares with Howe’s other works a belief in the page as a transformative space, a site of discovery and escape. In *The Midnight* (2003), Howe recalls how her mother hung printed broadsides on the walls of Howe’s childhood home:

Broadsides were an escape route. Points of departure. They marked another sequestered ‘self’ where she would go home to her thought. She clung to William’s words by speaking them aloud. So there were always three dimensions, visual, textual, and auditory. Waves of sounds connected us by associational syllabic magic to an original but imaginary place existing somewhere across the ocean between the emphasis of sound and the emphasis of sense. (75)

Howe remembers being raised on William Butler Yeats “even before I could read” (74); his words were introduced to her as sounds (lullabies) as well as illustrated prints, framed and hung on the wall, which meant that poetry had for her a visual and sonic, as well as textual, dimension.<sup>199</sup>

Howe’s account of her early experience of poetry maps the ways her own writing engages the graphical, material, and acoustic aspects of poetry, “always three dimensions” (74).<sup>200</sup> Her recollection connects the written page to a writing of place, seeing place as shifting rather than stable, existing geographically elsewhere yet also (only) in language, between sound and sense. The enclosed, material space of the framed poem constituted an “escape route” and “points of departure”; it connected poetry to travel and migration, to border crossing, to what lay outside the frame.<sup>201</sup> “Broadside” suggests the side of a nautical vessel—like the one by which Howe’s mother emigrated to the United States—as well as a finite sheet of paper like the ones hanging in the childhood home; the pun is especially apt given Howe’s etymological interests, her self-confessed status as “library cormorant.”<sup>202</sup>

For Howe, the printed page dislocates the reader as it offers access to an “imaginary place existing somewhere across the ocean.” Biographically, this phrase acknowledges Howe’s Irish heritage, from her mother’s accent to the rhythms of Irish theatre (Mary Manning Howe was a stage actor).<sup>203</sup> Yet in casting the broadside as a site of departure to a place “between” and “imaginary” indicates that it is poetry more than biography that reworks ideas of place. The enclosure of the written page leads to a sense of movement and ocean travel: “waves of sounds” elides the acoustic and the aquatic, the heard word and departure from sedentary space.<sup>204</sup> Howe’s critical study *My Emily Dickinson* refuses depictions of Dickinson as trapped-at-home: the poetic page, the broadside, and the (un)bound fascicle are vessels for the transportation of writer and reader.

Critics have repeatedly noted, because Howe has repeatedly noted, her formulation of libraries as spaces of restricted access, “forbidden territory,” especially for women (Bruns, 2009, 42-3). Yet libraries are also spaces of exploration for her, “places of freedom and wildness” (2007, 16). Analogous to the broadside, the library is an enclosure (an “ingathering”) which leads to wandering as well as wondering. Howe describes “often walking alone in the stacks” in ways that echo the motif of the Romantic poet-walker, the Baudelairean flaneur, and Hope Atherton’s peregrinations: “The first ENGLISH CHILD BORN IN NEW ENGLAND WAS NAMED PEREGRINE OR THE WANDERER” (2007, 16; 1996, 91). Howe cites Thoreau’s notion of literature as walking into wilderness, explicitly connecting the “wild” and “forbidden” to the (suggestively named) “stacks of Widener library” (2007, 18). Libraries are both the archaic past and the yet-to-come, places where “the future seemed to lie in this forest of letters, theories, and forgotten actualities,” a description that echoes Howe’s poetics of drawing materials from older texts to shape new works which comment on contemporary events (1993a, 18). To return to a text

like *Eikon Basilike* might be a way to comment on potentialities, on political futures for Howe's America.

While these descriptions accord the written work an organic physicality in which “the woods, then, is a figure for text” (McHale, 225), they also foreground the technology of the book, presented as having a Janus-like doubleness.<sup>205</sup> Formed from the pap of trees, books are a dead forest archived in a library whose access is restricted to the select, male few—Howe's father, her husband the professor of art, Dickinson's male editors. Opening onto the wilderness, books are a living forest in a library, waiting for Howe to access what is not yet known, what has not yet been read, the “out of the way volumes” (1993a, 18). Stephen Collis has noted the “anarcho-archival” aspects of this practice, the ways Howe disrupts the space of texts/libraries and, in making use of them, affirms their importance. Her texts engage in import and export, in points of departure, in escape roots as well as escape routes.<sup>206</sup>

Howe has long conceived of the book in terms of a physical sense of movement through space, what Miriam Nichols has referred to, after Deleuze and Guattari, as Howe's “nomadology.”<sup>207</sup> Her concept of the book develops from her artist's practice of making “environments [...] rooms that you could walk into and be surrounded by walls, and on those walls would be collage, using found photographs (again a kind of quotation). Then I started using words with that work” (Keller, 1995, 6). She started producing what we conventionally recognize as books only when the poet Ted Greenwald told her “you have a book on the wall. Why don't you just put it into a book?” To do so was to make her environments transportable, just as Yeats' broadsides had transported her and her mother. At the same time, Howe's oeuvre demonstrates that she did more than “just” put her walls into a book. Her works preserve the nomadic experience of her citational environments by encouraging an active, tactile engagement with the written word, necessitating the physical reorientation of the book and using “abusive



(mis)quotation” in order to “target the imperfection and unreliability of our collective cultural memory” and so render her books places to wander in (McHale, 213).

For Howe, the site of (unread) volumes allows reading and writing to combine in an act of future-oriented traversal, walking through library branches into the past of American literature in order to re-animate buried directions for American identity, to ascertain, as she says in *The Birth-Mark*, “where and how the English seventeenth-century voice becomes the seventeenth-century, the nineteenth-century and even the twentieth-century American voice” (1993a, 56). Once again we see Howe trying to articulate a theory of contemporary politics—how you sound (to take a phrase from Amiri Baraka) and to whom—through returning to an anterior moment.

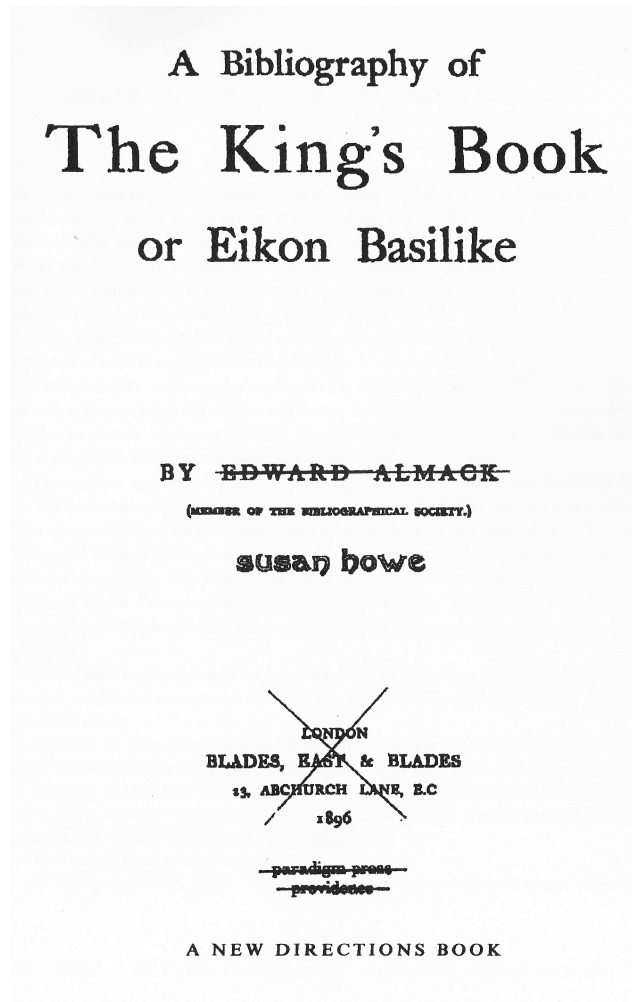
While other critics have noted Howe’s use of citation and intertextuality, my reading of Howe’s work in terms of her use of texts aims to demonstrate how Howe critiques citizenship. Like Olson and Baraka’s versions of projective citizenship, Howe’s text-based citizenship is rooted in the social possibilities of writing yet also aware of the way writing might “inclose” and restrict. Her description of F.O. Matthiessen in *The Birth-Mark* offers an early sense of this strand. Noting his failure to site Dickinson or women writers within his *American Renaissance*, Howe wryly observes, using words by Whitman that are absent from Matthiessen’s opus, “It is blank here, for reasons.” She critiques Matthiessen for the absence on which his masterly study relies: “an ocean of inaudible expression. An American educator. A careful citizen” (17). Yet she also notes his “leftist political affiliations,” wondering “maybe my reading domesticates him,” just as his and other male critics’ readings had domesticated American women writers and Whitman’s sexuality. Although the “careful citizen” does a disservice to the radical possibilities of disruptive writers, the citizen *must* be full of care for fellow citizens, socially and politically active, as Matthiessen was, in this reading. Howe thus recognizes the ambiguity inherent in the writer-scholar’s citizen status.

Her own work aims to be careful but not cautious: her anarcho-archival poetics subvert textual borders—the limiting enclosures of pages, books, and libraries—in order to recognise and subvert social and political borders like those imposed on Emily Dickinson by 19<sup>th</sup> century, male literary culture; Anne Hutchinson by Puritan ideology; and the preacher Thomas Shepard by his editors.<sup>208</sup> In seeking out transgressive figures whose written works refuse easy categorization, Howe considers how these outsiders used writing to attempt changes in the relationship between the citizen and authority. Rachel Tzvia Back’s reading of Howe as a “foreigner both biographically and as a result of her engagement with and understanding of language and its structures” (8) reminds us of the dangers of reading Howe’s books as ‘only’ books. For Howe, the written word, with its nomadic propensities, is one of the means through which power and authority are wielded and resisted.

*A Bibliography* explores, visibly and violently, the roles citizens perform within civic and textual space. Tony Lopez has asked, “Why does an Irish American feminist poet, champion of the silenced, erased and excluded, living in Guilford Connecticut, want to write a Royalist poem? Why a *Royalist* poem in 1989?” (2008, 211). This question becomes more pertinent given that “Howe is commonly understood to have entered a more noticeably ‘American’ phase” in the early/mid-1980s (Golding 173). To see *A Bibliography* as concerned with citizenship offers an answer to Lopez’s question, though that answer is not a new historicist understanding of the events of 1989 (the fall of the Berlin Wall among them) but a conceptual understanding of a shift in citizen status in the wake of post-structuralism: “the citizen” was Étienne Balibar’s answer to the question, “Who comes after the subject?” (1991). *A Bibliography* uses the execution of King Charles I, and the “pamphlet wars” enclosing that event, to re-consider the “sovereign” subject and attendant issues of authority, questioning where authority resides and how we might resist its ideological forms.<sup>209</sup>

The stability of authorship and authority is eroded even before *A Bibliography* has ‘begun.’ The title of Howe’s 1993 compilation, *The Nonconformist’s Memorial* (which reprints *A Bibliography* from the 1989 Paradigm Press edition) suggests a tension between disruptive individual activity and normative representation: attempts to create memorials which do not stand for institutional power must avoid visiting their own conformist orthodoxies on the citizenry.<sup>210</sup> The nonconformist must memorialize and be memorialized in ways that reflect her nonconformity—her break with the “force of habit”—even as memorials risk instilling approved behavior in citizens.<sup>211</sup> The first page of *A Bibliography* offers a visual-verbal instance of what a nonconformist’s memorial might involve. Reproducing the frontispiece of Edward Almack’s 1896 *A Bibliography of the King’s Book, or Eikon*

*Basilike*, Howe preserves that text's bibliographic data but crosses out the author's name and the



publication date, replacing them with her own name as author: “Susan Howe,” in ‘celtic’ typeface. She strikes through the publication details of the 1989 edition (“~~paradigm press / providence~~”) and leaves only: “A NEW DIRECTIONS BOOK.” The title page presents multiple claims to authorship and multiple locations for publication; from the outset, *A Bibliography* is a compositely-authored text whose author-ity is in question:

Howe’s gesture here is not an act of reclamation, of making Almack’s book her own; the striking-through of “~~paradigm press~~” implies as much. Since this frontispiece does not front the

physical, bound book at hand (*The Nonconformist's Memorial*) but occurs part way through it, at the start of section II (“Conversion”), its bibliographic information function is distorted. “A New Directions Book” is redundant: we already know that is what we hold—and technically what is “fronted” by this page is not a book but a section within a book.<sup>212</sup> By including the phrase in this faux-frontispiece, Howe emphasizes its semantic register: this text both is and isn’t an edition of *A Bibliography of the King’s Book, or Eikon Basilike* (Almack’s 1896 text, Howe’s 1989 text); it represents a “new direction” in which words literally take a *new* direction, oriented not on the horizontal axis but on diagonals, upside down, overlaid.<sup>213</sup> Through the frontispiece, Howe both claims and resists the author position, presenting herself as a bibliographer while simultaneously replacing Almack’s bibliographical method.<sup>214</sup> This methodological innovation finds expression within the text in an oblique reference to those who impressed copies of the *Eikon Basilike*: “no further trace / of the printer” (1993b, 60) alludes to the dangers faced by printers who reproduced copies of this banned book; it also draws attention to the visible marks of the printer signified through typographical elements including errors (“the Printers faults,” 66). The printer, subject to disappearance for breaking governmental bans on production of the *Eikon*, is present in the text’s pages through error, always linked, for Howe, to (textual) wandering.

This frontispiece signals the way the palimpsestual text (to use Michael Davidson’s term) layers physical textual elements as well as intertextual meaning, a hybrid of palimpsest and intertext. In *Melville’s Marginalia*, which immediately follows *A Bibliography* in *The Nonconformist’s Memorial*, Howe’s own lines are transplanted onto lines written by Melville and set beside the lines of other writers such as Matthew Arnold and James Clarence Mangan. *Eikon Basilike* draws on words from several texts, staging a series of debates: different bibliographic interpretations of *Eikon Basilike*, different claims to the authorship of the *Eikon*, different claims to the English state, different readings of “the people,” different attitudes to religious persuasion, and so on. Scattered through

these debates, which often concern the interests of governance, are two mysterious individuals: “Pammela,” a shepherdess, and Mr. Dick, the eccentric kite-flying character from *David Copperfield*. These figures are paradigmatic for ways that text can be manipulated in order to complicate the claims of authority and resist normative understandings of “the people” and of citizenship. In *My Emily Dickinson*, Howe suggests:

In Civil War we are all mutually entangled. To be rebellious but to distrust rebellion comes easily to women who may lose their husbands and children. To be rebellious and to distrust rebellion is the plight of the tragic artist. (1985, 114)

The “all” who are “mutually entangled” by intra-national conflict prove not to be equally entangled; gendered subject positions lead to discrepant experiences of war. Howe’s formulation equates the position of women with the position of the artist since both involve a compromised desire for change. The oxymoronic elements of “Civil War” revealed in her reading of Dickinson play out within *Eikon Basilike* as Howe fashions ‘her’ text by taking material from a war over the ownership of words, a war analogous to and no less conditioning of the “citizen” than the English Civil War.

### Subjects, Citizens, and Author(ities)

*A Bibliography* opens with one of the prose prefaces that have become a hallmark of Howe’s work: a descriptive section that offers historical detail—in this case, about the execution of King Charles I—without providing an authoritative narrative.<sup>215</sup> Howe’s prefaces tend to indicate absences and lacunae, as when she mentions the mystery surrounding the direct subject of Charles’s last word, “Remember” (if, that is, he used it transitively):

On the morning of 30 January 1649, King Charles I of England walked under guard from St. James to Whitehall. At 2 p.m. he stepped from a win-dow of the Banqueting House, out onto the scaffold. He was separated from the large crowd of citizens who had gathered to see his execution by ranks of soldiers so

his last speech could only be heard by the attending chaplain and a few others with them on the scaffold. (1993b, 59)

If we are unfamiliar with the history, we read with surprise as the King's "walk" reveals itself to be "under guard," the title of King now less meaningful than that of his captors. The opening sentences carefully locate us: a precise date and time, details of the settings and actors involved. The specific locative coordinates blur in the second half of the paragraph: Charles is isolated—"separated," at the right margin of the paragraph—from "the large crowd of citizens." The "citizen" enters into Howe's poetry at this moment as it is entering into English politics almost for the first time: the execution of the King turns the English people from "subjects" to "citizens."

In using this group noun before the execution takes place in her narrative, Howe simultaneously implies that those watching were already citizens and suggests that the term might be of limited use if it is only a rhetorical marker: her use of "citizen" begs a question as to what being a citizen meant to those "gathered to see his execution." The pronouns and prepositions in the final sentence of the paragraph complicate any reliable sense of agency: not only are the citizens' motivations unclear—are they here to celebrate or witness, to denounce or rejoice?—but the separation of "separated" from its prepositional phrase "by ranks of soldiers" creates a multiplicity of ways of performing this scene. In one, Charles is separated from the citizens by ranks of soldiers; in another, the execution is performed by ranks of soldiers; in a third, the crowd gathers by (beside) ranks of soldiers. While Charles I is practically and theoretically separated from the populace by his Divine status as monarch, Howe's preface works to complicate and confuse such roles, to shift from King to man, person to citizen, soldier to soldier-function. Through this blurring of the scene, the "them" able to hear Charles's "last speech" names an uncertain group. While it strictly refers to Charles and his chaplain, Bishop Juxon, it also invokes the gathered ranks of citizens and soldiers who have been named between Charles I and Juxon—and these citizens will "hear" Charles' words, if they are his, through the publication of *Eikon Basilike*.

In gathering together this *dramatis personae*, *A Bibliography* begins with those who perform key roles in the nation-state: government, in the form of Charles; church/religion, in the form of Juxon; military power, in the form of the soldiers; the people, in the form of those gathered watching. Yet in starting with a moment in which these roles are overthrown—as Howe would write to Norman O. Brown, the regicide was an unprecedented event with fundamental repercussions for both American and English identity—*A Bibliography* complicates the symbolic and literal role of individual actors within the state, as indicated by the uncertain pronouns of the opening paragraph.<sup>216</sup> What, in light of regicide, constitutes citizenship or even citizenry? What acts are available to citizens? The “so” of the last sentence highlights this confusion as to who has agency: is it because the citizens have gathered that his last speech cannot be heard, or because the ranks of soldiers have come between citizens and the (former) head of state?

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Howe’s preface is that the regicide becomes secondary to questions of bibliography and authorship: “Can we ever really discover the original text?” (58). Howe makes clear that we cannot, in part via a quotation from Pierre Macherey that invokes Foucault’s theory of the death of the author.<sup>217</sup> The authorial intent behind Charles’s last word remains absent, his final speech unheard by most of those present. Nevertheless, his obscured last speech generated a proliferation of words, themselves of uncertain agency and doubtful origin, including several versions of *Eikon Basilike*, purportedly written by Charles I himself and printed by Royalist supporters in several non-identical editions, and the *Eikonoklastes*, a dismissive propagandist retort by anti-royalist poet and government minister John Milton.<sup>218</sup> *A Bibliography*, which takes its genesis from Howe’s son’s discovery, at a book sale, of Almack’s 1896 *A Bibliography of the King’s Book; or, Eikon Basilike*, also stems from Charles’s loss of authority; both *Bibliographies* exist in the aporia created by the silence of the author through which “the vexed question of authorship kept intruding” (58). Howe’s text seeks to avoid the repetition of sameness



that re-inscribes authoritative, hierarchical relationships; it seeks to offer an authored text that defers its own authority.

Even though the events of the regicide are important to Howe's explorations of American identity—"behind the façade of Harvard University is a scaffold and a regicide" (1993a, 177)—she does not directly discuss the English Civil War as it relates to the Puritan colonization of America within *A Bibliography*.<sup>219</sup> Instead, she traces *The Eikon Basilike, The Pourtraicture of His Sacred Majestie in his Solitude and Sufferings* as it was "published and widely distributed throughout England, despite the best efforts of government censors to get rid of it" (1993b, 55). *A Bibliography* explores printing and (attempted) suppression, acting as an unconventional "Bibliography of the Authorship Controversy" (70). In this portrayal of the regicide, the publication or censorship of texts becomes as important to individual citizens as the execution of their monarch and the institution of a new form of government, Cromwell's Protectorate. Howe's version of events is not naively romanticized: John Bastwick, an anti-Royalist and a Leveller, swore from the pillory before the Regicide, "were the press opened to us, we would scatter [Charles'] kingdom"; the press, freed from Royal censors, might offer the populace a voice.<sup>220</sup>

As Elizabeth Eisenstein has documented, a mistrust of printing united the various factions in England at the time: all of them "expressed concern about the seemingly uncontrolled output of printed materials" (53). The Parliamentarians and the anti-Royalists, though, explicitly adopted a language of freedom or access in their conceptions of printing and of a free press. Nothing less than the liberty of the populace was at stake: "Milton's vision of a freeborn English people was famously based upon an emancipated readership, citizens whose inalienable democratic rights were best expressed through the ability to read pamphlets freed from the tyranny of pre-publication licensing" (Nevitt, 1).<sup>221</sup> In *Areopagitica*, "a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing to the Parliament of England," Milton repeatedly attacked the restrictions placed on

publication by Charles, seeing them as “to the common people [...] a reproach.” He argued that if “we dare not trust them with an English pamphlet,” then civic society suffers as a whole; for Milton, such mistrust was explicitly “popish”—therefore problematic—since it stemmed from “the same strictness” used “where the laity are most hated,” i.e. in the Catholic Church (1957, 737). *A Bibliography* takes up this early modern debate in placing authorship, printed texts, and questions of the reading public at the heart of citizenship practices: the written word, circulated in books, has repercussions for individual citizens and is implicated in the removal or restoration of entire systems of government.<sup>222</sup> In her discussion of Shakespeare’s plays and the fall of the Tudors, written shortly after *A Bibliography* and published the same year as *Nonconformist’s Memorial*, Howe names this process “the subtle workings of the Body Politic on every citizen” (1993a, 92); in Howe’s conception, the passive citizen is acted on by the state. Her works, as with her readings of Dickinson and Dickinson’s Shakespeare in *The Birth-Mark*, are an attempt to re-conceive the citizen through her acts.

In locating authorship debates in the context of Charles’ execution, and vice versa, Howe makes claims about theories and functions of writing within politics. She draws attention to the production of competing texts (and editions of texts), which were used to create divisions or foster allegiance within Caroline/Cromwellian England; her own method seeks to make visible the logic underpinning the use of text to divide or cohere individual readers and the “common people.” *A Bibliography*, through taking language from texts disseminated during the “pamphlets wars” of 1640-1660, participates in debates where Milton had featured as an outspoken voice. We might expect Howe to side with Milton, who is writing on behalf of “the people,” advocating the freeing of texts from censorship. Yet most critics have suggested that Howe sides with the *Eikon Basilike* against *Eikonoklastes*; Lopez, somewhat playfully, insists “Milton is the enemy of the

poem” (212). I want to suggest that Howe examines both works and authors, siding with neither; her concern is with the way texts construct citizen status.

The proliferation of written words and texts in the wake of Charles’s execution creates the conditions of authorial uncertainty that *A Bibliography*’s complex lexicographical interplay exploits. Now that there is “an absent center” which still retains a vestigial presence of royalty, “the ghost of a king,” ordering systems, including traditional, neatly-ruled lines of poetry, disappear (1993b, 58). The pages that follow the preface “unleash a picture of violence” (1993a, 165) by means of graphically-scattered lines which intersect and obscure each other. On one level, the violence is a mimesis of the spectacular regicide from which it results: the page immediately following the preface conjures the image of a newly-absent throne, as Mandy Bloomfield has insightfully suggested (423ff). This page considers the end of Divine Right and theological jurisprudence: the apostrophe “O Lord” is now “different from / Laws” while remaining a near homophone. Within this page, command has been inverted and become “comand”; the unjust has become “un ust,” and “Futnre” is as liable to suggest furniture—the King’s throne—as futurity. At the base of the ‘throne,’ the phrase “audPaged doe of Title-page” recalls Howe/Almack’s frontispiece. This fragment stabilizes the visual arrangement of the page (acting as a base for the throne-poem) while recording the failure to introduce a sense of authorial agency, a ‘doer’ who is the author of pages. Instead “audPaged” suggests auditors and reception as much as authorship and creation—and the ‘title’ of “Title-page” indicates a double displacement: Charles’s loss of crown, title, and head; the frontispiece’s loss of stable titular authority. The page, the space where text becomes visible as opposed to a text acting authoritatively, has replaced the author.

Yet this textual violence needs to be read as more than a mimesis, what Howe calls an impossible attempt to “express [regicide] in just words in ordinary fashion on the page” (Keller, 8). This page, like the other scattered pages in *A Bibliography*, uses the insertion of text, the erasure of

text, and the reorientation of text to uncover the subtle workings of Authority and suggests an alternative via the dynamic interplay of multiply-sourced fragments. In other words, *A Bibliography* records not a final product but a process of words encountering each other in visual, sonic, and semantic kinesis, what Howe has elsewhere called “disorderly velocity” (1993a, 69); in so doing, it argues a need to consider texts as produced not by single authors but by compilation and alteration, the dissonant words of many. Where once Howe made books in the form of word-based environments, wall spaces through which one walked, *A Bibliography* lets words themselves wander across books, between *Arcadia* and *Eikonoklastes* and *Eikon Basilike* and *A Bibliography* and more. A phrase like “Oh Lord” enters *A Bibliography* from *Arcadia* (as I discuss below); abutting “Laws” it generates not a theoretical stand-off between divine and parliamentary law but, via homophonic correspondence, a productive synthesis exceeding the binary between divine and earthly jurisprudence.

Through such collision of texts we encounter not resolution but dissolution, a refusal to settle, to sediment, to answer. Howe shows how others claimed the authority to adjudicate, constructing narratives of citizenship that did not reflect the errant ways actual citizens acted. *A Bibliography* examines several binary positions: *Eikon Basilike* versus *Eikonoklastes*; the suppression of *Eikon Basilike* by Cromwell’s government versus a later proclamation demanding that all copies of Milton’s *Eikonoklastes* are “to be handed in, or else seized and publicly burnt, and never to be reprinted” (81); a version of *A Bibliography of the King’s Book, or Eikon Basilike* that argues for Royalist authorship versus one that argues against it. Rachel Tzvia Back has argued that this “authorship controversy” involves “the desire on both sides to assign a *solitary* signature to the text” (127); *A Bibliography*, already multiply-signed from its title page, provides a multiplicity of signatures. Howe refuses the authoritative position of judge, creating instead a dialogic tension in which the opposed parties illuminate each other’s actions.<sup>223</sup>

As such, *A Bibliography* suggests that inauthenticity becomes a position of power, an argument it makes through the presentation of speech and speakers as composite. Although *A Bibliography* opens with Charles's final (misheard) word, there is no clear narrative persona within the book. Kathy-Ann Tan has pointed out that "a speaker is [finally] introduced for the first time eight pages into the text" (174), but even this pronoun might not be a speaker: the "I" that Tan identifies in the vertical phrase "Steps Between Prison and Grave a Brazen Wall I" (62) could instead be the "first" in Charles I; typographically, the two marks are identical, and the sentence likely describes Charles's exit from the Banqueting House window to the scaffold. The subsequent "Side of space I must cross" (69) could abbreviate Charles I as much as designate a first-person speaker. If these marks are speakers, they are doubtfully so, haunted by the "ghost of a king." While the book enters a lyric mode in the wake of Charles's execution, signaled by lines such as "I am a seeker" (72), any sense of self remains constructed through textual collision and collusion, through what David Clippinger has termed "multi-facet, interwoven dimensions of the 'I,' history, and texts" (165).

To point out that the 'I' within *A Bibliography* is layered, a palimpsest, is not to insist that there is never an author-function. Howe, writing of Dickinson but also of herself, has asserted that "I cannot murmur indifferently: 'What matter who's speaking?' I emphatically insist it does matter who's speaking" (20). As Marjorie Perloff has cogently argued, the rearticulating of lyric within so-called Language writing alters "not expressivity or subjectivity as such but the authority ascribed to the speaking voice" (1999, 433). *A Bibliography* rejects the authority that resides in authorial intention, something Howe suggests would only be found, if it could ever be found, at the "prescriptive level of thought process" (1993b, 58). The hyphenated "prescription" here indicates that authorial intention would convey an unwanted, authoritarian dimension, whereas *A Bibliography*

seeks a position in which it can “matter who’s speaking” without the author having to be reified as sovereign.

To the extent that an “I” emerges in *A Bibliography*, it does so precisely because the text’s words voice many other texts. Consider, for instance, the couplet “Tell you my author / I knew his hand / The book was his / The cloathing *Hands*” (72), in which authorship derives from a non-author “telling” an author—recognizing and informing the author—through a metonymic link in which the written script, substituted for the writer’s hand, comes to signify the writer’s identity. Such a proposition is evidently unstable in a book about purported forgery and the censorship of printers.<sup>224</sup> The irony here consists in the metaphor by which the hand of a decapitated King has the power, through his writing style, to suggest certainty as to authorship; this romantic notion is critiqued on the lower half of the page, which concludes: “The Sovereign stile / in another stile / Left scattered in disguise” (72).<sup>225</sup> Authority is about “cloathing” (cloaking as much as garb) and “disguise,” a matter of “stile” that can be misidentified, and which emerges from “the book” as a possessive reader searches for “my author.”

In other places where an “I” is suggested within *A Bibliography*, the sense of an individual speaker similarly indicates a speaking voice constructed through various texts, themselves potentially unstable and fictive: “‘voice,’ for Howe, is polyphonic rather than original, an elaborate weave of quotation and pastiche which is artful rather than ‘sincere’” (Nicholls, 589). The line “I am at home in the library” (83) affirms a voice among texts more than a unitary persona, a polytextual “I” refracted through a series of textual fragments that render errant the first person. For example, the lines “Maui printed so / second i falls below / the line” and the visual intersection of “intent” and “Ithuriel,” at which intersection two “I”s collide and collude, provide the barest hints of first-person pronouns via citation from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (85). The “I” is an elusive figure produced allusively, existing through the texts that ghost *A Bibliography*.

The most conventionally recognizable “I” in the work emerges directly after this, and not surprisingly emerges through quotation: from *David Copperfield*, as *A Bibliography* cites one of Dickens’ page headings, “I become friendly with Mr. Dick.” The “I” might reference David Copperfield (as yet unnamed in *A Bibliography*) or the ostensible author of this book, who is becoming “friendly” with Mr. Dick and including him within her pages. *A Bibliography* speaks here through a voice that is at once Howe, Dickens, and David Copperfield, as well as ghosted by the kingly “first.” This polyvocality references Mr. Dick’s own pondering of composite identity: asking if David can remember when “King Charles the First had his head cut off,” Mr. Dick laments the “putting some of the trouble out of *his* head, after it was taken off, into *mine*” (85). These lines echo the opening preface, in which the movement from subject to citizen might be thought of in terms of a transfer of (ruling) power, of responsibility and therefore “trouble” from monarch to the citizens who will elect their own Parliament. Mr. Dick figures as a polytextual speaker, one who gives Charles an afterlife through this transplanting of identities. The “I” in *A Bibliography* moves among texts, compiling text, present as a composite that suggests its absence as an authentic individual.

The link to Mr Dick’s kite is further important because it models the ways texts, as well as speakers, are composite. A later page in *A Bibliography* cites a passage from Dickens’ novel that describes Mr Dick’s kite, “covered with manuscript, very closely and laboriously written.” When flown, the manuscript-kite “takes the facts a long way. That’s my manner of diffusing ’em.” Mr. Dick is that figure Howe almost found in F.O. Matthiessen: a careful citizen, one who painstakingly records facts and writes them clearly yet is carefree enough that “I don’t know where they may come down [...] I take my chance on that” (89). Howe has remarked that this scene offers “a perfect definition” for her poetics (Montgomery, 36); Mr. Dick, like “Susan Howe,” assembles a literary text—his kite, *A Bibliography*—through disassembling and disembowelling

other texts. To “take the facts a long way” is not only to disseminate them but to stretch them, to “diffuse[e] ’em” in two senses. Howe, like Mr. Dick, allows aleatory possibilities for the literary text.

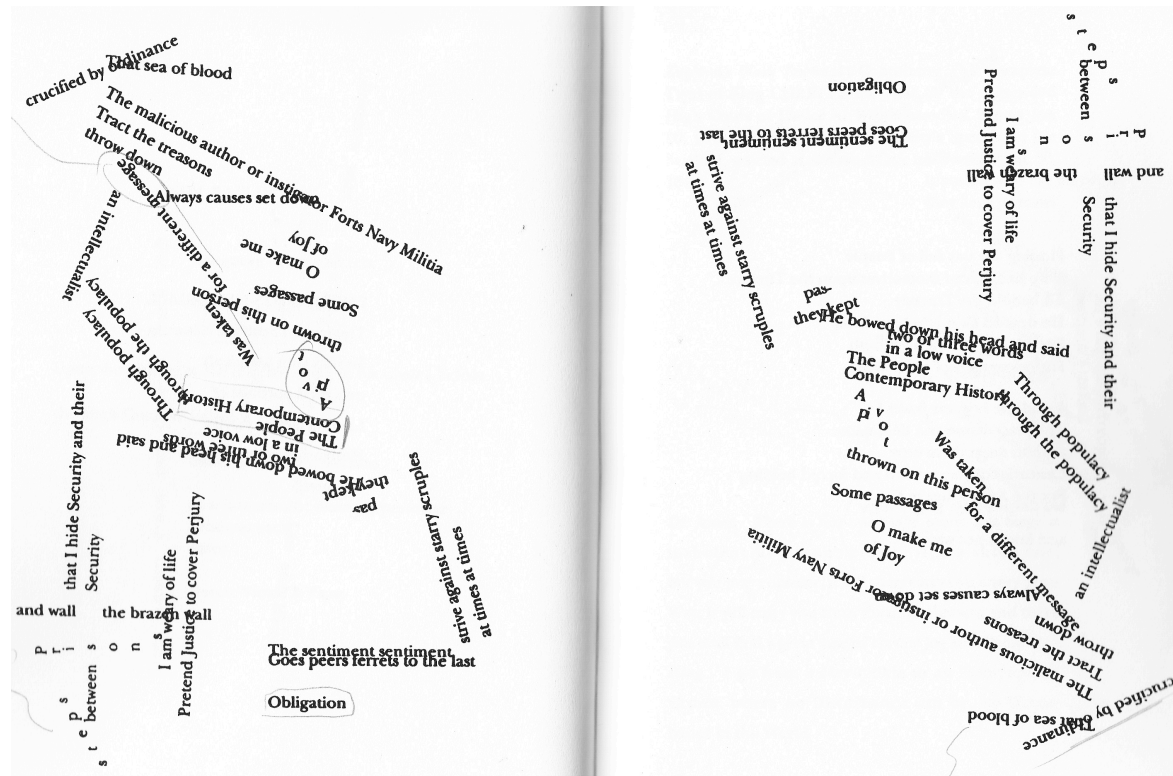
What, though, might this have to do with politics, let alone citizenship, and how (beyond the happenstance of Dickens’ intertextual reference to Charles I) does Mr. Dick relate to the Caroline/Cromwellian debates over printing and the circulation of text(s)?

### Beyond Mirrors: the Acts of Citizens

Mr. Dick’s kite suggests a model of textuality in which authority can be undermined through fragmenting and diffusing pieces of text.<sup>226</sup> What is at stake is more than the “free” movement of text or “open access” to printing presses: Mr. Dick, and Howe, disrupt the ability of texts to make authoritative claims. Milton’s claims about the freedom of the press do not, Howe suggests, allow England’s subjects and would-be citizens access to the production and interpretation of textual meaning; they simply transfer authority from a monarch to a government. *A Bibliography* demonstrates this via a series of oppositions, providing a visual analogue for the seemingly inescapable circuit within which “the people” is caught textually.



The authors of “the people”—Charles I and Cromwell alike—are cast as part of a “Tragicum Theatrum Actorum,” an acknowledgment that their roles are constructively performed. Howe describes them in terms of “unsigned portraits” (from a text called “ENGELANDT’S MEMORIAEL”), again inserting the issue of signature and authority into *A Bibliography*. The pages immediately following this textual representation of pictures showing Charles and Cromwell might seem to offer, in the wake of these rulers’ “unsigned” status, the freedom for which Milton advocated. Text on this spread is literally unruly, but it would be too simplistic to read the lines as “liberated” and therefore anti-restrictive:<sup>227</sup>



These pages do offer a departure from the traditions of poetry, yet they are also as carefully formed and as confined as the sonnet: the writing on the left-hand page is mirrored on the right-hand page, flipped on both the X and Y axes, as if enacting its own “pivot,” to quote from the noun phrase just off from page-center.<sup>228</sup> On the left hand page, “crucified by ordinance” appears

sloping diagonally up, left to right, in the top left hand corner; on the right hand page, it appears in the bottom right hand corner, upside down. As with the opening scene of *A Bibliography*, these graphically dis- and re-oriented pages explore and complicate the relationships between members of a state. At the heart of the page image we find “The People / Contemporary History,” positioning the “crowd of citizens” from the opening paragraph at the center of an ensuing textual melee.

This invocation of “the people” does not constitute a public voice raised against sovereign imposition; Étienne Balibar has reminded us, “whenever *the people* is invoked, most often it is state interest that is speaking” (2004, 134).<sup>229</sup> Both “the people” and its location here—in the center—must be seen as fraught; Howe elsewhere writes of the “Lawless center” (1990, 22). Around the edges of this mirrored spread, we find frayed challenges to “the people” as an abstract concept that is routinely used to offer a normative, orthodox reading of citizens’ wishes: “obligation”; “that I hide Security and their / Security”; “through populacy”; “Forts Navy Militia”; “Pretend Justice to cover Perjury” (1993b, 64). Lines collide to proliferate available readings: “was taken” is intercepted by “thrown on this person” and combines with it to suggest how roles are foisted on individuals. These dislocations and recombinations depict the citizenry as passive subjects experiencing or suffering events, the range of actions available to them limited by State authority even when the state purports to act in their name: for example, “the people” spoke to prosecute LeRoi Jones for gun possession, addressing an African American advocate of Black Nationalism engaged in community organization within a majority-black area of Newark which had no African American representation in government; in such a situation, “the people” can reveal biases rather than ensure popular sovereignty.

In offering these image-mirrors, Howe invokes the traditions of *speculum* literature, or the “mirror for princes.”<sup>230</sup> As Ruth Lexton has noted, “advice literature, treatises in the ‘mirror for

princes' tradition intended to draw the prince toward virtue, offer observations and commentary on conventional forms of kingship" (190). Typically taking epistolary form, these books were authorities on kingly behavior that sought to have effects in their writer's absence, after the death of the signatory king. Charles I, that ghost of a kingly writer who haunts *A Bibliography* and *Eikon Basilike* alike, was connected to the speculum tradition through his receipt of *Basilikon Doron*, penned by his father, James I.<sup>231</sup> *Basilikon Doron* was styled by James as reflecting his own character, "the trew image of my very minde, and forme of the rule, which I have prescribed to my selfe and mine."<sup>232</sup> Hence "mirror": capturing the character of an existing king, speculum literature authorizes a limited range of behaviors in its recipient, the future king, Charles I, and subscribes him to a conduct possessed already by James, "mine." James Doelman's explanation that "repeatedly, James' book is treated like holy writ, and quoted as an unassailable authority" (2) suggests the hegemonic status of this text and the literally reflective practices it produced.

*A Bibliography's* own use of mirroring here tends toward a radically different end than James I's prescriptions; Howe, in contrast, fragments texts in order to make visible their authors' attempts to claim authority. Almost trapped as a reflection of itself, a circuit with no exterior position, Howe's scattered spread hints at the possibility of an alternative: elements from these pages appear, with additions, two pages on, where the top of page 67 presents a bibliographic record for an account of Charles I's trial, *England's Black Tribunal*, written by Royalists, and the bottom of the page provides a transcription from Charles's final speech—the speech lost to the ears of the "crowd of citizens" in the preface and now resurfacing in textualised form as an exchange between Charles and Bishop Juxon. The latter advises the about-to-be-executed monarch that he "go[es] from a corruptible to an incorruptible Crown, where no Disturbance can be, no Disturb-ance in the World" (67).<sup>233</sup> The two passages—trial, execution—are bridged by a partial reprinting from the mirrored spread. A close copy of part of page 65, this reproduction in

an internal citation; its additions indicate that there is ever more to the textual record, that what we have is fragmentary.<sup>234</sup> For example, “an intellectualist” (65) has become “an intellectualist out of submissive levelling love” (67), a phrase written over the bibliographic data about *England’s Black Tribunal* and which alludes to the anti-Royalist faction the Levellers.

Even when that phrase is contextualized in light of Caroline history and its dissident political groups, its function is hardly explanatory, in part because of the uncertainty raised by its prepositions: does “out of” connote ‘due to’ or ‘without’? Yet when read intratextually, we can see that it offers exactly the kind of disturbance that Juxon’s words refuse. “The People” and the notion of “populacy” remain physically caught between trial and scaffold. Yet the suggestion that Charles’s speech “was taken / for a different message” reminds us that authority has its limits, that interpretation intervenes in authoritative construction, just as *A Bibliography*, as an unorthodox description of books which unsettles texts’ authority rather than recommending their factuality, undermines authorship and authority at both the semantic level and the level of bibliographic data. The page that intervenes between the mirrored spread and the disturbed reproduction of part of that spread contains “For the Author lies in Gaol” written directly above the inverted phrase “All the Civil War Authorities.” “Author lies” almost reflects “authorities” and both terms gloss one another. We cannot read both together—we almost have to turn the book upside down to read each—yet, almost touching, they call into question the veracity of the authorities while also suggesting that authorship remains perilously close to Authority, a connection asserted on the title page to Milton’s *Eikonoklastes*, which insists, above the name of the printer and in larger type, it is “Published by Authority.”<sup>235</sup> While Milton sought to offer a position which freed the presses for the people, his own post-Caroline works relied on a rival authority, the construction of narratives by the state for governed subjects.

The graphically scattered pages towards the opening of *A Bibliography* represent violence in the English commonwealth in order to make an argument about the ways authority is imposed on citizens by the written word—and the ways texts can be used to reinterpret authority. As Howe points out in an interview, “the *Eikon* was read and cherished as a sort of sacred relic by the common people. And Milton, who is supposed to be part of the rising of the people, wrote *Eikonoklastes* in an attempt to destroy its credibility” (1993a, 175).<sup>236</sup> “The people,” caught between two ideologies, Royalist and anti-Royalist, is textually written into competing narratives by Charles I and John Milton. Moreover, even though *Eikon Basilike* and *Eikonoklastes* both claim to represent popular sentiment, Charles I and Oliver Cromwell are equally described as “Caesar” in a process Howe terms “dominant ideologies drift”: each legislator, no matter whether strictly “sovereign,” replicates the other’s power structures and, more troubling still, “in those copies are copies” (88). To take sides in the debate between *Eikon Basilike* and *Eikonoklastes* would risk engaging in that same imposition of authority on citizens in the name of “the people.”

*A Bibliography* works to subvert and critique strategies of copying and replicating, itself inscribing “Printers errors”; one might read its resistance of conventional forms and modes as an argument against replication. It seeks instead a mode by which citizens can create their own alternative narratives, a possibility suggested by the fact that *Eikon Basilike* proliferated despite attempts to censor it. To create such narratives, though, is not necessarily to be in control of them; it is certainly not to have intentions that are equivalent to effects. The unpredictability of these attempts to script citizenship is made visible through the presence within *A Bibliography* and *Eikon Basilike* of “Pammela’s Prayer,” that prayer Milton described as “stol’n word for word from the mouth of a Heathen fiction” (362). As Howe explains in her preface, it was allegedly read to Charles I on the scaffold by Bishop Juxon and subsequently entered into editions of the *Eikon Basilike* as though it were Charles’ own words. After Milton launched his attack on the prayer as

plagiarised and heathen, Royalist sympathisers accused him of having managed to “procure the insertion of the prayer” in those editions by his own “contrivance” (1993b, 56-57).<sup>237</sup> Instead of determining the provenance of this prayer—Howe merely notes “the charge has been confirmed, and denied” (57)—she reads into it a significant rupture: “a captive Shepherdess has entered through a gap in ideology” (57). If the institutionally sanctioned text—*Eikon Basilike* and *Eikonoklastes* alike—threatens to impose a limiting authorship and authority, then the acceptance of the “inauthentic literary work” with its “beginnings in a breach” (an echo of the broadside) might offer an alternative textual practice characterized by singularities (55).<sup>238</sup> In other words, it is not simply by fragmenting texts that one might critique authority as a citizen; fragmentation can be used to assert hegemonies, whereas to reveal (or construct) a text as composite is to allow for the questioning of authority.

Returning to Howe’s throne poem, we notice that “the captive Shepherdess” has been present all the while: “oh Lord” and “o Lord” are from Pamela’s prayer as included in Sidney’s *Arcadia*.<sup>239</sup> That “Pamela’s” words first enter the text in an apostrophe, “O Lord,” suggests an appeal to ultimate sovereignty—God and the divine right of kings—at the very moment sovereignty is being rejected in the name of “the people.” That the provenance of these words is at stake—do they belong to *Eikon Basilike*, to *Arcadia*, to *A Bibliography*?—indicates the fictive quality of the apostrophe, which can no longer sustain a clear sense of speaking location or of addressee. Punning on Althusser, Balibar indicates that “the essential character of the sovereign is to interpellate subjects as individuals,” and by so doing negate the agency of “the intermediate ‘bodies,’ the ‘belongings’ that confer a particular identity upon individuals, and which could be claimed either against one another or against the law and the sovereign itself” (144).<sup>240</sup> The same might be said not just of Pamela as a fictive subject who resists interpellation precisely because she interpolates, but also of the prayer as a textual element that, rendered mobile and able to move

between texts, works against the dominant ideology each text alone seeks or seems to impose. “Pamela’s” words appear in *all* these texts, subverting the authority of each by revealing how constructed each is.

Precisely because Pamela’s presence renders porous the notion of a hermetically-sealed text, she becomes a figure who breaks the bounds not only of the *Eikon Basilike* but also of the other texts Howe cites, including *Eikonoklastes* and Almack’s *A Bibliography*. The disputed authorship of “Pammela’s prayer” restyles *A Bibliography*, as well as its precedent texts, as “inauthentic literary work[s],” calling into question which text or texts “Pammela’s prayer” can be said to ‘belong’ to. Whoever inserted the prayer into the *Eikon Basilike* instigated, wittingly or otherwise, a resistance to dominant ideology, with evident repercussions for the citizen’s ability to counter that which is “published by Authority.” “Pammela’s prayer” as inserted into both *Eikon Basilike* and *A Bibliography* can be read as a creative act of citizenship, in part because it performs in ways that are unanticipated by those who made use of it within the *Eikon Basilike*.

As the “fictive Pamela,” the “captive Shepherdess” is everywhere inauthentic, already invented by Sidney and put to use by Charles, Milton, or “a ghostwriter who was a Presbyterian, a bishop, a forger, a plagiarizer”; she crosses borders between bound texts and affects the interpretation of the new, host works (57). Such polytextuality reminds us “no word, poem or prayer is ‘the possession’ of an isolated writer” (Back, 37). Similarly, Will Montgomery’s reading of *A Bibliography* acknowledges the importance of Pamela as “a gendered third term” beyond Charles I and Milton, a figure who “frustrates the claims to truth of both sides”; acting as “a token of inauthenticity and religious nonconformism,” Pamela is able to “short-circuit the paradigm that depends on the author-creator as a guarantor of a text’s integrity” (38). In other words, while Charles and/or Milton attempt to create narratives about Pamela as part of a dominant ideology, her words speak past those authorizations through Howe’s re-publicizing of them. Peter Nicholls’

reading of *A Bibliography* reveals the intricacy in Howe's invocation of Pamela: "in contrast to Milton's polemic, Howe's poem sticks to its fragmentary materials, refusing to erase the 'heathen' figure of Pamela at the same time that its collaging of words keeps it just at the threshold of systematic 'meaning'" (599). Pamela, then, might be read as a figure of threshold, "therfrom / evry / edge," as Howe cites her, also noting her "Light symbolism." Pamela cannot be a representative of "the people," but can act against settled meaning in order to make possible a plurality of ways of constructing texts as part of a creative practice of citizenship.

Of particular importance to Howe's work, in this respect, is the way Pamela's words migrate between the borders of several different texts. Marjorie Perloff has pointed out the importance of borders to Howe's work, noting the phrase "boundary manic" that it is "central to the poet's thought; she is mesmerized by questions of 'secret' divisions, borders, boundaries, fault lines" (1999, 425); Howe herself has described her work as "a breaking of boundaries of all sorts" ("Encloser," 192). Even when these borders are textual, they seek to act upon dimensions larger than the text, to alter larger political situations rather than just reveal the limitation of a text, especially where purportedly single-authored.<sup>241</sup> *The Midnight* "explicitly maps the frayed cultural and ideological edges of America, the remnants of texts torn from texts" (Yaeger, 56). Like the word "Americ" which appears in *Secret History of the Dividing Line* and which, Yaeger points out, Howe found on a paper fragment in Emily Dickinson's manuscripts, Howe's "ruptures and textual discontinuities" are used to directly engage with "competing visions of American literary nationalism" (57). Her disruption of textual borders is more than a bibliographic pursuit: "while establishing the borders of her 'virgin landscape,' her personal history, Howe finds herself caught up in a larger plot, the making of the nation" (Green, 85). The edges and borders of texts signify within more than a typographical or bibliographic field; they are sites for the renegotiation of communal identity and of citizenship. Howe has affirmed this dimension of her work, seeing her



own radical bibliography as counter to “the patriotic zeal of local antiquarian scholarship” which she claims “is often doctrinal it confirms a community’s need to flatter current misconceptions” (1990, 17-8).

Howe’s poetics reveal where borders lie and thus makes visible textual as well as cultural acts of border-crossing—think of Hope Atherton’s wanderings, in and beyond *Singularities*.<sup>242</sup> Even as we acknowledge that textual borders are not equivalent to the detention and document-checking required by the existence of contemporary State borders, we can recognise an analogous practice of code-shifting at work as text crosses into the borders of another work or book. Milton’s objection to Charles’s prayer was, after all, that it introduced a “heathen” code that should not belong to Charles’s work. His criticism was in effect that these words did not properly come within its borders. In doing so, he was attempting to construct an ‘authentic’ version of Charles I, one that would be instructive and authoritative to those who supported the regicide, and which would work against the equally ‘authentic’ version of Charles being constructed by his supporters in order to de-legitimise the regicide and the new Parliament. Rather than adjudicating the authorship of Pamela’s prayer, *A Bibliography* uses the inauthenticity of the fictive voice to reveal the ways in which prior narratives of the regicide scripted certain versions of the relationship between citizen and government/king.

Behind this poetics is a claim that language is ascribed to authors, and from there gains its sovereign authority—quite literally in the case of Charles I, who speaks from beyond the grave despite his last words having been largely unheard. *A Bibliography* discovers this ascriptive nature of language through the ambiguities of its speaking positions and its awareness of how speakers and writers are styled by their readers. While Howe might seem to claim *A Bibliography* as ‘her’ text through crossing out Almack’s name, in leaving his name legible she reminds us the book is not hers alone. Similarly, Pamela must no more be allowed to become an authorising voice than

Charles or Milton: Howe chides the “energy and confusion” of scholars who have tried to ascertain where the “forged” prayer entered into the textual history (1993b, 57). In practice, Pamela’s words repeatedly enter and leave textual history as they appear in different editions and interpretations of *Eikon Basilike*.

By tracing the dispersed voice “Pammela” in *A Bibliography*, we can see how the composite quality of the fictive can question institutional attempts, like Milton’s, to create an authentic narrative of citizenship. Nowhere directly named in the book after the prose preface, one of Pamela’s functions within the text is to make possible new models of composition: fragmentation, recombination, citation. Her ideological breach, which we might also call a methodological breach, gives rise to the figures of Arachne and Ariadne (the only other female presences in this text), who thread their way through the last third of *A Bibliography*. They are first mentioned in the couplet “Daniel’s way Daniel’s way / Archaic Arachne Ariadne” (77). The first line references a sermon John Donne preached at Denmark House after the death of King James I, Charles’s father, another instance of the way *A Bibliography* composes (itself) through other texts.<sup>243</sup> As Arachne and Ariadne emerge from the archaic they introduce elements not rooted in authorized texts; since they are mythological figures, the stories constellated around them are characterized by iterability and variability, not original to or owned by a single text/author. As narratives available to people rather than authorized for “the people” (as *Eikon Basilike* and *Eikonoklastes* were), they provide *A Bibliography* with a key motif: the thread, as both the spider’s web and Ariadne’s ball of string that led Theseus out of the Labyrinth (79). If Ariadne offers a motif of narrative development, the means by which we find our way back to the (Labyrinth’s) beginning, which is also its end, Arachne the weaver is a figure of crossed threads, of intertextuality. *A Bibliography* employs both models, telling the narrative of King Charles I through a fragmented recombination of text.

These textual practices of weaving and unwinding shape alternatives to claims of authority that purport to speak as and for “the people.” On the apparently ultimate page of *A Bibliography*, Howe invokes the thread semantically and visually: “Silk / symbolic” heads a strand of references down the page that includes Ariadne/Ariagne<sup>244</sup>, Arachne, winding wool, and the material-tactile, “soft / threada / twist” (90). Back has noticed that these words are extracted from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* Book VI, which describes Arachne embroidering her work. Howe takes Ovid’s narrative description of Arachne and fragments it to create traces that signal gaps in the narrative even as they suggest weaving as a metaphor for composition. Neither Ariadne nor Arachne’s thread alone can offer a sole model of disruptive practice; Howe disrupts Ovid’s orderly version of their crafts to recover the possibilities of recombinant, interweaved text. It is not that Howe refuses narrative but that she resists its potential to script behavior.

Reference to silk thread also surfaces in the bibliographic details of one edition of Charles’s works, described as having “remains of light blue silk / strings” (88). The textual thread is both materially significant, holding together a text, and conceptually important, through the symbolism of Ariadne and Arachne. The thread as it appears at the end of *A Bibliography* does not bind the scattered texts present in *A Bibliography* but further disperses them. The visual logic of this final page, what Nathaniel Mackey calls graphicity, derives from Mr. Dick’s kite string, which it visually suggests.<sup>245</sup> The string consists of single words that occasionally intertwine to suggest pairings or phrases, the “t r a c e” and “w e f t” of palimtext. Yet Howe’s final page does not neatly conclude or lead out of the book: if we follow the kite string down past “twist” we find a twist in the tale, for “twist” returns us, sonically and visually, to “utmost,” back on page 87, where we can now read the lines “utmost / light / mote / Spire” as already having been a part of Mr. Dick’s kite string, which they prefigured by several pages. The kite itself is shaped (“let down”) on the lower left side of the page, where we might not earlier have noticed it. Within it we find a first reference

to “trace / weft” (almost touching) and a fragmented account of Ariadne’s story intertwined with words from Pamela’s prayer (the “captive Shepherdess” remaining a mark of breached ideology). Graphicity here is both internal to the text—crossing between pages out of sequential ‘order’ — and intertextual, bringing a concept from *The Personal History of David Copperfield* together with narrative elements of mythical stories and a prayer from *Arvadia* in order to allow for the movement of text rather than for assertions of authenticity.<sup>246</sup> The ultimate page of *A Bibliography* turns out to also be the penultimate, and in generating a re-encounter with an earlier page, further unsettles our ability to know or speak for the textual whole, to adopt an authoritative position.

*A Bibliography* explores ideological narratives while attempting to avoid proposing a new ideology of its own; as Dworkin rightly warns us, “even critical and scholarly work that pays close attention to the disruptive possibilities of visual prosody runs the risk of neutralizing the very disruptive potential it identifies” (65). The critique of textual authority in *A Bibliography* challenges governmental co-optation of texts through censorship or imprimatur, revealing how “the subtle workings of the Body Politic on every citizen” function through text. *A Bibliography* proposes a different version of textual encounter available to citizens who, even if not liberated, might be prepared to take liberties. Howe’s project differs from those “well-meaning editors” who “by correcting, deleting, translating, or interpreting the odd symbols and abbreviated signals” of writers like Dickinson and Thomas Shepard, end up “effacing the disorderly velocity” and antinomian “enthusiasm” of idiosyncratic work “for readability” (1993a, 69). Howe, who has defined the antinomian as that which is a “contradiction to canonical social power” (1), insists on the written text as one of the spaces of a creative citizenship. Through an always-unsettling kinesis, Howe shows that what is impressed can be eroded, moved, and further impressed upon or overwritten. In tracing the history of Pamela’s prayer, with its potential forgery, Howe also suggests that text can only stay disorderly if our engagement with it as readers, critics, and editors remains

aware of its composite nature, aware that Howe herself is hardly the only author of ‘her’ book: we as readers construct the “style” of a text, claim to “know” its Author.

What Howe adds to the discourse around citizenship studies is an acute focus on the textuality through which citizenship is ascribed, prescribed, and, indeed, subscribed to, whether voluntarily or not. The link from book to nation-state is not incidental; it writes large the broadside-as-migration image from her childhood, part of the way Howe’s books aspire to become allegories for the political arenas within which words move. What links textual borders to national ones is the way Howe recognises both as fictive, authorised in language by those who subscribe to their limits. As her practices of fragmentation and recombination draw attention to the construction of textual borders by disrupting them, these practices make visible the ways texts underwrite claims to authority, governing the range of practices allowed to citizens. By replacing debates over the legality of Charles’s execution and the authority of his *Eikon Basilike* with a palimpsestual dynamization of lexicographical elements, Howe’s creative act of citizenship consists in rendering textual Authority—her own included—unstable. Howe suggests that citizenship is a matter of documents; where Olson sought to offer an alternative to official documents through epistolary exchanges, and where Baraka tried to refuse to recognize the existence of authorizing documents issuing from a racist state, Howe explores the ways power functions through such documents, and argues that a creative act of citizenship involves writing over, through, and in resistance to existing scripts.

We might characterise Olson and Baraka as attempting to find positions outside the institutional, state-derived version of citizenship; such positions failed because they could never rival or replace the conditions that determined what and how a citizen should be. Howe’s alternative to citizenship attempts to intervene within it, to explode the processes by which citizenship is constructed right at its inception within the Anglo-American tradition, recognizing

the citizen as a narrative construction “Published by Authority” and creating new methodologies of non-linearity for the citizen. Yet while Howe might offer ways of interrupting narratives of citizenship in theory, we need to put pressure on her claim that returning to originary moments—the point where subjects became citizens, the “English” became “American”—can truly have relevance to the historical particulars of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century United States. While her works certainly do not follow a patriotic attempt to flatter a community’s need for a single mythology of existence, they are to some extent antiquarian, not obviously bridging their/our past with the problem of citizenship today. In writing via the historical space of early modern England, Howe reveals how authoritative narratives position citizens outside their citizenship, but she does so from safely inside her own U.S. citizenship: the freedom of movement that the broadside offers, it offers to those with “the right to have rights.” Like Baraka and Howe, her outsider status as citizen is constructed from an insider position.

At the same time, Howe’s citizenship is at stake because of the patriarchal structures that deny her access to the manuscripts and editorial decisions that are complicit in scripting the citizen. We might, then, think of *A Bibliography* as imagining ways to reconceive narratives of citizenship from within those narratives. What might be needed in order to construct an alternative understanding of the citizen than the governmental would be a reconsideration of the narrative itself. Such a reconsideration can be found in the work of Myung Mi Kim, as I argue in my final chapter: influenced both by Howe and Olson, Kim’s poetics offer a citizenship through translation which targets the linguistic basis of citizenship narratives, focussing particularly on moments where “the citizen” is called into being by governmental bureaucracy and by the “popular” imagination. Targeting the linguistic basis of citizenship definitions, Kim imagines citizens as listening to each other’s different ways of enunciating; she develops Howe’s model of textual fragmentation into an engagement with questions about who is allowed to say they are a citizen, and, most importantly, through what language(s).

“Word Model Plurality”: Citizenship through Translation  
in Myung Mi Kim’s *Dura*

Every statement is a product of collective desires and divisibilities.  
—Susan Howe, *The Birth-mark*, 47

Through sameness of language is produced  
sameness of sentiment and thought.  
—Myung Mi Kim, *Penury*, 27

How to Say Who Are Citizens

“What is English now,” poet Myung Mi Kim asked in her book *Commons* (2002), addressing the way “mass global migrations” and “shifts and upheavals in identifications of gender and labor” have multiplied the “diction(s), register(s), inflection(s) [...] that have and continue to filter into ‘English’” (“Pollen Fossil Record,” 110). Her work across her five books to date explores what she refers to as “this particular English I participate in—perhaps an English that behaves like Korean, an English shaped by a Korean” (James Lee, 2000, 94). Her writings depict the English language as written and spoken within America; she uses Korean and English homophones, competing transliteration systems for Korean into English, Hangul characters, and fragments of language instruction. Rather than recounting her singular experience of Korean/English and so offering an “authentic” lyric subjectivity, Kim’s poetry reveals the English language as a shifting composite inflected and altered by translation. By translation, I refer to a set of practices—including those Kim identifies: translation, transcription, transliteration—which move text, language, and culture between codes. I contextualise *Dura* (1998) in light of Kim’s other books as an argument for a polylingual script of citizenship, a re-characterization marked by a shift from monolingual copying, “transcription barely permeable” (5), to plurilingual invention, “letter syllable word model plurality” (99).

To that end, I draw on Étienne Balibar's argument for translation as a vital "worksite of democracy" and citizenship, a way to replace "the romantic ('Humboldtian') concept of language as a closed totality, the expression of a community equally closed upon itself" (2004, 177). For Balibar, language as translation is a "constantly transformed system of crossed usages" (178), dissimilar from "the traditionalist and communitarian bases of identitarian 'national-language-culture'" (178). Balibar's contention necessitates a movement away from associating citizen status with any one language that is linked to (if not coterminous with) a given political space: such conceptions of language are a barrier to the acts of citizens. This tension remains even where a language has seemingly surpassed its national borders: English cannot be the language of Europe, Balibar argues, since it is both too global ("much *more*" than the language of Europe) and too national ("much *less*"; indeed, "occasionally in a minority situation itself") (178).<sup>247</sup> In making visible practices of transcription and transliteration as well as translation, Kim offers us greater precision than Balibar's ideas do: her works remind us that translation occurs across language codes and also within them, taking place in the passage from sound to written alphabet and in choices between different notation systems, whether the ways English has Romanized Hangul or the non-verbal notations of intonation Kim has started using in *Penury*.<sup>248</sup>

In attempting to reconceive citizenship, Balibar identifies translation as essential for "turning public space back into civic space" as part of a "reality of social practices of translation" which he sees as unequally manifested, visible in the intellectual spheres of Europe and among migrant workers but not among the "intermediary levels" (178). His ultimate argument against English as the language of European citizenship is that it is "threatened with breaking up into several relatively separate idioms" (178). The propensity of English to do so, its availability to Kim as a language that can be revised, is one means by which her work investigates the possibilities, necessities, and tensions of transcribing (or, as I explore later, trans-scribing).<sup>249</sup> The pun in Kim's



couplet “To cross and alter / Land and peoples / Task of tender” (*Dura*, 2002, 29) highlights, for instance, a Christian iconography alongside financial motivation as historic catalysts for migration missions. At the same time, such linguistic play relies on a flexibility with language rooted in her sense of Korean. The construction “Donor: dolor / Placement between / and /” (27) generates meaning out of a particularly difficult enunciation for most Korean speakers of English, using that problematic to explore associations between gift (“donor”) and sale (“dolor” heard as “dollar”) while noting the pathos in gifting (“dolor” understood as “sadness”). These lines attain their meaning through a condition of translation which includes not only the conversion of language from source to target, but the physical movement of people between places and the historical import of words into new lexicons: “translations of / the Scriptures into Chinese” for “educated Koreans,” as she mentions in *The Bounty* (1996, 23).<sup>250</sup>

In such moments, Kim draws on the co-presence of multiple, often-divergent languages (and the histories of colonialization and globalization into which language is inexorably bound) in order to understand the complexities of speech and writing. It is not enough to confidently declare “who are citizens,” as Olson had sought to; nor, in an age of potentially global citizenship, can a Black Nation that rejects the bourgeois aspirations of citizenship protect its constituents from their own or other states’ intrusions. Effective citizenship must emerge from a consideration of how we allow people to phrase their citizenship, how we speak ourselves as citizens; while Howe’s fragmentation of narrative constructions of citizenship within the space of the English Civil War begins to attend to what gets said and written by and about citizens, it is Myung Mi Kim’s consideration of the polylingual that offers the fullest possibility for articulating in poetry a projective citizenship that is meaningful for citizens beyond poetry.

Kim has discussed her poetics in relation to issues of multilingualism, plural Englishes, and translation within *Commons*:

It is not the actual translation or even the state of translatability between the two texts that is intriguing but the possibilities for transcribing what occurs in the traversal between the two languages (and, by extension, between two ‘nations,’ their mutually implicated histories of colonization, political conflicts, and so on). What is the recombinant energy created between languages (geopolitical economics, cultural representations, concepts of community)? (2002, 110)<sup>251</sup>

In this formulation, the meaning of translation extends beyond paraphrasing in one language a semantic unit from another, and also beyond a given work’s “state of translatability,” its potential for translation.<sup>252</sup> Instead, Kim privileges the idea of “transcribing what occurs in the traversal between the two languages,” acknowledging her interest in the encounter between languages as they are collectively used. Kim is not interested in language as an abstract concept but as a social activity, as gaining meaning as people encounter each others’ words.

Transcription involves more than writing down an oral/aural work, which would be tantamount to dictation. Instead, Kim’s notion of transcribing, which we might call trans-scribing, implies a sense of discovery and creation (“recombinant energy”); what is to be found through transcription is that which is currently silent, missing, or undocumented. Such absent sounds and meanings emerge through the interaction (“traversal”) of two (or more) languages: in Kim’s case, Korean and English, though neither term is determinant for Kim since both languages are shaped by (new) use. Kim’s sense of trans-scription calls to mind M. NourbeSe Philip’s now-famous refrain, “english / is a foreign anguish” (32). In Philip’s construction, the semantic content of the phrase pivots around a sonic correspondence of “anguish” and “language,” a rhyme that owes more than a little to English’s Norman roots and to a French pronunciation inflected by Tobagian Creole. The implication of English in both British and American imperial projects, colonial spaces, and long histories of slavery have left English a language that is at once local to specific regions and significantly global. English alters the language of many places with its “foreign” status, but it is also altered by those places’ speakers and writers, who reformulate it as a “foreign anguish.” A Caribbean-Canadian poet’s resistance to English elocution allows her to subvert English as a

normative language; English becomes foreign to itself, the less a source of anguish to its speaker the more it ceases to be 'pure' English. So too with Kim's tracing of the recombinant energy between Korean and English as she explores how one language is (un)able "to speak of another region and its goods" (2002, 22). To trans-scribe, then, is more than just to set down in writing: it is to expose crossed usages, unlikely correspondences, and innovative possibilities for communication.

While Kim's work should be read within a tradition of Asian-American poetry and writing more widely (she is often linked with Theresa Hak Kyung Cha), in part because of her relation to migration narratives, which I discuss below, her poetics also emerges from an engagement with experimental American writing in the Open Field, Objectivist, and "Language" traditions; writers such as Susan Howe and Kathleen Fraser have been influential to her work. As the Director of Poetics at the University of Buffalo, Kim holds the position Susan Howe previously held, a post which emerged out of Charles Olson's visiting appointment there in the mid-1960s (Schultz, 1997). That suggestive connection takes on more weight given that Kim has situated her work in response to "Projective Verse," noting the "propositional character" of both the Projectivist and Objectivist traditions as important to her poetry. Her contention that "the poem is what in fact emerges at that very moment of encounter, with your ear" closely tracks "Projective Verse" and its attention to the internal, as well as external, auditory sources of poetry. Kim's considerations of listening within her poems take an essential component of projectivist poetics and interrogate it from a multilingual position, complicating Olson's sense of the ear. We might well see Kim in the tradition of Rachel Blau DuPlessis' group of innovative women writers who have made out of Olson's masculinist and often-exclusive poetics a meaningfully inclusive alternative.<sup>253</sup>

Primers, Proofing, and the Citizens' Language

Before turning to read the ways *Dura* explores those who are adjacent to citizenship—migrants seeking the documentation of citizenship and (new) American citizens read by others as being outside citizen status, regardless of their legal positions—I want to first show how Kim has connected language use to citizenship practice in her work to date, focusing on her first two books, *Under Flag* (1991) and *The Bounty* (1996). In the former, Kim directly engages the recognizable sites of citizenship—protest marches, naturalization tests, war zones—in order to critique limitations on the citizen’s acts of speaking and writing. In the latter, Kim attends to the ways language instruction discriminates between citizens, creating divisions within citizen status according to class, gender, and race whilst also imagining an ideal language that should be spoken by model citizens.

“Primer,” the opening section of *The Bounty*, demonstrates the composite quality of English within Kim’s works: written across languages, it explores the systems that dictate how individuals learn a language, and the ways language is policed. Ostensibly a guide to Hangeul, the orthographic Korean alphabet—“this is the study book” (11)—“Primer” is written in English, or appears so.<sup>254</sup> The poem in fact relies on interplay between English and Hangeul alphabets as they are scribed and vocalised. The Hangeul consonant transliterated as [g] is expressed via a series of English alphabetic illustrations: “g is for girl            g is for glove” (15). Kim’s phrases resemble English, and are comprehensible lexically as English; at the same time, they offer a primer for the way Korean sounds, a form of written or “pen hearing” (15) which expresses Korean enunciation. As the book’s epigraph indicates, Hangeul’s “five basic symbols [...] are shaped to suggest the articulators pronouncing them” (11). In moving between the languages, Kim’s text alters the alphabet for the English speaker: the *g* that is “for girl” is not the English “g” familiar to English-language readers, but a different sound, a “Korean” [g]. “Primer” thus not only explores Hangeul but also records attempts to distinguish English words: “parcel partial            study 1, study 2,

study 3” (18). The effect is to complicate any certain sense as to what “Primer” is the study book *for*: Hangul, English, or some language system that exists between the two.<sup>255</sup>

The words in “Primer” can seem English but sound Korean and vice versa. Juxtapositions of words such as “Reticent: errant sediment” and “Transom transgression” (22, 23) create idiosyncratic English phrases via alliterative wordplay, sonic association, and paratactic structures that blur syntactic hierarchies. “Transom” functions as both a noun and a novel verbalization, perhaps an imperative for dealing with transgression as well as an allusion to the “ransom” that might be paid for an agent—a suspected spy—who has transgressed. The vowel + ‘nt’ ending that carries through “Reticent: errant sediment” reveals a particulate quality to words as consonantal pairings cross word-boundaries. The meaning created in this phrase is more than semantic, for although we might think of misplaced sediment as unable to disclose its origins, “errant sediment” is an unlikely gloss on or result of “reticent.” This attention to lexical elements, to a word’s shared morphemes and graphemes, offers a grammatical association in addition to semantic connections. In so doing, “Primer,” subverts the normative intentions that lay behind what Richard Weaver termed “language citizenship” (1953, 142). A quite different idea of grammar and language use emerges within *The Bounty*, one in which syntax and semantics are as liable to thwart as adhere to existing rules, in part because “Primer” makes use of a language that is never only English or Korean—that bridges Korean/English.

In a series of recent articles on translation and what she terms “comparison literature,” Rebecca Walkowitz, drawing on ideas put forward by Lawrence Venuti, Rey Chow, Judith Butler, and others, has called for readings of translation that are historically-specific, account for multilingualism within a nation-space, and keep translation “visible within collective speech acts” (2009, 569), or what Butler terms “irreducible.” In Walkowitz’s analysis, translation is not a case of understanding a fixed, monolingual “source” language and finding the “best” alternative in a fixed,

monolingual “target” language. Instead, translation should aim to record the fissures, inconsistencies, and tensions that exist in source and target languages, dispensing with what is, to use Venuti’s term, “the illusion of transparency.” Walkowitz’s case study is J.M. Coetzee’s novel, *Diary of a Bad Year*, a book she argues does not “simply *appear* in translation but in important ways has been *written for translation*” (569). It is the “for” of translation I am most interested in here, and where I depart a little from Walkowitz: she argues that Coetzee’s novel is effectively written for translation, an argument that is not about authorial intention but about the novel’s architecture.<sup>256</sup> While Kim’s work “invokes historical practices of translation that emphasize comparison between source and target,” like Coetzee’s novel (Walkowitz, 567), I would argue we need to read it less as *written for translation* than written “in-translation”: what we are reading lies somewhere in the passage from source to target, rather than in a condition which makes it particularly susceptible to successful movement across languages.<sup>257</sup> In a sense, Kim’s work has no home or existence in either source or target; it is in-translation that her poems become most legible: that their narratives, speaking and listening positions, and political horizons surface.<sup>258</sup>

Important to this dimension of in-translation is the relationship between language and authorized usage. “Primer” not only filters languages into one another by means of its English account, in a homophonic “Korean,” of the history of Hangeul from promulgation in 1443 up to the embargo of Hangeul during Japanese imperial rule (1910-1945); it uses that account to trace the ways language can be institutionally-determined, noting a time when “Emperor letter of the law” defined the relationship between language and government (1996, 23). Hangeul’s origins are, unusually, simultaneously popular and governmental. Hangeul was instigated to replace Chinese by Sejong the Great in a text called *Hunmin jeong-eum* (“Correct Sounds to Teach the People”). Communally-oriented, “for many years Hangeul / was used by the less        never having been native / privileged and by women” (23). To cast Hangeul as spoken by the “never [...] native”

neither valorizes nor rejects its existence within Korean space: on the one hand, it is a popular alternative to Chinese, and on the other it reflects class and gender stratification. Hangul intersects with the later, imposed Japanese, which is also a referent of the phrase “having never been native,” indicating how a ‘national’ language can emerge via governmental fiat in order to legislate an approved language for citizens. Hangul, itself a language of resistance composed against a non-native Chinese, seeks to provide “correct sounds” that will “teach the people,” a phrase which replaces individual self-expression and a personal, “particular experience” of language with the normative risk of “sameness.” “Never having been native” interrupts the otherwise straightforward (if lineated) prose description of Hangul use with the implication that the “less privileged,” whose identity the phrase literally splices, become to some degree “never [...] native” through their language use. This connection between language use and national identity is a dynamic Kim’s work explores in both Korean and American spaces.

“Primer” reflects on the ways institutional decisions as well as cultural factors affect how and why a language is used. In “[j],” Kim interweaves Hangul history, Chinese migration to Korea, and Korean migration to America, implicating multiple languages in the narratives of these disparate geographies:<sup>259</sup>

mostly translations of the Scriptures into chinese which educated Koreans could read	inculcate its shame	to learn the English of a Midwest town (23)
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The columnar division of this stanza allows for combinations in which we “could read of a Midwest town” or inculcate the shame variously of “the English” and “educated Koreans.” “Educated” hovers between being an adjective and being a verb that marks the presence of a (religious) institution’s investment in citizens’ learning. The poem’s conclusion, “sent to the proofing house,” describes the process of publishing in a way that recognizes a judgment passed

as to the language abilities of the poem's several speakers: they, too, have to be proofed and approved.

As “the study book,” this primer negotiates official versions of languages and their regional inflections. “The English / of a Midwest town” where “call and cull” easily switch is at one and the same time a local version of “English,” which suggests the possibility of linguistic variety and the presence of an imperial language imposed on Korean space by American military presence, another iteration after Chinese, Hangul, and Japanese.<sup>260</sup> Yet even as “Primer” records repeated attempts by different governing forces to legislate a single approved way of speaking and writing, Kim's use of an idiosyncratic language that exists somewhere in translation between Korean and English hints at a way the citizen might reclaim language from a standardized discourse, especially where that discourse serves the nation-state rather than the individual.<sup>261</sup>

Such policing, and the possibility of subversion, is directly connected to questions of citizenship in *Under Flag*, Kim's first book, which offers a critique of the politics of national allegiance—and particularly of (bureaucratic) forms of government that prescribe the citizen's behavior. The opening poem, “And Sing We,” identifies voice, written down, as a question: “what sound do we make, ‘n,’ ‘h,’ ‘g.’”<sup>262</sup> This line filters the vocalisation of Hangul through the English alphabet as the poem introduces a blur of languages: “Depletion replete with barraging / Slurred and taken over / Diaspora” (13). *Under Flag's* narratives of wars in Korea, immigration to America, and the negotiation of the Korean and English pronunciation indicate the relationship between institutional practices of government, the possibility of citizenship, and the control of language. The poem “Under Flag” describes “Citizens to the streets marching / Their demands lettered in blood” (18), connecting the exercise of popular dissent with a written expression that can only be composed and read through violence, “in blood.” Unpromisingly, such oppositional actions on the part of citizens—engagement in rebellion and protest—are seen to depend on, and are defined



by, governmental action: “The leader counters them / [...] / and they must scatter, white cloths over their faces.” Both speech and writing are shown in compromised states within the opening poems of *Under Flag*, disconnected from individuated acts of expression by institutional authority.<sup>263</sup>

This compromised status of language stems from institutional control of what it means to speak or write a language. Though “Into Such Assembly,” from *Under Flag*, has been the most analyzed of Kim’s poems, I want to explore it here briefly in order to show that citizenship, rather than just national identity, is a key concern for Kim, and that the script of citizenship relies in part, on attempts to control language use.<sup>264</sup> This poem starts with a partial transcript of the United States Citizenship Test:

Can you read and write English? Yes\_\_\_\_. No\_\_\_\_.  
Write down the following sentences in English as I dictate them.  
    There is a dog in the road.  
    It is raining.  
Do you renounce allegiance to any other country but this?  
Now tell me, who is the president of the United States?  
You will all stand now. Raise your right hands. (1992, 29)

To transcribe a question about English literacy at the start of a poem written in English subverts that question, answering it in a way that exceeds the set frame of its multiple-choice options. Yet the range of meanings and syntaxes for English remain prescribed by the bureaucratic governmental institution administering the test.<sup>265</sup> As the Citizenship Test indicates, it is the codified scripting of language that turns it from social activity to normative code. The addressee of the test is presented with a bureaucratic script that offers two positions for the citizen: “Yes\_\_\_\_. No\_\_\_\_.” The speaker must insert herself into either script, with consequences for her rights within a given territorial space. In transcribing the question and its form, Kim’s poem seeks a third response: a transformation of the ideology of language on which the citizenship test is predicated.

In leaving unchecked the blank space for an answer, the poem disrupts the script, refusing either to claim or disavow literacy in English as a participation in citizenship. The poem's pronouns shift between narrator and reader in ways that complicate the ownership of literacy: does the "you" first address the reader or record a narrator's experience? Put another way, the poem occupies an ambiguous temporality, either a present event in which the reader must participate or a recalled event that conditioned (and conditions) the narrator's status as a citizen. The citizenship test is presented as an attempt to make its takers biddable automatons: the construction "You will all stand now" functions as a speech act in which what language declares comes to be. In the imperative phrase "raise your right hands," rhetoric compels response, the first act of the citizen being to obey, in deed if not in thought. The process of becoming an American citizen takes place through a norming of language use, and the effects of that control are expressed through the way language begets predetermined action: the stance of the new citizens.<sup>266</sup> Kim's counter-poetics is rooted in a disavowal of this: "language is very plastic. Language is a social practice rather than any sort of intractable given" (quoted in James Lee, 2000, 355). Although the requirements for English proficiency set by the citizenship test are minimal, it is the assumption behind them which Kim's transcription contests, the notion that language-use can be serially divided into yes/no categories.

The poem itself offers an alternative to "stand now. Raise your right hands" as a way to resist the limited framework of this test: Kim's raising of her hand leads, among other things, to a written act. As her lines shift from "you" to "I" or "me," the roles of speaking and listening become shared between reader and narrator, as they had within Baraka's poems, resisting positions in which the new citizen is inexpert and the state official authoritative. "You" are required to "renounce allegiance to any country but this," a construction in which "this" could adhere to multiple countries and flags—especially in a collection called *Under Flag*—rather than

guarantee connection and loyalty to the test-setting state. The “English” speaker’s status is further complicated by the speaker’s association with the speaker of the preceding two poems, who identified herself as a Korean woman at various civil war sites. Kim’s transcription of the test cannot reject the linguistic requirement of the citizenship test but does transform it by suggesting we might measure citizenship in terms of the ability to make considered use of linguistic heterogeneity instead of establishing a barometer of proofed usage.<sup>267</sup>

Central to this transformation of the monolingual dimensions of the Citizenship Test—the absence of any of the other languages of the United States of America—is the interplay of multiple geographies and ways of communicating. This plurilingual aspect of the poem becomes legible in the following stanza, where the poem’s mode shifts to an urban description of “Cable car rides over swan flecked ponds / Red lacquer chests in our slateblue house” (29). The stanza concludes in “a lush clearing where we picnic and sing: / *Sunn-Bul-Sah, geep eun bahm ae,*” a fragment of Korean song which translates as “Deep into the night at the Temple of Becoming the Buddha” (Zhou, 2006, 239). Zhou reads this stanza as a “romanticized description of Korea isolated from history,” part of the poem’s implicit call for historicized considerations of Korean identity and American-Korean relations; Zhou thus consider the first stanza to be “American” and the second, “Korean.” The result of this division is an untenable “binarized choice of either this or that category of national or cultural identification” (239) which the poem’s shift into monostichs refuses: “Neither neither / Who is mother tongue, who is father country?” (1992, 29).<sup>268</sup> Although there is movement from a recognizably American space in stanza one, ruled by “the president of the United States,” to markers of Korean space in stanza two, where “sweet potatoes grow on the rock choked side of the mountain,” neither stanza is ascribable definitely to Korea or to America.

“Neither neither” therefore rejects the “binarized choice” of national identification, indicating that there was never a binary to begin with: both “national” spaces are composite, their languages altered through immigration and colonization, what *Duru* will cast as “Proof: skill or artifice or tiling, empire and colony” (2008, 75). The citizenship test’s sense of national geography, undermined in the poem by the deictic uncertainty “but this,” is further complicated by the dictated sentences “There is a dog in the road. / It is raining,” which reference an indeterminate location. The second stanza’s lines likewise displace us as much as locate us, their details providing specificity without revealing whether we are in Korea or California. While lines like “So-Sah’s thatched roofs shading miso hung to dry” link the scene to Korea, they might also be memories returning to the narrator, inspired by Californian “chrysanthemums” whose “pale yellow petals crushed / between fingers, that green smell” (1992, 29).

This descriptive displacement echoes the book’s title, *Under Flag*, which names not one flag but several: Chinese, Japanese, Korean (North and South), American. Eliding the experience of multiple places, the poem suggests that an institutional citizenship, whether Korean or American, offers a limited way to use language and, therefore, a limited range of acts and identities for the citizens. The danger of such limitation becomes clear in the poem’s second section, which opens with troubling, childlike questions: “Do they have trees in Korea? Do the children eat out of garbage cans?” (30). These questions parody the citizenship test question, similarly opening a section of the poem, a formal echo that implies such questions, with their yes/no answers and their underlying ignorance, are of a kind with and even produced by the types and forms of interrogation that comprise the citizenship test. The poem suggests one cannot just reject or accede to governmental procedures, but must transform those procedures’ inflection of public discourse. Citizenship becomes a negotiation, in language, between individuals’ dissonant expectations of sound and meaning. The conclusion of the citizenship test that “Into Such

Assembly” imagines is not the test-takers standing after merely transcribing dictated language, but a written act that uses multiple languages and locations to complicate the experience of place and allegiance.

Yet what does it mean to disrupt the script of the citizenship test within a poem rather than within the test itself? Given that the test remains private, it is difficult to analyze instances where new citizens have subverted it. To take an analogous situation, however, the electoral ballot offers the citizen a form for completion as part of the exercise of rights and responsibility. To spoil a ballot paper would potentially have repercussions within the political sphere as an alternative response to casting a vote; similarly, write-in candidates offer options for voters “who [are] not persuaded by any of the candidates on the ballot” (Nader, 2000, 35).<sup>269</sup> Yet such activity tends to perpetuate the logic of the existing script: the write-in candidate is simply one more name, their election subject to pre-agreed rules, and the spoiled ballot paper generally enters into statistics not as a critique of the political structure but as an error on the part of the user-voter. To adopt an answer other than “Yes\_\_\_\_. No\_\_\_\_.” within the test could have repercussions for one’s leave to remain, rather than existing as a visible act of citizenship. Put another way, it may be impossible from within the naturalization process to engage in an act that is visible *to others* as an act of citizenship; the logic of the citizenship process requires interaction, invisibly, with the state. Kim’s decision to subvert the test within poetic discourse is thus a way of entering into the public sphere an exchange between would-be citizen and state that normally exists only in the bureaucratic sphere, hidden from view. In so doing, Kim reveals to those who are citizens through birth rather than naturalization the conditions of citizenship, complicating what it means to act as a citizen.

“They Must Be Taught The Language”: Resisting Proofing

The idea of the citizen articulated within *Under Flag* and *The Bounty* is someone who is the subject of linguistic proofing, exposed to governmental decree and colonial rule. If we follow the trajectory of “citizen” and “citizenship” as they traverse Kim’s books to date, we observe an unpromising sequence beginning with marching citizens in *Under Flag*, moving through the problematics of the U.S. Citizenship Test, and most recently placing the “citizen” as a fragmentary, dislocated term within *Penury*: “guarded ravine hoarse hail || pilfer citizen reedy gibber” (2009, 84). The citizen keeps poor company in these lines, part of a thievish nonsense-speak one letter away from the gibbet. Optimistically, we could read the citizen as the lone promising term in a fragmentary telling of (horseback) migration across ravines, hoarse from thirst, risking destitution and robbery. Within this story, “hail” would be at once a meteorological condition and the terms of engagement between citizens: to be a citizen involves being recognized by others in that status, being “hailed” as a member of the community rather than as a threatening stranger, outsider, or barbarian (one who does not speak the way the citizens speak). As Kim puts it earlier in *Penury*: “They must be taught the language which they must use in transacting business with the people of this country” (75).

Yet I want to argue that citizenship remains essential to Kim’s sense of poetry’s political role, and not simply because citizenship is the sole status that guarantees protection and full rights within the nation-state, nor because abandoning citizenship as a category risks forgetting or obscuring the “history of Chinese [and other Asian] immigrants’ exclusion from naturalization for U.S. citizenship on the grounds of their supposed inability and unwillingness to learn English” (Zhou, 2006, 1), though these are both important reasons to reinvigorate and make meaningful the concept of citizenship. My argument is that the expression of citizenship within Kim’s poetry connects individual experience with communal activity through the use of language in-translation, shaped by more than one linguistic tradition in its speakers, writers, readers, and listeners. Artistic

practice remains at the heart of this endeavor, what Kim terms “pushing into your art as a means of being a citizen, with awareness, with political conviction and insight” (Morrison, 82)

That *Dura* can be read as a reinvention of the migration narrative, a genre closely tied to stories of citizenship, is evident from its opening section, “Cosmography,” in which what migrates is not just people but the language people use to share their individual and collective experiences, in oral and written form.<sup>270</sup>

Who even came this way, bellow or saw

Thirty and five books

Paper        script        document

Vowels unwritten

Kinglists     proverbs     praise phrases

They say it is the ocean

Indistinguishable water horizon net of worth

False vocalisation of the consonantal text

Rose thorn and reported ocean

The beginning of things (2008, 3)

“The beginning of things” invokes the settling of America, an event Kim will reference throughout *Dura*, and an alarmist rhetoric about the dangers to America of migration, such as Senator McCarran’s fear of “hard-core, indigestible blocs which have not become integrated into the American way of life,” that “mighty river” which comprises “many streams.”<sup>271</sup> Such travel is presented from the outset as involving a suspicious uncertainty as to “who even came this way.” Treated with suspicion, migration is reliant on an examination of records that permit travel and the crossing of borders: “Paper        script        document” denoted visas and the money (“paper”) that might secure passage, illegally or through official payment for a visa or green card.

Such documents are part of the “script,” present here both as a gesture to existing narratives of migration, including the Chinese American “Paper Sons,” and as an English archaism, the script as any piece of writing, including this poem.<sup>272</sup> The migrant person or language arrives with or through “Thirty and Five Books,” a phrase that is also the title of *Dura’s* most autobiographical section, where Kim’s own emigration is elliptically told.

The records that exist in this migration narrative are seen to be potentially unstable, subject to “false vocalisation,” their “vowels unwritten.” Such enunciation fails a truth test established by the proofing of language; it is one more instance of the ways certain kinds of speaking are privileged within the popular sphere of citizenship, if not technically within the legal sphere. Linguistic control comes to affect even the seascape, with the ocean less a natural phenomenon than an act of speech, something “they say,” its status only “reported.” If the written record—the passport, the identification card, the birth certificate—makes possible the movement of people, “Cosmography” also recognizes that the way one speaks affects one’s recognition as a citizen, after as well as prior to the claim of citizenship.<sup>273</sup> “Cosmography” oscillates between corrective attempts to assure approved uses of the English language—“And the. You must designate the article” (6)—and the variation produced by individual speakers: “use shaped the names of things” (10). Similarly, the phrase “decimal

decibel” records a mis-hearing that works against the “sameness of language” that Kim argues is tantamount to “sameness of sentiment” (2009, 27). Such moments of variation are few and far between in “Cosmography,” where we find “Transcription barely permeable” (2008, 5). Language here takes on a rote quality, with scant potential for translation or trans-scription: the migrant imagined being tutored in this section is simply “another copier scribe to sound” (6).<sup>274</sup>

*Dura’s* genesis reflects an attempt to resist the sameness of proofing through recombinant linguistic acts. Kim has noted that one of her compositional methods involved “taking ‘western’



texts and putting them up against Korean texts that were written at the same time” (Morrison, EPC). As Josephine Nock-Hee Park (2006) and, following her, Juliana Spahr’s “Preface” to *Dura* show, the title could stem from any one of a number of languages:

There is *dura* as the dense, tough, outermost membranous envelope of the brain and spinal cord, literally “hard mother” as it is from the Arabic, *al-‘umm al-jalida* or *al-jafiya* ‘the hard mother’ and *durare*, to last, endure, in Italian and *durer*, to last, to run, to go on, in French and *durar*, to last, in Spanish and *dura*, the feminine hard, stale, tough, stiff in Spanish and *Dura* as an ancient city in Syria and *dura*, as the Romanized transcription of the phrase listen up, in Korean, and *Dura* as the people who live on the hills of Dura Danda, Turlungkot, Kunchha Am Danda of Lamjung District and some adjacent villages of Tanahun District in Nepal and *Dura* as the language of the Dura and *duras* as a variety of sorghum of Southern Asia and northern Africa and.... (*Dura*, 2008, xi)

In arguing that Kim’s writing exists in-translation, I am suggesting our aim should not be to find the source, the “authentic” meaning: *Dura* as a title becomes meaningful in the interplay of multiple languages and translations. Since there is no single source or target language, we understand the word through traversing referents in multiple languages. While several of the meanings are related—the Italian, the French, and the Latin all connote time, “to endure” and “to perdure” and “duration”—others take us further afield. What we might understand *Dura* to be emerges through colinguistic reading, including a transcription of the Korean for “listen up” that we find almost hidden by a combination of transliteration and English unfamiliarity with non-Western, non-Roman language systems. Right from its title, *Dura* considers the cultural and national contexts within which words and sounds are used. New, contested meanings emerge through such linguistic encounters.

This linguistic pluralism is the opposite of the norming structures represented by “another copier scribe to sound” (2008, 6). The history of English is often the history of attempts to standardise, despite its continual evolution and adaptation through encounters with dialects and idiolects; the “copier scribe” symbolizes this process of clichéd reproduction.<sup>275</sup> Yet the bureaucratic figure who transcribes, the first of many such figures in *Dura*, also suggests the

potential for a more shifting, generative production of language as written language notates vocalised sound in multiple ways. On the lower half of the page facing this depiction of the copier, four phrases are written in Hangul, filling in four blanks. Each phrase is translated on the right: “a short lyric poem / or, the founder of a family,” “an ancestral tablet,” “a new world,” “dried radish leaves” (7). The last item in the sequence is a surprise, given the links between the three preceding items. While the family’s progenitor associatively suggests the “ancestral tablet” which we might imagine carried to a (or “The”) “new world,” by comparison “dried radish leaves” seems unexplained. Yet Josephine Nock-Hee Park has shown there is a greater degree of coherence “if one hears the Korean: the sound of ‘a new world,’ shin-sae-gae, sounds like ‘dried radish leaves,’ shi-rae-ghee” (244). Meaning is produced across the two languages, a homophone in one language generating a cryptic juxtaposition in another. In moving between these different languages, “Cosmography” complicates the fit between a language and a place: does “new world” have the same referent in both the Korean and the English? In so doing, Kim manifests what Juliana Chang has called “interlingual poetics,” a poetics that “change[s] the shape and sounds of dominant languages like English by pushing the language to its limits and breaking it open or apart” (93).<sup>276</sup>

This limit-case version of language is what *Dura* terms “having to found descriptions for things never seen” through “letters a carving a chipping” (52). The migrant speaker depicted here does not find (out) the words for new sights, but “found[s]” them, a phrasing which disrupts expected English semantics/syntax, reconfiguring English usage according to the speaker’s awareness of more than one referent for a sign. The fact that the written description involves a process of abrading letters—“carving” and “chipping”—highlights the alteration to language such transcriptions involve. *Dura’s* experiments in the sonic and visual aspects of written language do more than indicate Kim’s subtle sense of the intricacies of English; they record attempts to alter (altar) the language. Consider, for instance, the phrase, “Duration that a pair of starlings’

participation magnetized” (52), which seems to work via a pun on “part” to visualise the two starlings’ distance from one another, linked as they are by a magnetic attraction. Beyond an intra-English wordplay, however, this line records the ornithological history of a Pacific bird that links Korea and America: the starling is itself not native to North America, having been introduced in 1890-91 through the release of 160 birds in Central Park (Cooke, 1928, 3). Starlings have long been known as birds of mimicry: Shakespeare’s lone reference to the starling features an exasperated Hotspur plotting to “have a starling shall be taught to speak nothing but ‘Mortimer’” as an affront to King Henry, who will not ransom Mortimer, Hotspur’s brother-in-law (*Henry IV.I, I.III*).<sup>277</sup> Combining migration, trans-pacific history, and language acquisition, the starling is an appropriate icon for a poem that records the challenge of “found” language and speakers bureaucratically classified as “non-native.”

These migrant starlings appear during “Thirty and Five Books,” the section of *Dura* that particularly focuses on the 1992 Los Angeles riots, placing those events in two contexts: a depiction of migration as a collective experience and an individual history of immigration. That individual history takes the form of a two-page chronology detailing 24 events from the ages of 6 to 35; this is the moment the autobiographical ‘I’ most fully enters the book (Park, 244).<sup>278</sup> The first recorded event, 6.1 (with the .1 referring to the month), is simply “How expressed” (73), which casts the act of even fragmentary autobiography as a challenge of enunciation, especially in light of in-translation and trans-scription: what language does the citizen speak?<sup>279</sup> Kim emigrated to America from Korea at the age of nine (“9.8 One of the first words understood in English: stupid”) yet writes the “Korean” events and locations of her autobiography nominally in English: “7.2 Number, form, proportion, situation.” The act of expression is glossed not in terms of meaning but as an “impulse of vocal air” at age 34.6, itself a follow up to “33.0 The subject is a proposition” (74). “Subject” names both a sense of self and a grammatical element, the

vocabulary of the sentence drawn from linguistics as much as philosophy. That combination indicates that self and the description of the self are intimately connected, hence “this immediate problem of reporting” (73): to write an autobiography is not only to select details but to consider the words that will relate experience for an audience or readership.

This autobiographical poem remains propositional in nature, suggestive rather than complete, both in its choice of language and its selection of events. “27.7 The name of that town is” narrates the absence of information rather than the revelation of details. The poem-chronology is preceded by nine propositions about existence and followed by a set of proofs; the individual speaker is thus caught between uncertain identity and categorical absolutes that bear little relationship to individual experience. The propositions, including ‘Propose: constant translation’ and “Propose: as relates to an America. Propose: as relates to immigrant” (72) suggest ways that one might conceive of the individual in the context of socio-political situations. Some of these are marked by their institutional character, like “Propose: knowledge becomes the parlance of the state,” but others, such as “Propose: sound combinations,” offer alternatives to normative uses of language. The proofs that respond to these theorems offer definitive rather than conjectural possibilities for identity: “Proof: an America is a woman is a sea path is / Proof: 1492, the first terrestrial globe” (75). Although the absent predicates in the first proof allow us to write in a range of responses, the grammatical structure slants us towards a single conception of nation, gender, and migration. That restriction is more troubling in light of the later “Proof: a woman face for to see monstrosity,” where the claim to proof is in reality a means by which to position women. These “proofs” offer only one way to depict the world, the 1492 Nuremburg or *Erdapfel* globe of Martin Behaim, a distinctly Western version of world geography, yet one that precedes America as a cartographic presence.<sup>280</sup> Thus, even within these rigid, quasi-scientific declarations, “Thirty and Five Books” hints at the instability of description, at the constructed quality of the

nation, through the contrast between two proofs which differently describe America. Situated between proposition and proof, the autobiographical self exists within *Dura* as a mediating presence, potentially able to offer something more meaningful than a theoretical proposition yet without the over-determined quality of rigid proof.

“Thirty and Five Books” opens with an account of migration as a communal activity which calls into question “what place assume to know”(47). In this written record, individual experience is threatened with bureaucratic effacing: “Registers and demands of travel. How was it to be the first arrival in rows and columns” (48). Governmental decree dictates “deployments to the assigned parallel” according to “peculiarity of state and nation,” and the resultant descriptions of place involve de-individuated generalisations—“various kinds of rice are the manner of living in that country” (49)—and the reduction of women to a masculinist vision of control: the hope that “the young women can be checked for snoring, teeth grinding, any unpleasant odor from any part of the body” (53). This bureaucratic, governmental account of the movement of people between places legislates the human, recording the “ascension, declination, and distance of the measured body” (48).

Running counter to this narrative is a trans-cription by which Kim juxtaposes plural narratives of individuals gathering into communal groups. Casting language as “obdurate sound,” this section of “Thirty and Five Books” seeks to “thereby insert interpret” (50), an arresting mediation which is, etymologically, an act of speaking between and among people, such as those who “take to the streets and fairs” (51). Kim introduces resistant figures, including a woman identified not as “the daughter of the merchant the doctor the magistrate” but as an agent able to exist beneath official surveillance: “Unrecognized she went about the city.” As the section proceeds, the refrain “is that accurate” enters as a way to question and critique de-individualising militarized actions suffered by civilians, including those on a playground who are bombed and left

with “No heads, fugitive heads. Eyes turned lid. Blood mat hair. Each their hands (held)” (56). Without denoting a specific military manoeuvre, these images recall a series of bombings of Japanese and Korean spaces, the repeated “success of the random bomb” (54). In offering an English-language account of these distant events (“Do not ask again where we are” [57]), “Thirty and Five Books” attempts to counter official narratives of Korean and American history through a series of statements that place together disparate geographies and events. The focus is on the citizens’ acts, not their determinate status.

Such intervention in the official narrative informs *Dura’s* account of the 1992 Los Angeles riots. The first page of the account interweaves two parallel narratives, one occurring on the left margin of the page, the other slightly indented. The left-hand narrative offers a description of the events surrounding the riots, the “asphalt and rooftop rifles” and the “tinder under flint” through which the fires start, “extinguished                      spreading.” In these fragments, any sense of individual agency disappears, with the focus remaining only on resulting effects and the visible nouns, the rifles and the flames. “Beat the fresh burning” indicates the dangers of such a non-human space, as the activity of trying to beat out new fires, to extinguish them, implicitly references the beating received by Edward Jae Song Lee, the Korean-American killed during the riots for ostensibly looting. That reference for “beat” is heightened by the interweaved “telling” around the spreading fire, the words of Lee’s mother, Jung Hui Lee, explaining how “the boy in the newspaper wore a dark shirt” and therefore “it could not be my son” who was pictured lying dead (58). Lee’s death and his mother’s personal grief are woven into the communal experience, the two narratives commingling in the lines “Body moving in circle be fire / If fire be the body carried around,” which evoke a group responsibility for individual suffering, a shared carrying of the body (59).

It is this shared carrying, linking individual experience to group action, which *Dura* targets through trans-scription. The need for writing across cultures and languages is marked in the wake of the account of Lee's death by a description of immigration to America that once again takes the shape of a bureaucratic form:

\_\_\_\_\_ arrived in America. Bare to trouble and  
forsworn. Aliens aboard three ships off the coast.  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ clash. Police move in. (61)

The singularity of arrivals to America—through variously elicited, forced, and aspirational sea-crossings from multiple directions—is re-written here as an inevitable narrative of violence which can only be quashed through law and order, a response that the Los Angeles riots indicate will likely foster further “clash.” Those arriving not only have a blank identity, but they are already, before arrival, marked as both “aliens” and “trouble,” their “forsworn” status suggesting they have forgone the possibility of speaking (truthfully) for themselves, possibly due to their “false vocalization.” They are outside citizenship, unable to articulate themselves as citizens under the terms laid down by existing citizens, irrespective of their legal status and their documents. While Kim's poem depicts the complex forces of global labor practices, economic deprivation, and racial tension which lay behind the riots, it also insists on the role of language, or the failure to listen to divergent ways of using language, as one of the factors driving that tension.

“Thirty and Five Books” counters this depiction of uniform American identity with an alternative picture of “Bodies in propulsion,” a kinetic scene of

Guatemalan, Korean, African-American  
sixteen year olds working check-out lanes. Hard and noisy  
enunciation. (73)

These lines link and separate ethnic groups in America, a hierarchy of distance from American status. At the same time, they suggest that the act of speaking, however persistent or difficult, is what connects their experience: their “hard and noisy / enunciation” resists the blank spaces of official narrative. In the aftermath of the L.A. Riots’ cultural clash, Kim describes a moment of colinguistic community, an example of the ways English is altered through the entrance of new speakers vocalizing and writing across languages. The poem terms this “A banter English gathers carriers,” re-inscribing the mundane task of placing groceries in carrier bags as the creation of a new, playful, experimental English which gathers speakers. The “banner” of national allegiance is rewritten by “banter”; these speakers carry a transformed English, a verbal form of the communal carrying of the fallen body.<sup>281</sup>

In this formulation of English, the language becomes fluid, defined not by proofing institutions but by those who speak it; it is through this that the individual’s idiosyncratic experience—Edward Lee’s mother’s, Myung Mi Kim’s—might enter into conversation with the experiences of others as they are uttered and/or written. The question “Can you read and write English” is transformed into a question about whether one can negotiate and translate the “sound combinations” that comprise “English.” *Dura* offers a poetic version, through trans-cription, of what critic Daniel Kim has identified as the “disjunction” involved in translation. In his reading of Susan Choi’s novel *The Foreign Student*, he suggests:

Readers are invited to conceptualize it as a kind of translation. This does not mean that we are asked to imagine the English words on the page as the translation of some source text originally written in Korean. It means, rather, that the narrator, at key moments, foregrounds the disjunction between the language in which she describes the thought and experiences of her Korean protagonist, Chang Ahn, and the language through which he makes sense of and experiences the war. (552)

Daniel Kim demonstrates that even in monolingual texts a language can carry the vestiges of speakers’ translative experiences. In the case of *Dura*, this disjunction lies not between narrator and protagonist, but between individual enunciation and governmental discourse; through writing



across languages, Kim creates a version of English that exceeds the approved “national” language as it remains responsive to the sounds and words of other languages.

The final section of *Dura*, “Hummingbird,” might be read as the fruition of this translative, trans-scriptive practice. Its opening page introduces a test with a blank left for a student’s name and a single injunction: “Translate:” (91). This page recalls the citizenship test from *Under Flag* as well as the blanks of “\_\_\_\_\_ arrived in America.” This new test, though, revises its previous incarnations, replacing a fixed space of solution with an open-ended invitation to offer more than one meaning. The test features 12 sentences, such as “1. Praise beasts and their worthy marks” or “12. Copying began on the sixth day of the twelfth month.” Like much of Kim’s work, these sentences hint at specific customs and cultures: is there a depiction of Korean custom in “6. Keep cranes in the front garden,” or is such a reading a hangover from naïve Orientalist stereotypes of a monolithic “East”? Therein lies the possibility of trans-scription: the “crane” can be linked both to the construction machine and to the symbolic bird, just as “the fifth day of the ninth month is good for birthing cows” might function as agricultural lore in Korea or the Midwest. These statements “belong” in no one location; it is by seeing them across locations and, indeed, across languages that they become meaningful. We might potentially read these statements as already translated, instead of awaiting translation, and thus carrying the association of an English inflected by Englishes. In this sense they exist in-translation, in a condition of movement between linguistic codes.

This exercise marks a shift in *Dura* to a new notation, single brackets] [which cordon statements off from one another; the effect, as Krzysztof Ziarek has pointed out, is to “hold the phrases and words from spilling back into the empty space [...] forcing the reading to dwell in between brackets, turning the in-between into the proper space of language” (366). This notation develops out of the encounter between Korean and English, across the plural languages of *Dura*.

Phrases such as “the writing hung on the wall] [whose writing is it” resist ascribing ownership to (transcribed) language. Between the two phrases lies a space of emptiness. This emptiness might not signal absence, however, but potential, that which is created through encounter. We cannot abandon responsibility for “whose writing is it”—Kim’s poetics are historically contextualised even where they seek, through shifting deixis, to examine processes more than specific events—but we do not need to ascertain authorship and ownership as much as effect. In the space between “precise printing] [warping” lies a conception of poetic language that allows for both painstaking attention to what is transcribed and the creative improvisations of deformity (95).

This linguistic unpredictability is figured within this section of *Dura* through the motif of the hummingbird, which is described in terms of its absence (“no word for its size,” “no speed to match [it],” 94, 95) and depicted as a sound rather than an image. The section’s acceptance of sonic complexity—“all these letters including those classed as unnecessary or not genuine are formed by the sound of any voice” (96)—leads to “letter syllable word model plurality” (99) in which “*Meal* means: stuff, material” (100). The logic here is not synonymic, but proceeds through semantic association and by rhyme: in making a meal of something, one gives a matter undue substance, “stuff, material”; material emerges by adding letters to “meal” and forms a half-rhyme with it. This conception of language might be the fitting response to the hope of “usher liberty” sought by “Cosmography” amid the monolingual copying in which “transcription [is] barely permeable,” unable to admit multiple languages.

*Dura* ends with “Progress in Learning,” a section which seeks to offer imaginative redefinitions of six nouns. Yet given the ambivalence towards instruction in Kim’s works, including the “Cosmography” section of *Dura*, it would be unwise to take this as the triumphant result of teleology. “*State* is, for instance, *having armor on, having shoes on*” (102), for example,

registers simultaneously the military nature of the state, including the obligation to bear arms contained in the Pledge of Allegiance, but also its protective dimensions, the possible extension of welfare into the domestic arena. The question of the individual's relationship to the state, her ability to create a version of citizenship that reflects plural ways of speaking and listening, remains finely in the balance.

### Can You Read and Write English?

In Kim's latest book, *Penury*, one sequence of poems opens with a curious paradox: "Fell" is identified as a poem "for six multilingual voices" yet is written using recognizably English words. The sequence consists of 9 poems, one to a page, variously comprising six or three lines. Each line in the six-line poems is prefaced with :| as though to signal the simultaneity of the voices: the page vertically separates the lines in a sequence but the notation indicates they are to be read in parallel. The poems record a set of civilian experiences during an on-going, unidentified time of war and deprivation, with hopeful "Sacrifices to the Altar of Land and Grain" counterpointed by the diaristic "Stripped bark from pines and boiled it—and swallowed it" (2009, 54). The former line references Sajik Altar, in the center of Seoul, and the latter alludes to the famine conditions of North Korea during the 1990s and beyond; layered over one another as "multilingual voices," they offer different responses to the same situation.

While the poems voiced in "Fell" obliquely reference life inside North Korea, these references also translate beyond a specific historical moment; they invoke a series of civilian experiences, from "Measure streets by the number of uniforms" (51) to "I send them candy wrapped in socks," a playful smuggling that is blasted away by its blunt counterpoint, "Scorched earth tactics" (58). The conditions under which these individual voices come to enunciate their experience is marked by militarization, governmental authority, and surveillance, whether by

“Foreign Employment Bureau” or “Border security operation” (55). Dawn Lundy Martin has suggested that “Kim calls attention to language that some might experience as ‘natural’ and free from the discourse of the nation-state, in order to reveal how its very invisibility makes it a tool that maintains the power of the nation, as it slips beneath the radar of critique” (96). “Fell” seems to fit within this logic as it documents the irrepressible discourse of the nation-state which is increasingly the basis of prescribed citizenship: do you belong here, do you have rights here? At one point, two voices both demand “Do you have guns drugs or needles in the car?” (55).

The portrayal of civic space offered is stark, even nihilistic; the “affection” that is the last word of the poem is annulled by the juxtaposed image of “that which is forced outside flesh / cloven tourniquet,” a deformation of the famished/maimed body (59). Such bleakness is apt in a book titled *Penury*—but who are the depicted subjects, and whose is the lack? “Penury” is also a pun on the “pen hearing” of *Dura* which linked speech and writing through trans-cription. To see “Fell” as written in-translation explains how it is these “six multilingual voices” speak in English: they may not be speaking the same English, and not from a shared location. What they share, instead, is an experience of speech through which they participate in civic space: “It’s the pitch of the cry that carries” (51). There is no guarantee that voice amounts to citizenship, of course, especially given the risk attached to “false vocalization” in *Dura*; indeed, many of the subjects interrogated within “Fell” experience a silencing of their voices. Yet in counterpointing nation-state discourse with a chorus of dissonant voices that record human rights infringements as well as make visible their positioning within state-based narratives, by responding to the limited framework of a citizenship test with a poetic act that transforms that activity, and by interweaving the personal losses resulting from police brutality with the shared response to that suffering, Kim’s poems seek to take us beyond English as a normative system, and towards that “banter English” which operates through plurilingual hospitality, an English as its strangest and most

strained, unfamiliar even to itself. In so doing, Kim's poetry offers a practice (more than a content) through which to resist normative prescriptions of the citizen's behaviour: "pilfer citizen reedy gibber" is one instance of the disruption of the script of citizenship, an aesthetic which necessitates a contemplation of multiple possible versions of the citizen if we want to attach meaning to citizenship rather than to leave it as a bureaucratic term that delineates inclusion and exclusion.

This dissertation began by exploring Charles Olson's question "Who can say who are citizens," and ends with Myung Mi Kim revising that position into an exploration of how we (are allowed to) speak as citizens. Kim's poems, working in-translation and through trans-cription, model the way a "banter English gather carriers" as part of an argument for a projective citizenship founded on peoples' mutual but different interest in a shared, if at times dissonant or discrepant, status within a given territory, a status informed by local and global encounters through language. This conception of a language practice that involves the encounter between different languages or different understandings of the 'same' language critiques Olson's faith in language's ability to directly communicate its politics, as most optimistically expressed in his universalist letter to LeRoi Jones.

At root, Kim's project shares with Olson's own projective citizenship the urgent desire to motivate the specific material experiences of individuals within a cosmographic context rather than just within the local; both poets imagine a necessity for a global connection rather than a division into discrete states or nationalities. In contrast to Olson, though, Kim acknowledges that governmental and institutional forces affect how we speak as citizens, when we are allowed to speak, and what we can say. She explores hesitancy and silences: the erasure or failure of language. Where she most significantly revises Olson's own alternative citizenship, then, is in her concern for the social contexts that create and delimit individual experience. Olson insists on the primacy

of *'istorin* and environs, one's *own* exploration of past and of local space read on a world scale; his work risks mobilizing a Romanticized self, not so far removed from Whitman's, primarily able to create community through the force of personality and at the expense of ethnic, class, or gender differences. Kim, by contrast, links idiosyncratic individual experiences to group histories as she shows, through an investigation of language, that individual experiences like those of Edward Lee and his mother are part of wider communal experiences. To recognize this allows us to interrogate the social dimensions of language, to ask "what would identify the speakers of the idiom" (2002, 15)? Can we read and write English? The answer lies, for Kim, in-translation, in negotiating with others the way sound combinations form shared and contested meanings.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See Isin, 2005, 377, for an argument that, given concepts such as the Greek *chora*, "the city" should not be seen as too rigorously distinct from "the countryside" within Greek or Roman thought.

<sup>2</sup> The banishment of the poets from the Republic is a much-discussed topic, for obvious reasons. Mei (2007) and Partee (1970) offer useful analyses of the key issues; Yoshino's law-and-literature approach somewhat reconciles the poets to the state (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Isin's remarks are taken from "Engaging Being Political," a response to an "Author Meets Critics" panel. While Isin complimented the critics for attending perceptively to his work, he argued they failed to address the place of poetry and poetics within citizenship as he had outlined it. Isin's lament that theorists ignore poetry and poetics most directly relates to this specific context but his claim resonates well beyond it. Citizenship Studies is somewhat belated in its attention to poetry, as a search of the archives of journals like *Citizenship Studies* quickly reveals. Isin's *Being Political* is a notable exception, attending to an international, trans-historical set of (male) poets; he does not, however, engage with poetic form, a focus of my own analysis. Surprisingly, while Isin's recent co-edited volume of essays *Acts of Citizenship* includes several case studies analyzing how an artistic or historical act by a citizen—Antigone burying her brother, China's 'Tank Man' in Tiananmen Square—has transformed what is understood by citizenship, it does not discuss poetry anywhere.

<sup>4</sup> The same is not the case with fiction; I briefly discuss below monographs by Brook Thomas and Julie Lupton that broadly analyze citizenship and literature, and I discuss in my chapters other essays on citizenship and the novel. The references within this and the following paragraphs/footnotes are to critical studies that use citizenship (or purport to use it) as a key analytical term, as opposed to making incidental reference to it.

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<sup>5</sup> That said, Filreis' project is conceptually very different from this one: I attend more to the poetics through which poets engage citizenship, whereas he insightfully explores the historical conditions, as well as the rhetorical positions, of poets for whom citizenship was an issue.

<sup>6</sup> Vanderborg (1998, 2001) has written about Olson's phrase "who can say who are / citizens," but her focus is chiefly on what she calls "paratextual communities"; her 2001 study of post-1950 American avant-garde poetry does not offer a theory of citizenship. Similarly, Robert Tsai considers Langston Hughes' "melancholy citizenship" but without offering an analysis or definition of citizenship. Srila Nayak's reading of *The Waste Land* carefully situates Eliot's poem not only in debates about the modernist city, but also about the status of citizens and noncitizens, arguing that *The Waste Land* "approaches a state of 'universal otherness' in which citizen, foreigner, and *metic* are difficult to distinguish from one another" (244). Valuable as this reading is, particularly in recognizing a 20<sup>th</sup> century history of poetic considerations of citizenship, Nayak examines the citizen as an idea within a literary text rather than as part of an attempt to use poetry to reimagine political life. Adopting the opposite approach, Jeffrey C. Stewart's chapter "The New Negro as Citizen" considers the African American's exceptional status *vis-à-vis* citizenship and the relationship between this "outsider" status and literary production; as such, he explores how writers' citizen status affects their texts more than how texts might affect narratives of citizenship within the public sphere.

<sup>7</sup> Through reading works by U.S. and Cuban poets (Wallace Stevens, José Lezama Lima, Robert Duncan, and Severo Sarduy) Keenaghan argues that poetic disclosure, particularly through lyric, was a means of developing a "queer ethic of vulnerability" that could reveal "the fullness of citizens' otherwise censored interior lives" (27). Keenaghan argues that poetry has a role in resisting state definitions of the citizen: he opposes this "queer ethic" to contemporary Homeland Security slogans such as "Our Free Society Is Inherently Vulnerable" (13), seeking to find a virtue in poetic expressions of vulnerability. Similarly focussing on citizenship, Dale Smith (2011) has analysed post-1960s American poetry to show how "modalities of rhetorical intervention in poetry can enact gestures that allow new civic possibilities to persist" (3). His work most considers public/civic space in the work of Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, Denise Levertov, Lorenzo Thomas, and Ed Dorn, although he is also interested in "communicative situations" where poets can "voice their dissent and [...] perform their citizenship with the tools of their art" (5). David Herd has promisingly outlined the theoretical dimensions of poetic speech as an intervention in citizenship (2011) and the particulars of Olson's relationship to citizenship (2012). Kathy-Ann Tan is also at work on a project rooted in Isin's ideas, reading Canadian poet Dionne Brand's poetry via conceptions of social models of citizenship; nothing has yet been published from this project.

<sup>8</sup> Although this dissertation cannot cover the ways poets writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—Lily Mosini, Sarah Gambito, Daljit Nagra, John Agard, Craig Santos Perez, David Herd, and more—attend to citizenship, the debates and poetics I analyze in the following chapters reveal a sustained history of attempts by poets to re-imagine the citizen as a political category, attempts that continue in our own contemporary moment. The 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century poets whose works consider citizenship might fill another dissertation: Denise Levertov's early volumes (themselves part-influenced by Black Mountain poets) mine Anglo-Saxon texts and English landscape at the moment of claiming her new citizenship in America; Nazim Hikmet's modernist innovation in Turkey saw him stripped of his citizenship when soldiers took to reading his works; John Agard's "Remember the Ship" (1998) sees citizenship in terms of its historical, colonial and postcolonial journeys; Daljit Nagra rewrites Matthew Arnold's "On Dover Beach" in *Look We Have Coming to Dover* (2004), using a symbolic English site in order to record immigrant experiences of citizenship; Sarah Gambito's *Delivered* (2008) positions family dynamics at the centre of a citizenship complicated and made vibrant by migration; and David Herd's *All Just* documents the conditions of detention centers and the condition of detention itself. Attention might also be paid to the work of expatriate writers who became citizens of their new countries or visibly stopped short of so doing, writers like José Garcia Villa, T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Gertrude Stein, and more.

<sup>9</sup> Of the fourteen judges, ten voted for *Pisan Cantos*, two for *Paterson*, and one abstained; the fourteenth, Theodore Spencer, died before voting commenced, but was the original nominator of *Pisan Cantos*. William McGuire documents the events of the award in *Bollingen* and in *Poetry's Catbird Seat*; see also Leick (2001-2).

<sup>10</sup> Conrad Rushing (1987) examines the trial from a legal standpoint, concluding that it would have been unlikely for the prosecution to secure a conviction.

<sup>11</sup> Hillyer seems disturbed by those who swap national allegiances; he pauses to note that two of the judges (Auden and Eliot) were "native" to one country but now "citizens" of another and objects to Eliot's presence on the jury since "he gave up this country in favor of one he liked better" (11). Robert Corrigan has shown that Hillyer's attacks

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were motivated as much by Eliot and New Criticism as by Pound's poetry or radio broadcasts (1967); Karen Leick contends that neither Hillyer nor the *Saturday Review* would have been so motivated to mount an attack were it not for Eliot's presence on the jury (2001-2, 20). The theme of the problematic expatriate would surface time and again in letters from the public on the matter: for example, F. Leighton Peters described the judges as "a circle of coldblooded expatriates and men without countries" (Leick, 29). In the period, casting aspersions on citizenship was often a way to criticise someone's aesthetic stance.

<sup>12</sup> This formulation, spoken by Congressman James Patterson, in places plagiarises verbatim Hillyer's article. That fact indicates the extent to which the governmental judgement of the *Pisan Cantos*, and the eventual decision to suspend the Library of Congress's prize-awarding functions, relied on an anti-democratic principle: the interpretation of a single, far-from-objective critic, Robert Hillyer, as opposed to a group of fourteen writers who, although biased in their own ways, nonetheless had debated the merits of the *Pisan Cantos*.

<sup>13</sup> Hillyer's national terms are, on close inspection, somewhat hazy. At one point he refers to the jury as involving "a group of Americans and one expatriate," though both Auden and Eliot were expatriates. Hillyer, it seems, was uncertain as to what might constitute nationally-based citizenship—country of birth? country of election?—and in so doing unwittingly revealed a contemporary instability within American identity: who or what was an "American" citizen?

<sup>14</sup> The connection between the *Saturday Review*'s attack on Pound and the investigation of activities that were supposedly "un-American" did not go unnoticed: one reader, B.J. Armato of Brooklyn, New York, wrote to say that "Your articles on Ezra Pound and the Bollingen Fellows should make you the darling of the House Committee of Un-American Affairs. If ever a publication took over their technique of guilt by association and thorough smearing of reputations you are it" (Leick, 32). Armato was right: see footnote 12 above.

<sup>15</sup> For a history of the Pledge of Allegiance, see Yao and Copulsky: "from its birth in 1892 to 1954, the Pledge of Allegiance made no mention of 'God'" (2007, 122). Rydell explains the Pledge's origin at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair (1987, 46).

<sup>16</sup> The three-quarter-page advertisement on the opening page of the June 11 issue of *Saturday Review* (facing the contents) was for the publication of "The American Book of Common Prayer," an Oxford University Press critical history of the Prayer Book since 1549. The insistence of "American" claimed a hybrid Protestant-Catholic tradition for America and America for a Protestant-Catholic Christian tradition.

<sup>17</sup> Hillyer offered grudging praise for the lyric qualities of "Tudor indeed is gone and every rose" but saw no worth in the "tearful elegy" of the opening, "The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent shoulders" (11). If Tate and the other members of the jury might be accused of having been too insistent on aesthetic criteria, to the extent that they ignored entirely questions of bigotry—or so, at least, felt fellow judge Karl Shapiro, describing himself bitterly as "the Jew by the window"—Hillyer's anti-aesthetic position is the polar opposite: poetry cannot be of value where its politics are anathema to its readership. Hillyer effectively was arguing that poetry only mattered where its politics were sound; New Criticism, he felt, ignored politics entirely. One of the key flaws in Hillyer's position, a flaw made particularly visible by Filreis' discussion of the poetry wars of the 30s-50s, is that Hillyer himself could not separate aesthetics and politics: an anti-innovative stand meant that all radical poetries were suspect, even where their politics were not as obviously problematic as Pound's.

<sup>18</sup> It was chiefly by downplaying legal notions of citizenship and emphasising instead a set of "civic obligations" (apparent to Hillyer and his like-minded readers but never articulated) that Hillyer could object to *Pisan Cantos*. In the prefatory Editor's Note to "Treason's Strange Fruit," Hillyer separated his identity as poet from that of citizen. His essay was not written as a poet whose long poem, "The Death of Captain Nemo," "Knopf will publish [...] in August." Rather, "it is by my authority as a citizen that I protest. A scandalous thing has been done in the name of my Library of Congress!" (9). Citizen status protects Hillyer's protest against his fellow-citizen; he invokes that protection in order to remove Pound's claim to citizenship, on the grounds of Pound's poetry. His attack offers a telling instance of the way citizenship was constructed by the writing of citizens.

<sup>19</sup> I thus hesitate over Michael Thurston's claim that "The awarding of the Pulitzer Prize to Robert Lowell in 1947 and of the Bollingen Prize to Pound in 1949 signals a decisive depoliticizing of mainstream American literary institutions" (41). While such gestures do suggest a willingness on the part of the awarding committees to overlook affiliations to political parties and stances, they are part of a profoundly political debate over citizenship. In privileging aesthetics in their awarding of the prize to the *Cantos*, the judges were not being apolitical: they were



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entering into a long-standing debate about innovation that was already bound up with issues of national allegiance and citizenship.

<sup>20</sup> Coblenz's paranoia has been documented by Filreis (2008). As Charles Bernstein points out, the views of Coblenz and others that modernist poetry would lead to "secret police, concentration camps, and execution squads" would be subject to ridicule today were it not for the high social cost and damage to individuals' lives as a result of these conservative objections (2011, 63).

<sup>21</sup> The logic here view echoes Plato's acceptance of a certain kind of poetry: that which is already condoned by establishment, not that which is threatening, innovative, and transformative.

<sup>22</sup> *The Argus*' scare quotes around "poet" and "sanity," together with the tone of its article—Korn is "a short, tubby, heavy-breathing, retired real estate booster" overly willing to offer his own history as a poet—indicate that his line of sentimental verses was more likely to damage American reputations abroad than were MacLeish's modernist poems.

<sup>23</sup> Such a stance was advocated, for example, in John Ciardi's popular anthology, *Mid-Century American Poets* (1950).

<sup>24</sup> The hundredth anniversary of *Leaves of Grass* in 1955 was co-opted by political positions on the left, right, and in the center: the left claimed him for the working man, the center examined his philosophy in a "tempered" way, and the right rejected claims he was "the poet of democracy [...] the poet of the common man" (Filreis, 96). For a full account of the debates, see Filreis, 96-103.

<sup>25</sup> One avenue of analysis here, though not the methodology this dissertation follows, would be to apply Marxist critiques of form to poetics and politics, drawing on Anthony Easthope's *Poetry as Discourse*, which argues that "what makes poetry poetry is what makes poetry ideological" (22), and on Michael Davidson's readings of poets like George Oppen, Louis Zukofsky, and Charles Reznikoff as not just concerned with political messages but with offering formally political gestures (1997). While I am interested in the relationship between innovative form and the political gesture, I am not suggesting a direct correlation between formal experimentation and political change; rather, I am examining the ways a set of innovative poets have used form as part of an imagination of new political possibilities. I should note, though, that Davidson's arguments are persuasive, particularly where he traces a link between traditional poetic form and what he calls a post-war "politics of containment." Such a link between form and politics was evident in the poetic discourse of the immediate post-war period; for instance, Richard Wilbur wrote in *Mid-Century American Poets* that form was a way to say, "This is not the world, but a pattern imposed upon the world or found in it" (7).

<sup>26</sup> Civil citizenship primarily concerns individual rights, including property, freedom of speech, life, and so on; it emerged principally in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Political citizenship primarily concerns the right to elect and to be elected; Marshall connects it to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Social citizenship, bound together with the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, primarily concerns questions of welfare and social standing.

<sup>27</sup> Judith Shklar has identified "social standing," a category related to the ways citizens have regard for one another, as particular to American citizenship; she considers it alongside "nationality," "active participation," and "ideal republican citizenship" (3). Similarly, David Ricci has argued, "the United States is an association of citizens" (15). The idea of the "association" derives from what Ricci sees as an American adherence to classical models of citizenship in which "no one, unlike in a regime of strict nationalism, should automatically be excluded from membership in the community because of ethnic origin" (101). While these models of citizenship recognize its social dimension but still see it as rooted in legal, governmental, and nationalist bases, Isin and Nielsen's *Acts of Citizenship* attempts to foreground the actions of those in the "association."

<sup>28</sup> Decision-making as a basis for citizenship emerges from Aristotle's *Politics*, which most commentators take as their starting point for theories of citizen status. Aristotle distinguishes citizens from other inhabitants of the *polis* (principally women and slaves) according to responsibilities for government and therefore involvement in judgment: "he who has the power to take part in the deliberative or judicial administration of any state is said by us to be a citizen of that *polis*; and, speaking generally, a *polis* is a body of citizens sufficing for the purposes of life" (1275a-b, pp. 18-21, 1996).

<sup>29</sup> Spiro (2011) indicates the complicated link between modern citizenship and geography when he points out, "to the extent that territory no longer correlates with community, and to the extent that (as Charles Maier puts it) the sense of territory becomes 'plural and fugitive,' governance defined on a territorial basis may lose authority" (741). For Spiro, the solution is likely to be "an international law of citizenship"; my work in this dissertation suggests there are

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meaningful non-legal ways to express citizenship beyond the territorially-bound: Olson's non-localized epistolary polis; Kim's in-translation poetry, and even Howe's writing of American citizenship through early modern British politics.

<sup>30</sup> The Charles Olson Research Center holds this essay, dated 1956-7.

<sup>31</sup> In Chapter One I discuss James' deportation from the United States in 1953 as an example of both the attempt to achieve citizen status through a written act and the U.S. government's ability to adjudicate citizenship beyond an individual's self-expression.

<sup>32</sup> For defences of national citizenship, see David Miller (1995) and Gertrude Himmelfarb (2001).

<sup>33</sup> Finding an irresolvable contradiction in both the open, universal ideal of citizenship—the possibility that any individual might participate in a community of citizens—and the exclusive basis by which the nation determines who can be a citizen (often on ethnic grounds), Keith Faulks has gone so far as to argue that “citizenship must be uncoupled from both nation and state” (36). T.K. Oommen (1997) has argued for residency as the principal, but not sole, determinant for citizenship. Renato Rosaldo's argument for “cultural citizenship” (1999, 2003) suggests that legal, formal citizenship is only theoretically universal; in practice, various peoples grouped under the term “citizen” are treated without parity. For Rosaldo, “claims to citizenship are reinforced or subverted by cultural assumptions and practices.” Dawn Oliver and Derek Heater note that citizenship may be “a status invented by men for men” (1994, 40) and the source of gender inequalities. Judith Shklar has argued that, where there is not an acceptance of fellow citizens' social status as citizens, there exists a failure of citizenship: she notes how “black citizen-soldiers did not really achieve parity of status, and in the Second World War they again had to remind white Americans that they had heeded [Fredrick] Douglass's call, ‘Men of color—to arms!’” (53).

<sup>34</sup> I am mindful here of Wahneema Lubiano's perceptive formulation of nationalism as “the activation of a narrative of identity and interests” which “members of a social, political, cultural, ethnic, or ‘racial’ group tell themselves” (in Gaude, 156). Although there are crucial differences between nationalism and citizenship (see p. 19 and fn. 31 above), much of what Lubiano says here does apply to citizenship, particularly when taken in light of Isin's suggestion that narratives of citizenship, plural, are told to and about citizens as well as by them. Lubiano anticipates the move from nationalism to citizenship in aligning her conception of the “social identification” that is nationalism with the Weberian idea of a “community of memories” (157).

<sup>35</sup> Herein lies a key distinction between this dissertation and Dale Smith's *Poets Beyond the Barricades*: whereas he is concerned primarily with the actual cities within which poets lived and wrote (i.e. Gloucester, MA), I am concerned with poets' uses of city-space in order to reconceive citizen status (i.e. Gloucester as it is fictively present in *Maximus*).

<sup>36</sup> From an in-progress dissertation on early 20<sup>th</sup> century (self-)narratives of Indian American citizenship (2013).

<sup>37</sup> The variety of terms used by critics discussing such work has proliferated—innovative, non-traditional, avant-garde, experimental, and so on—with the same terms being differently used by different critics. Shockley offers a useful assessment of this issue in her introduction to *Renegade Poetics* (10-12). Following Harryette Mullen, she aligns the innovative with interrogative, explorative, and transformative poetry invested in social change; for Shockley, the innovative is different from the avant-garde, partly because it has less been associated with particular periods of poetry within the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but chiefly in that “[avant-garde] most usefully signifies people working in the context of a movement or a visible collectivity seeking [...] to shift the whole discussion around poetics away from current norms” (11). The avant-garde, while having potentially political aims, targets artistic spheres first. Shockley continues: “all avant-garde poetry is innovative (or aspires to be!) but not all innovative work is created within the context of an avant-garde” (11). Following from this, we might *choose* to read avant-garde work for its innovative rather than avant-garde aims: while Howe's poetry might be read as part of a feminist avant-garde (as Elizabeth Frost, among others, has done), for instance, and Olson's poetry is certainly part of a projectivist avant-garde, I am concerned in this dissertation with the ways their poetry is innovative, targeting alteration primarily beyond the artistic sphere through introducing the unprecedented.

<sup>38</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I prefer the term “projective verse tradition” or, more simply, “projective poetry” to the comparable “open field tradition,” though both are somewhat interchangeable. However, the former indicates the anticipation of response that I believe is basic to Olson's poetics and, especially, his quasi-epistolary poetry. The projective, like the projectile, is something thrown forward, towards the unknown.

<sup>39</sup> I discuss White's ideas more fully in Chapter Three.

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<sup>40</sup> For Balibar, contemporary citizenship is almost irresolvably trapped after the end of the national and before the beginning of the post-national. He shows that old models of national sovereignty no longer fully govern citizen-subjects, yet the “historical residue” of national allegiances still affects citizenship. The “unitary or federal *formal constitution*” that names citizenship can no longer work equitably, and a new model has yet to be devised that involves the people without homogenizing “the people.”

<sup>41</sup> Balibar identifies four worksites: justice, labor, borders, and language (translation). Justice as a worksite concerns how and in what ways the individual is a political subject able to become involved in judgement and to have “universal access to justice” even when opposing the state, a protection that would allow for the “community of citizens” to be of more value—more “advanced”—than the national community (2001, 174). This worksite relies, as Balibar makes clear, on a classical element of citizenship, Aristotle’s category of “the activity of judgement” which is “as essential a component of democratic citizenship as participation in decision making or in legislation” (173). We do not have to hold office or vote in order to be citizens, and these processes do not in and of themselves make us citizens; we must instead participate through judging and being judged but, following Hegel, in ways that do not lead to exclusion from citizenship when we are judged in certain ways by others (as criminal, as un-American; see also Carbadó, 2002). Balibar’s second worksite links “labour time” and “socially necessary” activity as a way to rethink what the “active” citizen might be active *in*; if the classical definition was military activity, this new worksite must consider intellectual activity and acts of caring among other forms of labor; it aims to connect “productive labour” to the “production of sociality” (175). Such a socialised labor conception of the citizen is linked to a third worksite, that of the democratization of borders, which has a transnational component: focusing on “the nomadic populations who are the source and target of the obsession with law and order” and identity, Balibar suggests that this worksite could renegotiate how and why border-crossing takes place. Balibar does not seek to abandon borders, “which would only give rise to the extension of a savage capitalism” and the commoditization of peoples. A fourth worksite identifies the romantic impossibility of a singled, shared, fixed language common to all citizens and suggests a need to consider, beyond “colinguism,” *translation* as a language spoken by citizens, or one that must be spoken by them in order to collectively practice politics and citizenship (177).

<sup>42</sup> When Balibar writes about “apartheid” in Europe, he justifies the allusion to South Africa as a means of recording the dismissal of certain citizens or would-be citizens within Europe. That term might be applied, too, to the United States in relation to its treatment of those designated or perceived non-white, from the Japanese Americans ‘relocated’ during the Second World War to the experience of African Americans generally, as well as more recent laws that cast suspicion on Hispanic Americans’ rights to reside and, by extension, to act as citizens. The aim in such application is, as Balibar makes clear, not to ignore the trauma and suffering of black South Africans, but to recognize comparable patterns in narratives of citizenship.

<sup>43</sup> My use of “dissensus” is largely informed by conversations with poet Benjamin Miller, who uses the term “informed dissensus” in pedagogical contexts. By dissensus, I hope to name an accepted absence of agreement, an antonym of consensus that is not a synonym for dissent. For a similar view in relation to ethics, see Lehrer (2001), who argues for “the reasonable of dissensus in some cases” (133). Another way to say the same thing might be to adapt Nathaniel Mackey’s term “discrepant engagement” from the sphere of poetics in order to express collective political practice and citizenship. Though nationalism, as an imagined community, involves a central, shared vision of the group, citizenship does not have to; it can be marked by the willingness to discrepantly engage, to have difference in common. Such an argument relates most directly, of course, to the Balibarian reconception of citizenship through worksites; citizenship as normed through bureaucratic measures still involves a shared vision, one authorized by government.

<sup>44</sup> Balibar’s theories of citizenship refer particularly to a European context, and the translation of these ideas into the post-1950s American space is not without difficulty, given that citizenship must remain a historicized concept. His title, *We the People of Europe*, already inflects his reading with an awareness that contemporary European citizenship faces issues linked to those debated within the American sphere; it is particularly the issue of federation as regards citizenship that makes his ideas applicable to an American context.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Thurston offers a useful account of what poetry might “make happen” (2001). See also Naylor, 1999.

<sup>46</sup> Siraganian reads breath, as Olson and Stein conceive it, as “invok[ing] a set of relations between objects and subjects that dramatizes political life” at a time when “the rise of the bureaucratic state, fascist and imperialist dynamism abroad, corporate culture” hindered “aesthetic and political autonomy” (9).

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<sup>47</sup> Keenaghan offers a reading of the state in light of Foucault's mischievous supposition that it might be a "mythicized abstraction"; he discusses Foucault's concept of "governmentality" in relation to the surveillance and control of a wider populace (2008, 637-641). Timothy Mitchell suggests that we read into the notorious difficulty of defining the state a "clue to [its] nature"; he argues that the state is a "structural effect," an "almost transcendental entity" (94). Such a notion, I would argue, operates especially in relation to citizenship; not incidentally, the border is Mitchell's example of the state's "structural effect." To make such a claim is not to see state or citizen status as abstractions; it is to make possible a reading of the scripts through which these determinate and defining forces are constructed and have their effects.

<sup>48</sup> The Second World War limited literary publication by Japanese Americans. Patti Duncan relates the paradigmatic story of Toshio Mori's book, *Yokohama, California*, due to be published in 1941 but which did not come out until 1950 because of deteriorating relations between "American" and "Japanese American" citizens during the war. As Duncan indicates, "from 1941 until well after 1945, any narrative or for that matter any act of public speech by a Japanese-American posed an unacceptable threat to the national fictions embodied and organized in established U.S. literary institutions" (94).

<sup>49</sup> For a complete discussion of Okubo's experience and an analysis of *Citizen 13660*, see Creef, 2004, 76-92.

<sup>50</sup> These remarks were made in a 1938 speech to the Jersey City Chamber of Commerce. Quoted in "Un-American Activities," *Life*, 26 March, 1945, p. 30.

<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of the Zenger case, and the extent to which it did not actually protect free speech nor set legal precedent in practice, see Warner, 1990, 49-48.

<sup>52</sup> In 1945, this committee gave rise to a Standing Committee, the infamous House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), which lasted from 1945 to 1975. As Carr has shown, HUAC and the McCarthy hearings were less about activities than persons; they sought "to threaten and harass those persons who have deviated in the slightest degree from the narrow confines of 'Americanism'" (1952, 456).

<sup>53</sup> That President Truman (who introduced a "Loyalty Program" for federal employees in 1947) vetoed this Bill before having that veto outvoted 278 to 122 in the House of Representatives indicates the divisions over the legislation and over American citizenship. James Aune offers a history of the Act, Truman's veto, and the Commission on Immigration and Naturalization; for his discussion of the vote against the veto, see p. 158. Cornell law professor Robert K. Carr argued, in a thorough 1952 study, that HUAC was related to the passage of Acts limiting citizenship: "The Un-American Activities Committee may justly claim a major share of the credit for the passage by Congress of the Internal Security Act of 1950" (451).

<sup>54</sup> I offer a fuller discussion of the Act in Chapter 1, pp. 40-49.

<sup>55</sup> Carr documents the first five years of HUAC following its inception as a standing committee in January 1945. The original debate over the establishment of the committee in 1938 did not vote on Representative Boileau's amendment to specify what were "subversive and un-American propaganda activities" (17) and the question of the "un-American" remained ever-unresolved, which led to members debating if radio script lines like "Put it in the Bible. Nobody looks in there" were "un-American" (25). Representative Rankin, in the committee's sole discussion of poetry, scorned a verse by suspected Communist Hanns Eisler on the grounds that "this filth [...] is out of the class of any American poet that has ever been recognized by the American people" (43); the German Eisler was conscripted into status as an American poet solely in order that he could be un-American!

<sup>56</sup> For a fuller consideration of governmental wariness of writers during the period, see Culleton and Leick, 2008.

<sup>57</sup> Richard C. Sinopoli discusses citizenship in connection with the U.S. Constitution (1992). For a further complication of citizenship in the United States, see Brook Thomas's argument that "the federal system of the United States generates potential conflicts between national and state citizenship, a relation that was transformed by the Fourteenth Amendment" (2007, 10).

<sup>58</sup> Quoted and discussed in Schachar and Hirschl, 2007, 264.

<sup>59</sup> <http://bulk.resource.org/courts.gov/c/US/320/320.US.118.2.html>, retrieved 3/18/12 16.23.

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<sup>60</sup> The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the major Supreme Court decisions of the 1960s and 1970s relating to citizenship suggest citizen status is determined by the judiciary rather than by the legislature alone, and that the individual's ability to appeal to the courts is one to alter citizenship; cf. Sassen, 2003, 49.

<sup>61</sup> Poetic discourse, of course, was not the only sphere to attend to the possibilities of engaging popular notions of citizen status. Anna McCarthy's *The Citizen Machine* (2010) uncovers attempts by the emerging television industry to mold approved kinds of citizenship, in part through developing a rhetoric that connected ways of viewing television to attitudes towards the citizen. As she notes, for American philosopher Mortimer Adler, television was a means to communicate "the ideas that should be in every citizen's mind" (27).

<sup>62</sup> Wai-chee Dimock's article on Kantian aesthetics and nationalism (2004) uses Hillyer's article, and the *Saturday Review's* response to Pound's *Cantos* more generally, to make an argument which concludes "the word *aesthetic* will always be a virtual synonym for the word *un-American*" (542).

<sup>63</sup> The distinction, as I explore in my first chapter, is vital to Olson, for whom the poem is a site of political activity to the extent that the poet is not constrained by governmental politics.

<sup>64</sup> The term "prospective," which Olson would later use as a subtitle to "Projective Verse," is here approvingly used of D.H. Lawrence, not for Pound, who is ultimately not projective even as he offers a means to get there.

<sup>65</sup> In "Grandpa, Goodbye," Olson's severing with Pound, he would continue to insist on Pound's value; writing two years later, he would have realised a backward-looking aspect that limited Pound's work, and which was clearly in tension with the "prospective" and projective: "[Pound's] work is a structure of mnemonics raised on a reed, nostalgia" (146).

<sup>66</sup> The effect of "Projective Verse" on the American (and British) poetic landscape, despite its relative obscurity when first published, is almost unsurpassed, though it has perhaps reached fewer classrooms than poetics essays like "Tradition and the Individual Talent." M.L. Rosenthal, writing in 1967, notes that "this piece has affected writers as far apart in every way as [William Carlos] Williams and the British poet and critic Donald Davie," recognising a transatlantic influence that also crosses aesthetic preferences, beyond the "cluster of poets usually associated with Olson—Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Denise Levertov, and Paul Blackburn, as well as a number of others" (142). More recently, Paul Lake calls the essay "the document that probably had the greatest influence of any single literary manifesto published in the post-war period"; its influence is signalled by its passing into unread status as "terms and phrases from the essay—'open form,' 'closed form,' 'composition by field'—continue to be repeated in essays and writing workshops" without being defined or interrogated (1991, 594). Readings that investigate projective verse tend to explore its formal and aesthetic properties, or to offer physiological and physiognomic interpretations, rather than to engage with citizenship (though some critics, including Catherine Stimpson, have responded to issues of community). Rachel Blau DuPlessis' "Manifests," which I discuss later, is an important exception in attending to the term "citizen."

<sup>67</sup> As I discuss in Chapter 1, the ear is a threshold through which the poet listens to himself, deep within his body, as well as outside himself, to others.

<sup>68</sup> That the essay emerged in letters to fellow writers such as Robert Creeley and Frances Boldereff suggests just how crucial the epistolary was to "Projective Verse."

<sup>69</sup> While each of these poets has individually been read alongside Olson, and some of them (Howe and Kim, for instance) have been read alongside each other, the four have not previously been grouped together.

<sup>70</sup> Thurston, among others, has linked the projective tradition to political ends, noting that "the programmatic open form promulgated in Black Mountain and Deep Image poetics bore political associations with Whitmanesque democracy" (216).

<sup>71</sup> For Jeremy Prynne, Olson's work must remain outside lyric because of its involvement in myth: "to be at home in that larger sense is not permitted to the lyric" (*Minutes*, 1999). Michael Golston (1997) identifies the mid-century division "between New Critical 'well-wrought urns' and Black Mountain process-oriented open-field poetics; between subject-centered, confessional poetry and what Charles Olson calls 'objectism'" (124). Olson did, as Golston recognizes, argue for "getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego," but with Brian Conniff (1988) I would argue that this does not mean we must read Olson's work entirely outside of lyric; we must instead move away

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from New Critical definitions of the lyric which, as I show in my chapter on Jones/Baraka, are actually distortions of the mode's communal ends.

<sup>72</sup> There is not the space here for a full discussion of lyric, especially in relation to narrative; I take up the issue in Chapter Two. For a consideration of the relationship between innovative (women's) poetry and lyric, see Kinnahan, 2005; for a sustained study of lyric within Olson's poetry see Conniff, 1988. Perloff (1999) offers a consideration of "lyric subject" in relation to "Language Poetry," although her conceptualization of what "lyric" involves is somewhat implicit. Keniston (2001) links lyric to "nonnarrative meditation" as well as to reconsiderations of temporality (296), offering a critique of the New Critical commonplace that lyric narrators are personae while seeing lyric as "constantly subject to incursions or threats from narrative" (fn. 4, 297).

<sup>73</sup> Brian Reed (2004) connects Howe's "word squares" to Kim's own use of the device.

<sup>74</sup> This formulation echoes Olson's depiction of the encounter between two bodies, writer and reader, through the privileged threshold space of the ear. Kim's conception of poetry asserts, like Olson's "Projective Verse," an improvisational and propositional poetics.

<sup>75</sup> Such activities include applications to legal courts, protests, and voting. Balibar's foregrounding of intellectual activity as a part of citizenship suggests that poetry might (need to) become a meaningful arena of citizenship, though he does not explicitly engage the work of poetry.

<sup>76</sup> For this reason, my dissertation does not primarily address poems "about" citizenship; such poems tend to document citizenship as it exists rather than imagine citizenship as it might (come to) be. My interest is in poems whose formal methodologies seek to offer, in the realm of *poesis*, new ways of conducting citizenship that might be of use in the realm of the political and/or might shape popular discourse over citizenship.

<sup>77</sup> *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways* has a complicated publishing history, as James indicated in an interview with Stuart Hall when he said "it was published just-about '52 [...] But Publishers don't publish it" (quoted in C.L.R. James, 2001, vii). The original edition (1953) was privately published, with all but 2,000 copies reclaimed by the printer for non-payment; future editions in 1978 and 1985 either omitted the final chapter, in which James asks that his book be read as a claim to U.S. citizenship, or omitted the section of that chapter where he made that claim (xii-xiii). James' own writings remain the essential documents on his politics, though Donald Pease's introduction to *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways* usefully summarizes the positions of the Forest-Johnson tendency (the group James formed with Raya Dunayevskaya and Grace Lee Boggs) as they differed from other Trotskyite organizations at the time (ix).

<sup>78</sup> That this faith in the power of writing was widely held within governmental organizations can be seen from the number of writers whom the Federal Bureau of Investigation and House Un-American Affairs Committee investigated, including Charles Olson, Langston Hughes, and LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka.

<sup>79</sup> Section 305, subsection (e) reads in its entirety: "Any alien who has been at any time within ten years next preceding the filing of his petition for naturalization, or is at the time of filing such petition, or has been at any time between such filing and the time of taking of the final oath of citizenship, a member of or affiliated with any Communist-front organization which is registered or required to be registered under section 7 of the Subversive Activities Control Act of 1950, shall be presumed to be a person not attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States and not well disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States, and unless he shall rebut such presumption he shall not be naturalized as a citizen of the United States: Provided, That the provisions of this section shall not apply to any person who shall be a member of or affiliated with any such Communist-front organization who shall, within three months from the date upon which such organization was so registered or so required to be registered, renounce, withdraw from, and utterly abandon such membership or affiliation, and who thereafter ceases entirely to be affiliated with such organization."

<sup>80</sup> The attitude towards writing exhibited by the INS officials who deported James closely tracks Plato's argument against writers and poets being citizens in the city-space in *The Republic*. In both cases, the writer is a transformative subservient, all too able to sway other citizens' beliefs and lead them astray.

<sup>81</sup> James explained that his lawyer had used the courts to appeal his rejection (in vain) by, firstly, arguing the inadmissibility of the McCarran-Woods Act to James' case and, secondly, showing that Trotskyite affiliations did not make James a Communist (and so did not contravene the McCarran-Woods Act, even had it been applicable).

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<sup>82</sup> James made explicit his link between these categories of citizenship, appealing to “the average American citizen” to consider the “theory of law” operating in the U.S.; he claimed that the various channels of legal appeal must exist “to declare to the alien, and to American citizens, and to the whole world that the United States took upon itself the responsibility of seeing that as far as possible he was treated as a potential citizen” (2001, 141).

<sup>83</sup> Cong. Rec., March 2, 1953, p. 1518. This quotation comes from one of Senator McCarran’s speeches in defence of the McCarran-Walter Act, more properly known as the Immigration and Nationality Act (1952). Although the two Acts should not be conflated, they did aim at similar targets and were received in comparable terms. It should be noted that the McCarran-Walter Act theoretically rescinded race-based discrimination over citizenship by ensuring that “the right of a person to become a naturalized citizen of the United States shall not be denied or abridged because of race.” However, see Takaki, 1987, 28ff for further discussion and for qualification; Reimers (1985) explores the complex racial politics motivating the Act, exposing the ways an apparent advance masked practical restriction on would-be American citizens from Asia.

<sup>84</sup> Both Acts limited the immigration of aliens and further controlled deportation; Graham (1962), in arguing for an “ameliorative” aspect in the Act (“suspension of deportation for certain deserving aliens,” 352) suggests how much of the Act was not a positive development as far as non-citizens’ rights were concerned.

<sup>85</sup> Contemporary academics felt *Call Me Ishmael* was “an intervention, generally unwelcome, against the normative approaches to American Studies” (Ziegler, 2007, 54); they entirely ignored *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*, for reasons that were only partly related to its limited distribution and the circumstances of its composition.

<sup>86</sup> Olson wrote to Creeley: “there is no ‘history’ [...] this is (we are) merely, the *second time* (that’s as much history as I’ll permit in, which ain’t history at all)” (69); *istorin*, therefore, is no synonym for “history” but an act by the individual. See Colby for a full analysis of Olson’s understanding of history (2009).

<sup>87</sup> Rosemarie Waldrop explores the metonymic dimensions of Olson’s poetics, which she shows reject similarity and symbolism to “emphasize the other basic kinds of relation, relation by contiguity, i.e., all the forms of metonymy”; she sees these operating particularly in his “Figure of Outward” and “his skin in touch with the environment” (1977, 474). I would suggest, though, following Kenneth Burke (1969) and Wai Chee Dimock (2004, 60ff) that metonymy functions extensively more than contiguously: Olson’s figure of the “initial,” which both Waldrop and Watten discuss, projects towards an open totality, the boundaries of which cannot be anticipated from the constituent part. Olson read about “the metonymic poem” with some interest and puzzlement in the mid-1960s, as a letter to Mac Hammond reveals (2000, 307); his understanding of the metonymic, I would argue, offers an important revision to Burke’s notion of “reduction” as well as Jakobson’s ideas of contiguity. Traditionally, theorists such as Kenneth Burke, Hayden White, and Jacques Lacan have linked metonymy to synecdoche but Olson’s poetics suggests a departure from this part-whole relationship: metonymy functions in unanticipated ways, a fuller consideration of which I hope to offer in an article.

<sup>88</sup> Olson was able, seemingly without sensing a contradiction, to write against the objectification of Jewish bodies by Nazis—the turning of the human body into “so much fat for soap”—and at the same time to argue for an “objectism” rooted in the physiognomy of the human body. The tension perhaps accounts for the main shortfall in Olson’s renewal of social force: man does not control his own physiognomy, however much we feel he should.

<sup>89</sup> I follow Don Byrd in referring to the work published as *The Maximus Poems* (1983) using Olson’s title, *Maximus*, in part because it leaves open that work’s relationship to letters as well as to poetry.

<sup>90</sup> Masumi Izumi discusses the Internal Security Act in terms of its nickname, the “concentration camp law” (2005). John Howard offers an account of the differences between each of the 10 “relocation centers” and their structures of “racial hierarchies, sexual normalcy and deviancy, and gender categorization” (1990, 10). Greg Robinson considers the legacy of the camps and the transnational as well as inter-American dimensions of internment (2009).

<sup>91</sup> Prior to the Internal Security Act, petitioners were merely asked whether they would be willing to bear arms; they were not required to swear to do so. Cf. Hudson (1951).

<sup>92</sup> Edward Brunner’s *Cold War Poetry* examines “the domestic verse of the 1950s”; he argues the period developed “a new discursive formation, one which rearticulates the position of the responsible citizen” (xiv). Brunner does not, though, discuss who counts as a citizen within the old or new discursive formation; my own work in this dissertation draws on Olson’s writings and the literature of citizenship studies in seeing “the citizen” as a category wielded across power dynamics and thus in need of (re)definition.

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<sup>93</sup> James Ziegler offers a detailed account of Olson's relationship to American Studies; Olson claimed to have been the first student admitted to Harvard's pioneering Ph.D. program (2007, 55).

<sup>94</sup> Stephen Fredman situates Olson in relation to American Transcendentalism (1993); R. Bruce Elder reads Stan Brakhage's films in light of Olson's poetics (1998). Numerous articles have attended to Olson's American dimensions, including Jaussen (2010) and Ziegler (2007). David Herd (2010) offers a sensitive critique of Olson's understanding of the American with an international arena. For a recent, succinct account of monographs on Olson, see Nichols, 2010, 22-23.

<sup>95</sup> Daniel Belgrad offers a thorough account of the Office of War Information in *The Culture of Spontaneity*. Particularly relevant to Olson's deepening distrust of the misuse of language by advertisers is an incident involving future Black Mountain College faculty member, the social realist painter Ben Shahn, which led to Olson's transfer to the Office of Inter-American Affairs. Belgrad reports that "Price Gilbert accused Shahn of lowering public morale with his evocations of the grimness of war" (23). Shahn responded by parodying Gilbert's work: with Francis Brennan he adapted one of his own posters, depicting soldiers with bayonets, by substituting bottles of Coca-Cola for the bayonets. Shahn and Brennan's caption—"The War that Refreshes. Try all 4 Delicious Freedoms"—was an obvious accusation levelled at Price's role as Vice President of Advertising for Coca-Cola. The fault-line between writers and artists on the one hand and advertisers on the other is visible in Francis Brennan's comment to Elmer Davis that "ad techniques have done more towards dimming perception, suspending critical values, and spreading the sticky syrup of complacency over the people than any other factor" (24). Tom Clark, Susan Vanderborg, and James Ziegler all discuss Olson's time at the Foreign Language Information Services and the Office of War Information in some detail.

<sup>96</sup> Olson also announced his departure from politics in a letter to Ruth Benedict, 12 Jan., 1945 (2000, 57).

<sup>97</sup> Olson continued to believe in the political properties of poetry up to his death. Charles Boer's quasi-epistolary memoir of Olson's last months, *Charles Olson in Connecticut* (1975), addresses the dead Olson intimately, remembering: "though critical of Pound's politics, your conversations on poetry often emphasized the need for poets to be political. Dryden was more important than Pope, you said, because he was close to the throne" (87).

<sup>98</sup> The concept of "third space" does not originate with Lee; he acknowledges a debt to Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*; an interview with Homi K. Bhabha titled "The Third Space" (in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford); Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg's "Between and Among the Boundaries of Culture: Bridging Text and Lived Experience in the Third Timespace"; Edward Soja's *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*; and Minh-ha Trinh's *When the Moon Waxes Red*. Alice Fulton discusses the application of "third space" to feminist poetics in an interview with Cristanne Miller (1997). For Fulton, "third space" gestures to a point between polarity and duality, much like the reading of Olson that DuPlessis stages in "Manifests" and *Blue Studios* (discussed later in this chapter, pp. 59-60).

<sup>99</sup> Although cultural scripts are not only written, the text Olson produced at FLIS provides an immediate example of how such hegemonies are expressed to and required of citizens.

<sup>100</sup> Lee's conception of citizenship connects "citizenship-as-script" to "citizenship-as-technology," which resonates with the ways "Projective Verse" and *Call Me Ishmael* examine the enabling and restrictive potential of machines. In "Projective Verse," Olson reasons that we have "suffered" from "manuscript, press" and yet the machine has led to "one gain not yet sufficiently observed or used, but which leads differently on towards projective verse and its consequences" (1997b, 245); this gain is the typewriter's ability to "indicate exactly the breath" and so connect the writing body to the reading body. Likewise, in *Call Me Ishmael* he expresses a conflicted awareness of the ways machines separate Americans from space while also allowing them a relationship to it: Americans' "triumphs are of the machine. It is the only master of space the average person ever knows, ox-wheel to piston, muscle to jet. It gives trajectory" (17).

<sup>101</sup> Susan Vanderborg has noted that Maximus's address to Gloucester as city-state conflates island and mainland (2001, 27)—as if, I would argue, to metonymically project his address beyond its immediate geography and speak to citizens more widely, albeit on the model of Gloucester.

<sup>102</sup> Bruns (2002) glosses poetry as "a condition of election and a mode of responsibility" (1); he understands that community, in Jean Luc Nancy's terms, as one that "resists collectivity itself as much as it resists the individual" (3). Bruns concludes, in an essay that moves from Hesiod (one of Olson's key figures), via Black Mountain College, to the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets, "what poetry produces is not a totality or a unitary community but a series or



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tradition of communities whose sociality, if I have it right, is theatrical and performative rather than civil, economic, or even ideological” (28).

<sup>103</sup> For Perloff (1973), this relationship goes so far as to be entirely derivative. For Hatlen, there is a more subtle conversation to be had as regards Pound’s influence on Olson’s poetics and Olson’s revisions to Pound’s poetics (2000).

<sup>104</sup> For a full discussion of the encounter between Pound and Olson, see Catherine Seelye’s *An Encounter at St. Elizabeths*.

<sup>105</sup> I here extend Andrew Mossin’s argument that “‘Projective Verse’ was a call to the citizens of the Republic of Poetry (whoever might imagine themselves thus)” by suggesting that Olson’s citizens were not only writers and artists (21).

<sup>106</sup> The term “nation” is Olson’s, as in the phrase “nations of nothing but poetry”; given Olson’s qualification of America in his letter to Dorn, in *Call Me Ishmael*, and in his poetry, we might think of its sense as somewhere beyond the national (though not yet post-national). DuPlessis’ phrase allows as much: what might citizenship in a nation mean if the organizing principle is artistic not geographic or ethnic?

<sup>107</sup> The footnote occurs in DuPlessis’ essay version, “Manifests,” from a 1996 *Diacritics* issue on “Poetry, Community, Movement.”

<sup>108</sup> Susan Vanderborg points out that “Many would-be participants, moreover, registered their sense of exclusion from Olson’s polis; a number of women writers, for instance, found it difficult to gain recognition for their work or even to stay in Olson’s seminars at Black Mountain” (2001, 382). DuPlessis’ position recognizes this barrier while finding a way to transform it.

<sup>109</sup> For Olson’s work at the Security Council see Butterick, *A Guide to the Maximus Poems*, lxii, and Clark, 112. For a discussion of the drafting of the Declaration of Human Rights, see Johannes Morsink, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Origins, Drafting, and Intent* (1999).

<sup>110</sup> Engin Isin, among others, has noted, “the city is a crucial condition of citizenship in the sense that being a citizen is inextricably associated with being of the city” (2002, 283). See also Sassen (2002).

<sup>111</sup> Olson directly references the exclusion of poets from citizenship in his essay “Melville, Dostoevsky, Lawrence, Pound,” where he suggests that “Lawrence would never find it necessary, as Plato did, to exclude Homer as a danger to the state” (1997b, 136-7). More caustically, Plato gets described in “Human Universe” as “treacherous to all ants,” a thinker in whom “my contemporaries die, or drown the best of themselves” (157). As an idealist, Plato is the antithesis of the instant and the act, Olson’s watchwords.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Shklar: “Citizenship as nationality is the legal recognition, both domestic and international, that a person is a member, native-born or naturalized, of a state” (1991, 4).

<sup>113</sup> Olson’s “Reading at Berkeley” is littered with references to the world of poetry as a quasi-governmental sphere: Olson begins by saying that “It feels like a convention hall” (1978, 97) and later jokes that “nobody is caucusing for me, thank god, except Robert Duncan” (145). Such terminology is an attempt to claim a status within political life for poetry without turning it into the political realm, hence Olson’s semi-ironic tone.

<sup>114</sup> Letter to Elaine Feinstein, May, 1959 (in 1997b, 252). That Olson expected others to share his lack of inhibition informs many of his exchanges, not least an office feud with his colleague Lew Frank. In his “Reading at Berkeley,” Olson publicly recounted how Frank “was a secret—I mean, it wasn’t a secret to me: I wouldn’t speak to him for one year across a desk in Washington, sharing the same two secretaries, because I said to him, ‘Until you acknowledge that you’re a member of the Communist Party—’” (1978, 110-11). For Olson, the act of conversation could not begin until all involved were prepared to make public their positions; Olson was not trying to test Frank’s loyalty to America or police his political views but to start a discussion. Yet Olson’s actions here seem less conducive to polis than to smack of dangerous bullying: The Dies Committee was investigating Communist activity within the United States, particularly within government, and Frank did not share Olson’s luxury of free expression.

<sup>115</sup> A sense of how seriously Olson took letter writing can be gleaned from his scathing criticism of the Melville scholars who had ignored or panned *Call Me Ishmael* and who were gathering at Williams College for a centennial event: Olson’s poem, “Letter for Melville 1951,” was subtitled “written to be read AWAY FROM the Melville

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Society's 'One Hundredth Birthday Party' for MOBY-DICK." Olson wrote himself, via a letter-poem, into a community with Melville while writing other Melville scholars out of that community, the addressees of the poem yet not part of its polis.

<sup>116</sup> Rifkin, discussing *Black Mountain Review* and *Origin*, contends "Olson and Creeley's 'polis'—expanded, publicized, granted a small operating budget—appeared to function most ideally on the epistolary page where it began" (58). Where Rifkin explores the self-construction of career and poetics within such letters, my argument here suggests that letters themselves functioned to shape polis through their sending as well as their contents: the act of writing at times mattered more than the content of the letters.

<sup>117</sup> Steve McCaffery offers an excellent discussion of *proprioception* (and breath) at the start of his chapter on "the Mayan Substratum of Projective Verse" (2001, 45ff).

<sup>118</sup> Nichols perceptively links this epistolary form to "the loss of metaphysical certitude and clear social identity" in the face of the world's visible heterogeneity post-1945, a loss that meant "the poet cannot tell the tale of the tribe" (2010, 21). Olson, feeling that Pound's ideological failure stemmed from his provincialism (despite his mining of global cultures), sought to find common ground in ways other than the tribal; his redefinition of the citizen moves from tribalism towards shared *acts*.

<sup>119</sup> Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter" provides the classic case of the medium of the letter signifying even without its content being made known; *The Purloined Poe* contains the famous debate between Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan, as well as other important readings of epistolarity within Poe's text. Esther Milne's *Letters, Postcards, Email: Technologies of Presence* surveys epistolarity from the history of the British postal service to Twitter's "one to many" microblogging format. In arguing that epistolary forms use the body "to signify a presence that exists outside, or is in excess of, the realm of the physical encounter," which Milne, following Derrida, terms "presence" (90), she shows that the letter involves a complex interplay between the production and concealment of the body in which the materiality of the postal system plays a key role. Olson's sense of that materiality was informed by his work as a letter-carrier; his awareness of the epistolary production of the body is innovative in that his work suggests the body is not merely invoked by rhetorical, self-conscious references to the writer's body and her environment at the time of writing (a key trope of epistolarity, Milne shows) but through the projective act of writing itself, the way the syllable records and expresses the body. Olson's epistolarity tests the limits of seeing letter-writing in terms of embodiment and "incorporeal subjectivity" (190); it tries to express an "objectist" corporality, to produce the body on the page (cf. McCaffery, 47-8).

<sup>120</sup> Ann Keniston identifies an under-theorized relationship between the letter and the lyric poem; reasoning that both consider questions of addressee, she finds in Lucie Brock-Broido's poetic interpretations of Emily Dickinson's letters a similarity between "letter addressee and poetry reader" in that "both are, in the end, impossible to define or locate" (2001, 316). Joel Fineman's often-cited essay "Shakespeare's Will: The Temporality of Rape" is the most sustained reading of the form of the letter in poetry. Janet Altman's *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*, which focuses on the epistolary novel, explores "the use of the letter's formal properties to create meaning" (1982, 4). More recently, Lloyd Pratt's *Archives of American Time* considers "the future-oriented simultaneity of the letter" in relation to the "synchronic simultaneity implied in the letter form" (2010, 19).

<sup>121</sup> Gladys Hindmarch took advantage of a break in Olson's "Reading at Berkeley" to "tell [him] that they say they're going to close the building at twelve o'clock, and that's it. It's twenty to twelve." Olson promised to "close only with the witching hour. Midnight is good enough; that's a good reason" but still felt "That rushes us a little" (1978, 148). Letters, by contrast, offered Olson an on-going conversation: there was always another letter he could write, another recipient to send it to. No monologue was intended by this; having gotten behind on his correspondence to Corman, Olson still implored, "Please write—& I shall" (1970, 73).

<sup>122</sup> Olson's sense of the epistolary echoes Milne's argument that "[epistolary] privacy is not as inviolate as contemporary critics assume. In late-eighteenth- and nineteenth century Britain, for example, letter-writers were often keenly aware that their letters could be circulated to a wider audience, often without their knowledge or approval" (191).

<sup>123</sup> In the second and third books of the *Maximus*, Olson focuses on the figures of Enyalion and Tyr, describing "when Tyr / put his hand / in Fenris / mouth" and "your own living hand amputated" (III.29, III.47). These poems explore the relationship between the hand and the individual, the mythology of the hand that might be sacrificed for a

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community: Tyr's actions save the Æsir from the giants. For Olson, the hand figures as the means of writing and therefore as a metonym for the polis, especially given its link to the ideas of will.

<sup>124</sup> For Olson, Black Mountain was the idealized site of interchange allowing for “workers in different fields of the arts [...] working so closely together some time of the year that they find out, from each other, the ideas, forms, energies, and the whole series of kinetics and emotions now opening up” (“Letter to W. H. Ferry,” 1974, 11). While in that letter, written in 1951, he valued the “small place,” the “experimental locus” at Black Mountain, he had already begun writing towards a version of “working so closely together” that was not site-specific.

<sup>125</sup> Kyle Schlesinger discusses *Black Mountain Review*, particularly in relation to typography (2006). For a fuller survey, see Kevin Power's essay (in Katz, 2003). Duberman (1972) offers a brief contextualization of the *Review*; Mary Emma Harris (2002) offers a good survey of the College.

<sup>126</sup> Olson's theory of poetry is complex to the point of being tangled, and needs fuller elaboration than there is room for here; while it is clearly anti-symbolist, contiguous, and suspicious of inherited forms, such terms only partially describe what is specific to poetry as opposed to, for example, the projective letter. In a late interview with the BBC, Olson termed poetry both “the problem” and “the exciting thing,” noting that its special quality was “you can get image and narrative both to wed each other again, so that you can get both extension and intensivity bound together (1978, 80). Like his sense of the bridge between the local and the universal, and like the reaching down inside the person to communicate outwards to others elaborated in “Projective Verse,” “extension and intensivity” suggests a near paradox that is actually a generative tension. That tension, though, could collapse into uncertainty: a few minutes later, he tried to explain: “I think this is a poem, but it isn't...it's a poem in the old—no, that won't do either. It isn't a question of a poem in the old sense. It's a poem, well, which is based on uninterrupted statements, I mean the syntax” (81). Byrd (1980) and Fredman (1993) offer excellent accounts of Olson's poetics, although a fuller tracing of Olson's understanding of poetry remains to be written.

<sup>127</sup> “I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You,” is announced explicitly as a letter when the following poem, “Letter 2,” implies that we are already in a series; that title allows us to wonder where the original letter has gone and who it passed between: is “I, Maximus” necessarily the first letter? The title “Maximus, to Gloucester” precedes “Letter 2” in both the Jargon/Corinth *The Maximus Poems* (1960) and the later 1983 collected edition; the typography of “Letter 3,” written in small capitals like “Letter 2,” implies that it is from Maximus and written to Gloucester.

<sup>128</sup> Wrighton sees in Olson's typography an ethical “demand” on the reader, an “intensity of attention” which “inscribes an intersubjectivity of kinetic relations, an attention to the positioning of words and their relational aspects (both semantically and sonically)” (188). By ethical, we might understand what Tim Woods has termed “a fidelity to otherness through the constant displacement of representational systems that ‘capture’ the other” (2003, 8). While remaining cautious that a poetics can “demand” anything of a reader—indeed, part of Olson's point is that citizens, like readers, must actively participate rather than being “made” to do something—I concur with Wrighton that Olson “uses the page-space to perform the object's difference,” or, in the terms of this chapter, to interrupt the cultural script. Even if we disagree with the assertion that “we cannot separate language as a social material [...] from the wider politics of our social world” (190), we can see within Olson's writing a recognition that poetry is not separate from politics because poetics has always been present in the formation of citizenship narrative, in being political.

<sup>129</sup> In a letter of May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1950 to Vincent Ferrini, for example, Olson switches without signal into lineated lines, rather than sentences; that same day those lines became part of the poem “In Cold Hell, in Thicket,” as Maud notes (2000, 108-9). Another indication of Olson's fluid sense of poetry is his description of Melville as a poet, not on account of his verse but specifically “for *Moby-Dick*” (1997b, 112).

<sup>130</sup> Herbert A. Kenny, in conversation with Olson, proposed Cape Ann as a microcosm of America; Olson, laughing, retorts that it is “an image of creation and of human life for the rest of the species.” Gloucester represents the origin or outset of the new discourse (fourteen persons on a hillside) and its apotheosis “the final movement of the earth's people, the great migratory thing” (1978, 158). Alongside this depiction of Gloucester it is worth remembering Olson's point in *Call Me Ishmael* that “We know the literal space there is inside a microcosm, the nature of the motion hidden in any mass” (1997b, 117): microcosm is not a synecdoche but a field of force extending projectively outwards.

<sup>131</sup> “Letter 5,” then, must not be read in Rifkin's terms as “a willingness to exceed the limits of social and literary etiquette” which sees Olson “rejecting the long poem's first reader”; in chastising Ferrini, Olson is in fact performing

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what he saw as one of the duties of polis—necessary argument, which he also heatedly engaged in with Corman—and so binding Ferrini into the polis, interjecting rather than rejecting him (41-3).

<sup>132</sup> For Goodman, the “highest integrated art” is “Occasional Poetry—the poetry celebrating weddings, festivals, and so forth” (a notion he draws from Goethe) because “it gives the most real and detailed subject-matter, it is close in its effect on the audience, and it poses the enormous problem of being plausible to the actuality and yet creatively imagining something, finding something unlooked for” (376). Occasional poetry for Goodman differs from the popular usage of the term today as connected to such mass-market anthologies as the HarperCollins series edited by Daisy Goodwin, including *Essential Poems for the Way We Live Now*. For Goodman, occasional poetry is intimately linked to a particular community and so not easily transportable; its necessary work of imagination happens because that community can measure what is “plausible to the actuality” and *therefore* appreciate the “unlooked for.” Goodman allows that occasional poetry must foster disruption: the community needs to be able to “bear criticism and anxiety” (377). Today’s occasional poetry, by contrast, is designed to be separable from intimate community, its words transportable to anyone’s wedding; disruption, criticism, and anxiety are unacceptable to its operation.

<sup>133</sup> The second book of the *Maximus*, containing volumes IV-VI, opens with “Letter #41 [broken off]”; while not all of the poems in the first book of the *Maximus* are letters, there are forty poems, and the opening to the next three volumes suggests that Olson wanted to keep open the possibility of their being read as letters.

<sup>134</sup> James names the extent to which institutional strictures shaped *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways* when he writes “I had long contemplated a book on Melville [...] what form it might have taken had I written it according to my original plans I do not know”; he directly links the change in form to his alienation from citizen status in America (125). Donald Pease offers a perceptive reading of James’ use of the “future anterior tense” as a way that James “correlated a past event—the collective revolt that did not take place in the past [on the *Pequod*]—as dependent on a future event—the repeal of the McCarran bill—by which the crew’s revolt will have accomplished it” (2000, 19). James’ reading of *Moby-Dick* is a powerful commentary on the ability of the citizen to write social change even as the United States made him a non-citizen.

<sup>135</sup> In my following chapter on LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka’s attempt to re-articulate citizenship through lyric I explore the ways such subject positions limit citizens’ relationship to group identity, and examine Jones/Baraka’s attempt to reconfigure the speaker/addressee relationship.

<sup>136</sup> Etienne Balibar, in “Citizen Subject,” writes, “the citizen properly speaking is neither the individual *nor* the collective, just as he is *neither* an exclusively public being *nor* a private being. Nevertheless, these distinctions are present in the concept of the citizen [...] they are suspended, that is, irreducible to fixed institutional boundaries which would pose the citizen on one side and a *noncitizen* on the other.” (51) While Olson’s objectism offers a different philosophy than Balibar’s “Citizen Subject,” the latter’s conception of the paradox of the citizen—“unthinkable” as an “isolated’ individual” yet not able to be “merged into a ‘total’ collectivity” (52)—reveals a comparable set of tensions on which citizenship is founded and the grounds, the necessity, for its reversal: citizenship as at once constitutive, conformist, and revolutionary.

<sup>137</sup> The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1868) was a response to *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, which had (in part) excluded African Americans from citizenship; Section 1 is known variously as the Naturalization Clause or the Citizenship Clause. Source of text: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxiv/> (accessed 9.59am, 6/16/12). For an account of the *jus soli* principles of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, and a brief history of *Dred Scott*, see Glen, 2007, esp. pp. 70-71.

<sup>138</sup> I follow Isin in reading these categories not as separate from citizenship but essential to it. James is therefore not removed from citizenship though he is outside it; part of my project, like Isin’s, is to recognize that such “outside” and even non-citizen positions need to be included within discussions of citizenship.

<sup>139</sup> Dale Smith (2011) discusses the letters Olson wrote to the Gloucester Daily Times “that drew attention to styles of city management, land-use issues, and architectural restoration and preservation” (16). These letters show Olson in oratorical mode, instructing citizens rather than debating developments: “For \$25,000 I do not think anyone / should ever let the YMCA take down Solomon Davis’ / house, for any purpose of the YMCA” (29). For a reading of these letters and their relation to civic identity, see Smith, 22-47.

<sup>140</sup> Olson gratefully acknowledged Jones in his “Reading at Berkeley” and elsewhere as the publisher “alone” of such pieces as “Proprioception” and “Logography” “when no-one else would” (1978, 133); according to Boer, Jones was

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the only person on behalf of whom Olson ever signed a petition (1975, 43). For his part, Jones repeatedly referenced Olson's ideas, including in "Le Roi Jones Talking" (1966, 179ff); his claim that "There cannot be anything I must fit the poem into" ("How You Sound") draws, for example, on "Projective Verse." Baraka's appearance in *Polis Is This*, a 2009 documentary about Olson in which he read "The Hustings," suggests the continued importance of Olson to Baraka's conception of poetry.

<sup>141</sup> In a 1967 interview with Saul Gottlieb, Baraka described himself as "a racist in the sense that I believe in certain qualities that are readily observable on this planet that have to do with racial type and archetypes" (Reilly, 37); in response to being asked whether he felt "there's a genetic superiority of the black race over the white," he affirmed that "the black man was here on this planet first" (38, 37). Houen writes: "For Jones, building [...] nationalism had to be predicated on recognizing that African Americans were culturally different: 'Nations are races', he argued, and 'Race is feeling. Where the body, and the organs come in'" (63).

<sup>142</sup> In "Cuba Libre," published that year in the *Evergreen Review*, Jones/Baraka had criticized the U.S. as a place where "the young intellectual [...] inhabits an ugly void. He cannot use what is around him" (1966, 39).

<sup>143</sup> This poem was Olson's belated reply to a question posed by Frances Boldereff, Olson's early muse: "tell me about America—tell me how it is for you" (26 June 1948; SL xiii 6). In "The She Bear," Olson turns to the acts of people and their bodies as a way to achieve renewal, "a way / to breathe again, the process / not at all so complicated" (130). For Jones, the process was, in fact, complicated.

<sup>144</sup> A similar urge for and forceful belief in communication motivates an earlier version of "The Hustings," written on 10 November, the penultimate and antepenultimate stanzas of which ask of "the Poet": "what do you have to say // What do you have to say What do you have to say to Leroi / Jones to Robert Duncan to Frances Boldereff who wanted / 12 years ago to go to Russia" (1997a, 532).

<sup>145</sup> Claudia Moreno Pisano has edited the letters of Dorn and Baraka as part of a doctoral dissertation at City University of New York (2010). Baraka's *Ed Dorn and the Western World* (2008) explores Dorn's poetry and shows Baraka's continuing interest in his poetics.

<sup>146</sup> Having visited Cuba and seen there a model for politically-engaged art, Baraka returned to the United States wondering what "home" meant for him personally (not, it turned out, the Village) but also for African Americans as a group.

<sup>147</sup> "An Organization for Young Men" contained in Series II, Box 20, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Columbia University (visited April 8<sup>th</sup> 2012). Woodard quotes a chunk of this letter as an epigraph to one of his chapters (p. 69) but he omits the section mentioning citizenship.

<sup>148</sup> Rosa Parks formulated her act of not yielding her seat in terms of citizenship: "I would have to know once and for all what rights I had as a human being and a citizen" (quoted in Painter, 2006, 249).

<sup>149</sup> Jeffrey C. Stewart has traced the importance of and tensions within African American citizenship during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, wondering, "how could black people become citizens if black exclusion was the very ground of citizenship for others?" (13), a question Jones/Baraka wrestled with in *Blues People* and elsewhere.

<sup>150</sup> Baraka discusses his own transformation in *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones*. Several critics have detailed Jones' departure from the village, including William Harris (1985), Woodard, and Watts. For an account of Jones/Baraka's friendship with Village writers, see Epstein, 194ff.

<sup>151</sup> Harris, 1985, *passim*. Harris identifies this period as 1965-1974, after the death of Malcolm X. I follow Kimberley Benston in seeing the period as not strictly demarcated; works from before 1965 and after 1974 are clearly concerned with Black Nationalism, and works from within these dates show an interest in Communist-influenced writing. "Cultural nationalism" might also be questioned as not going far enough in naming Baraka's vision during this period: "like the Pan-Africanists he mentions, [Baraka] desires the actual establishment of a black owned-and-governed territory" (Henry Lacey, 1981, 124). Indeed, Harris adopts the phrase "Black Nationalist Period" to cover the same era in his *Reader*.

<sup>152</sup> Harry Elam (1996, 2001) explores the development of Jones/Baraka's theatre, noting how his plays attempted to challenge audience/actor positions through "constructing new relationships [...] a dynamic and immediate duality" (2001, 125). After one performance of *Slave Ship* "an aroused audience bolstered by the militant participatory action

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of the production stood at the end of the performance ready to riot” (1996, 13). For an account of the attempt to build Kawaida Towers, see Woodard, 219-254.

<sup>153</sup> Thus, Evie Shockley can write, in 2011, of “the predominant expectation for lyric poems to function as internally consistent, first-person utterances”; Shockley’s attention to polyvocality, derived through Gwendolyn Henderson’s idea that “speaking in tongues” characterizes black female utterance, has influenced my own analysis of Baraka’s shifting selves (17). See in particular Shockley’s readings of Harryette Mullen’s “lyric *Is*,” pp. 82-118.

<sup>154</sup> See Culler (1985 and 2008 especially) for a discussion of varying interpretations of the lyric within the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1985, Culler described the New Critical notion of “lyric as utterance” as “treat[ing] lyrics as dramatic monologues”; such a view led, he argued, to a contemporary understanding of lyric as “a fictional imitation of personal utterance” within which “the speaking voice” becomes nothing less than “a manifestation of consciousness” (99). My claim in this chapter is that Baraka attempts something radically different, turning the apparently personal utterance into a displacement of the individualistic self; however, his need for a Black Nationalism ultimately introduces a stable, authoritative “I” to his lyric mode.

<sup>155</sup> Vellino uses this sub-heading in her essay on Bronwen Wallace’s “talking lyric” (in Gabriel and Ilcan, 304). For a different understanding of the non-private lyric, see Susan Vanderborg’s chapter on Susan Howe’s “communal lyric,” which privileges the “individual voice” within the palimpsest as an indication that “subject positions have not yet become entirely arbitrary in avant-garde poetics” (2001, 100). For Vanderborg, such communal lyric emerges in part through shared marginalia which nonetheless preserve the traces of distinct annotators (121). As my subsequent chapter on Howe shows, there is a wide gap between the arbitrary subject position and the individual(ized) voice. Leslie Wheeler uses “communal lyric” in a different sense again, to designate poems that speak to/for a community, as in Margaret Holley’s readings of Marianne Moore’s “shared advocacy” (2002, 44).

<sup>156</sup> Jones quotes an extended passage from the journal of the actress Frances Anne Kemble as an indication of the refusal of membership of the human race by whites (1963, 36-38).

<sup>157</sup> Jones makes a similar point about the limitation of citizenship rights in pointing out that “the Jim Crow laws were the white South’s attempt to limit the new citizen’s presence and rights” (1963, 55). In this case, the legal extension of citizenship rights on a federal level led to further restrictions on a governmental level lower down the hierarchy—State by State. As Jones notes, the legal extension of citizenship rights to African Americans had the paradoxical effect of creating further obstacles to many individuals’ access to and experience of those rights.

<sup>158</sup> For Lubiano, this is one of Baraka’s key failings: “the limitation of a political imagery that tries to do the work of ‘creating’ the potential black revolutionary subject, but which cannot account for any possible middle-class black agency—including its own” (160). While there is reason to qualify this somewhat—Baraka time and again invokes his middle-class status in *A System of Dante’s Hell*, in the *Autobiography*, and in some of the poems—nevertheless Baraka’s poetics during his cultural nationalist phase relies on an opposition between the middle-class, which is individualistic, and the proletariat or the lumpenproletariat, where group identity might emerge.

<sup>159</sup> The two should not be seen as fundamentally opposed to each other’s poetics and politics: Davis included a small selection of Baraka’s poems in his anthology *The New Cavalcade* (1991), and wrote approvingly of how Baraka had used “Black Arts” not only first, but in “a positive sense” (7).

<sup>160</sup> Unpromisingly, Davis cited Allen Tate’s racist characterization of *Libretto*, which judged Tolson’s work almost solely by white standards, as evidence of the success of this new direction.

<sup>161</sup> One alternative to advocating citizenship can be found in Baraka’s 1999 introduction to a reissue of the text: Baraka’s mention of *Kimako’s Blues People*, the “arts and culture space” which, he points out, hosted not just local musicians but “poetry and political dialogue” (xii). Amina and Amiri Baraka’s creation of a space for both artistic production and intellectual engagement offers a model of community in which artistic work is part of the development of political life.

<sup>162</sup> Evie Shockley discusses a more recent debate over whether Blackness is synonymous with innovation, a position advanced by Harryette Mullen in an interview with Farah Griffin, and continued in a *Jubilat* forum on “African American Experimental Poetry.” Cf. Shockley, 2011, pp. 13, 84-85, and 202 especially.

<sup>163</sup> In *Making Something Happen*, Michael Thurston examines political poetry written in the 1920s and 1930s, arguing that in its “images and vocabularies” poetry “affords us new ways to make something happen” (221). While his

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analysis of the work of Edwin Rolfe, Muriel Rukeyser, Ezra Pound, and Langston Hughes offers an insightful account of the thematic and formal achievements of poetry within the political sphere, Jones/Baraka's poetry requires us to look more closely into who constitutes the "us" for whom "something" happens—and to work out what, exactly does happen, through poetry (and how!).

<sup>164</sup> Jones/Baraka is not alone in making this argument. Madhu Dubey's formulation of the "strategic separatism" of Black Nationalism invokes a binary goal, a choice as to "whether the ultimate goal be the establishment of a separate black nation or the achievement of full citizenship in the United States" (Payne and Barbera, 83). Other views suggest that citizenship might be a feature of the Black Nation, that the latter could not be attained without the former. Imari Abubakari Obadele, one of the conveners of the Republic of New Africa (1968) has recently compared Black citizenship to Navajo citizenship: "[we] are taught that We are United States citizens rather than being taught that We have a right to choose our citizenship" (in Joy James, 2007, 155). Hohle (2008) reads "the black nationalist political project," particularly regarding the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), as "defin[ing] a set of techniques of authentic black self as an alternative political practice for achieving racial equality" (182); for Hohle, citizenship, while important to the formulation of African American equality, ceased to be the end goal of Black Nationalism.

<sup>165</sup> Lytle Shaw explores the site-specific dimensions of Jones/Baraka's poetry alongside his institution-building in a chapter from *The Oxford Handbook of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*, "Fieldwork in New American Poetry: From Cosmology to Discourse" (2012, 530-559). Smith does not substantially discuss Jones/Baraka in his study of post-1960s poets' engagement with city-space and civic organization, but does offer readings of Lorenzo Thomas and Ed Dorn.

<sup>166</sup> In "Clout: What is It?" Baraka referred to Malcolm X as having said that "if we had to raise the cry of civil rights, i.e., democratic rights, then we must not be citizens in the first place" (1971, 71); he used almost the same formulation in "Black Liberation/Socialist Revolution": "[X] said that if we had to struggle for civil rights, which are merely the democratic rights of any citizen of a society, then we must not be citizens in the first place" (95). The desire to be a citizen again rubs up against the inherent racism of U.S. citizenship since slavery.

<sup>167</sup> Baraka's critique of protest can be understood in relation to Larry Neal's claim that "The Black Arts Movement eschews 'protest' literature" (1989, 62); for Neal, as for Baraka, protest involved "an appeal to white morality" rather than the development of a "Black aesthetic" (64).

<sup>168</sup> In addition to founding The Black Arts Theatre and School (1965), Spirit House (1966), and the Black Community Development and Defense Organization (1968), Baraka was instrumental to the coming together of the Congress of African Peoples (1970). He also was a central figure in the failed attempt to build Kawaida Towers, and played a key role in the election of the first black mayor in Newark, Kenneth Gibson. During his cultural nationalist phase, Baraka wrote, staged and/or published numerous plays, including *Experimental Death Unit #1* (1964), *Jello* (1965), *A Black Mass* (1965), *Great Goodness of Life* (1966), *Slave Ship* (1967), *Chant* (1968), *Home on the Range* (1968), *The Death of Malcolm X* (1969), and *Bloodrites* (1970).

<sup>169</sup> For example, for Charles Bernstein "the printed text of 'Afro-American Lyric' works to spur the (silent, atomized) reader *into* performance—it insists on action" (1998, 7-8). Yet the kind of action that results from 'Afro-American Lyric' is not the action the poem ends by calling for: the exclamatory "Only revolution / will set us free!" does not actually beget revolution; at best, it challenges a solitary reader into re-considering his involvement with change, his stake in the collective "us" that needs setting free.

<sup>170</sup> Hudson reprints part of the transcript of Jones' trial in "The Trial of LeRoi Jones" (in Benston, 1978, 49ff).

<sup>171</sup> *Hepcats Jive Talk Dictionary* (1945) included the entry "*Spook* (*n*), frightened negro"; the term was being used in novels by 1953, and had crossed to the U.K. by 1966, appearing in *The New Statesman* (Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>). *OED*, Spook. Accessed July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012, 21:07p.m.

<sup>172</sup> Writers like Pound, Cummings, Dante, and Ginsberg are all mentioned or quoted from in *The System of Dante's Hell*. Larry Neal wrote, "I don't think that it is inaccurate to say that, in terms of writers, Jones' closest associates were mostly white" (in Benston, 1978, 25).

<sup>173</sup> Reading lines from Robert Hayden's "Ballad of Nat Turner," Rowan Ricardo Phillips asks, "Does 'blackness' rhyme with 'blackness' here?" He concludes, "they are different. One blackness is spatial, it is wandered through. The other is a speaking subject" (11). His reading is both specific to Hayden's poem and illustrative of "the role of

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blackness in determining both seen and unseen outcomes of poetic encounter” (11). Building on it, we can re-examine Shaw’s “circuit” as well as *In Our Terribleness*: the kinds of (male) blackness suggested within Baraka’s book are not, in fact, synonymous but indicative of difference, hence the various versions of blackness the invited reader is asked to look at (and look like). The same does not, however, apply to the versions of black femininity with the work.

<sup>174</sup> Kimberley Benston (1978) offers a more positive view of Jones/Baraka as “representative man” (“Introduction”).

<sup>175</sup> Within *Blues People*, this phrase plays another way, too: whereas there had been a single, white idea of “the negro,” confined to one space, i.e. the South, now Negroes had pluralized, occupying many cities; this broke “social constraint within the group” and so made possible new versions of collective identity (97).

<sup>176</sup> Included in *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader* (2000) as part of *Black Magic*, “Citizen Cain” is omitted from the *Selected Poetry* (1979). That poem’s self-address—“Roi, finish this poem, someone’s about to need you”—implies a communal horizon for the writer, however disheartened; earlier in the poem Jones intones “I’ll go to jail and become a fag, write/ a huge treatise on religion, and never speak another/ English word” (211-2). The idea of the citizen is once again compromised, purporting to be meaningfully vengeful—Cain not Abel—yet also stuck in a white ideology of capitalism—Kane, unable.

<sup>177</sup> Hazel Carby identifies a gendered element to black constructions of citizenship: Jane Edna Hunter, author of the autobiography *A Nickel and a Prayer* (1940), felt that “Black female sexual behavior threatens to ‘tumble gutterward’ [...] the ‘headway which the Negro had made toward the state of good citizenship’ (*NP*, p. 126)” (1992, 745); within works by Claude McKay and Carl Van Vechten, “representations of urban black women are used as both the means by which male protagonists will achieve or will fail to achieve social mobility and as signs of various possible threats to the emergence of the wholesome black masculinity necessary for the establishment of an acceptable black male citizenship in the American social order” (747).

<sup>178</sup> In an interview with Kimberley Benston (1977), Baraka points out “the whole meaning of ‘impressive’: not only does it make you check it out but it affects you, it im-presses or *stamps* its image upon you” (Reilly, 115).

<sup>179</sup> Baraka used this term in “Literature and Reality,” a speech given at Old Dominion University (Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1984). The quote comes from his written notes, Series II, Box 10, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Columbia University (visited April 8<sup>th</sup> 2012).

<sup>180</sup> The formulation, Wittgenstein’s, was approvingly quoted by Baraka in “The Revolutionary Theatre” (1966, 238).

<sup>181</sup> HARYOU stood for Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited; Noel Cazenave offers a history of HARYOU in (2007, 105-136).

<sup>182</sup> In “The World is My Poem,” which opens, “Poetry is not the sole means of my expression / my life is such a broad thing” (1979, 177), Jones/Baraka writes “This warning is a writing of how far creation can be stretched / to include absolute evil.” In a sense, “Black Art” proffers a similar warning; the poetic statement complicates itself in the transfer between speaker and addressee. This complication offers Baraka’s most radical, if under-articulated, departure from Olson’s confidence as to the transferability of the poem.

<sup>183</sup> Arendt formulates this claim in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1986, 295-6). For useful discussions of her ideas in relation to contemporary dynamics of citizenship, see Benhabib, 2004, 49-70, and Balibar, 2004, 119ff. Schaap, 2011, explores Jacques Rancière’s critique of Arendt: Rancière argues for contest rather than human rights, finding the latter outside of the political.

<sup>184</sup> Baraka’s essay “Confessions of a Former Anti-Semite” was the cover page of the *Village Voice*, December 17, 1980; in it, he described anti-Semitism “as ugly an idea and as deadly as white racism” (1). Using this essay to critique Zionism while “repudiat[ing]” his anti-Semitism, Baraka charged American Jews with the same, dangerous upward mobility with which he had criticised “professional” blacks: “the movement among middle-class Jews to become straightup Americans” was, for Baraka a sign that Jews had “adopted the same backward ideas of American racism” (20). Even as Baraka admitted his anti-Semitism stemmed from having “constructed some metaphysical premises” (1) he continued to conjecture a version of Jewishness which was a foil for articulating Black identity, a form of exclusion akin to the “disheartening experience of native American citizenship” Baraka had set out in 1961 to address.

<sup>185</sup> Baraka, for instance, forged relationships with Italian-American trade unionist Bill Carlotti (Woodard, 235-6).



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<sup>186</sup> Charles Bernstein has pointed out that “the problems of group affiliation (the neolyric ‘we’) pose as much a problem for poetry as do assertions of the Individual Voice” (1998); poems can no more speak for a group, he points out, than they can speak for a single, authoritative, Author.

<sup>187</sup> As I discussed in my “Introduction,” Isin and Nielsen shift the terms of citizenship theory by focusing attention on the deed, rather than the doer. To do so allows them to avoid the chiasmic equation in which formal citizenship produces the conditions for substantive citizenship while “the latter is seen as the condition for the possibility of the former” (2).

<sup>188</sup> Dworkin reads Howe’s “politics of noise” precisely as static, glossed via Jacques Attali’s understanding of *bruit*; he sees the “‘noise’ in the channel of poetry” as a way for Howe to be “ex-static.” While White’s sense of static relates more to notions of stance and physical inertia than the technological crackle of an auditory static, the resonance is nevertheless productive, as if, via Dworkin’s reading of Howe, we might see her not only disrupting the static but converting the static to emergent use, just as she has done with the margins of books. Note, too, that Susan Barbour, in ways that anticipate Melanie White, identifies in Howe an “increasing consciousness of the book as a dynamic and intertextual phenomenon rather than a static artifact” (144).

<sup>189</sup> In 2003, Dworkin wrote “The bibliography on Howe is already extensive.” Howe criticism has proliferated in the last decade, including single author studies by Rachel Tzvia Back, Stephen Collis, and Will Montgomery as well as several monographs with in-depth chapters on Howe that situate her variously within spiritual-cosmological (Miriam Nichols), nonconformist-autobiographical (Kathy-Ann Tan), feminist avant-garde (Elisabeth Frost) or spatio-cultural (Elisabeth Joyce) traditions, to name just a few. For a fuller account of Howe criticism, see Montgomery, x ff.

<sup>190</sup> Barbour notes, “Howe herself has made a career out of recombining her texts”; mentioning her tendency of (re-)compiling works in new formats and editions, Barbour argues “Howe calls our attention, both through the content of her verse and the textual practices of her book, to the textuality, to the way she weaves together citation and found text as well as her own previously published material” (141). Howe’s practices of fragmentation operate within her own work as well as across materials found within the library; her subjects are often those engaged in similar practices of disembowelling and altering “source” texts, from James Clarence Mangan’s fake translations to Herman Melville’s marginal notes to the two competing ‘histories’ of the Dividing Line drawn on in *Secret History of the Dividing Line*.

<sup>191</sup> Encounters with unpredictability differ from what Daniel Belgrad, in his analysis of the writings of Charles Olson and William Carlos Williams and the art practices of abstract expressionism and bebop jazz, has called “spontaneous composition.” Belgrad shows how “spontaneous composition avoided the falsifications introduced by a conscious mind that internalized ideological structures” (29); creative acts, while they might be improvisational in the sense of *ad hoc*, need not be spontaneous in the sense of not-conscious. Howe’s works, I would argue, are at times improvisational in their composition—as when Howe uses cut-and-paste photocopying to generate texts (see fn. 194)—but, more importantly for this chapter, function through the encounter of dissonant texts and textual conventions; if Olson’s version of projective verse aimed to be fundamentally solidaristic, Howe’s works are agonistic (if not antagonistic).

<sup>192</sup> For a discussion of the way *The Liberties* maps the city of Dublin, see McHale, 2003, pp.233-5.

<sup>193</sup> Milton also criticized Charles as a plagiarism, offending against Sidney’s rights to his words as Author: “it was a trespass also more than usual against human right, which commands that every Author should have the property of his own work reserved to him after death as well as living” (364). Howe exposes the tension between Milton’s defense of copyright and his claim, in *Areopagitica*, to free pamphleteering for the populace.

<sup>194</sup> Perloff (1989) discusses collision and collusion in some depth, noting the etymological links and differences: “What a difference a phoneme makes! One’s *collision* with history may be accidental, an encounter of opposed ideas neither planned nor anticipated. One’s *collusion*, on the other hand, is by definition pre-meditated” (518).

<sup>195</sup> In an interview with Lynn Keller, Howe explains: “First I would type some lines. Then cut them apart. Paste one on top of another, move them around until they looked right. Then I’d xerox that version, getting several copies, and then cut and paste again until I had it right” (8).

<sup>196</sup> Michael Davidson has termed this the “palimtextual” quality of Howe’s poetics. He defines a palimtext as “not a final, ultimate version but an arrested moment in an ongoing process of signifying, scripting, and typing” (9).

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<sup>197</sup> For example, in canto XXXII, Pound notes “as you may / read dans les arrêts principaux du Conseil, decembre, soixante / six” (*Cantos*, 157). Fiona Green makes the argument that Howe’s sources are vital to reading her work, contending, “the work done in and by *Secret History of the Dividing Line* cannot be properly examined without reference to the textual materials from and in relation to which it was made” (84). She contrasts her stance to Peter Nicholls’ argument that “it is quite clear that, unlike a writer such as Pound, Howe has no desire to send us back to her sources” (596). Yet Nicholls himself points out, “when we do have [the sources] before us we gain a particular insight into Howe’s mode of composition” (596). My argument here aligns with this last position by suggesting that Howe makes visible the presence of sources in her work—“one senses here that these words come from elsewhere” (McHale, 211)—and thus explores how texts are composed of text from other sites. Whether we visit those other sites or not changes how we interact with Howe’s text, but we are neither required to nor discouraged from doing so; what we must do, however, is engage with the displacement of unitary authorship that results from fragmented compilation.

<sup>198</sup> Jenkins explores issues of the body, touch, and sexual alterity, via Luce Irigaray, within Howe’s work, particularly *The Nonconformist’s Memorial*. For Jenkins, “ethics as inescapable obligation arises when the Other remains other in and through poetic form” (165); he sees Howe’s “gaps and ambiguities” as part not of an opposition between women and patriarchy but of a subversive proximity to otherness.

<sup>199</sup> Perloff discusses Howe’s relationship to Yeats (and Robert Louis Stevenson) in *Unoriginal Genius*, Chapter Five, especially pp.112-114.

<sup>200</sup> These categories echo Pound’s distinction between *melopœia*, *phanopœia*, and *logopœia* (1978 [1931], 25).

<sup>201</sup> For a fuller reading of Howe’s textual borders, see Lazer’s argument about “textual frontiers” and the American tradition of “frontier writing” (1996, pp. 65-69 especially).

<sup>202</sup> Although this term can signify the cannon fire erupting from the side of a ship (the sense in which the term was used in Garrard and Hitchcock’s *Arte of Warre* [1591]), it was commonly attested during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as designating the side of the ship more generally. Cf. *OED*, *broadside*, *n.* accessed 11/16/11 09:50a.m. As a precursor to “broad sheet,” the term is first recorded in A. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* (1691). The metaphor of the page began as (in part) a naval reference, and Howe here also puns on the page as facing the reader, broadside to her. For an excellent reading of “the contemporary [postmodern] poet’s fascination with the dictionary,” see Davidson (1987, 204).

<sup>203</sup> Golding (2004) discusses Howe’s Irish roots and her mother’s history as an actress.

<sup>204</sup> Though Bruns (2009) does not develop his reading of Howe’s migratory, dislocating poetics, I owe a debt to his phrase “sound is transport” (40) and to his discussion of *The Midnight* in general.

<sup>205</sup> McHale offers a discussion of other critics who have similarly read Howe’s woods-as-text imagery.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Collis (2006), especially pp. 14-18.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Miriam Nichols, who writes that in the wake of Olson, “it remains for Susan Howe to work out a poetics that includes the problems as well as the liberations of a contemporary nomadology” (15). I would suggest that Olson’s own nomadology comes in the form of his epistolary writing, with which Nichols engages insightfully but which she does not quite link to his poetics of ground and action. Nichols’ discussion of Howe’s nomadology can be found pp. 226ff.

<sup>208</sup> Howe discusses the pastor Thomas Shepard’s written works in *The Birth-Mark* (1993a, pp. 45ff.), noting the norming by which neither of his editors “saw fit to point out the fact that Shepard left two manuscripts in one book [...] positioned so that to read one you must turn the other upside down” (60). Shepard’s textual inversion offers Howe a model for her own, and his last name temptingly suggests the “captive Shepherdess” who is so important to *A Bibliography*.

<sup>209</sup> Several critics have noted the tension between individual liberty and state power in Howe’s work; Keller, for instance, suggests, “Howe charts the general laws and systems (including, notably, those of language within patriarchy) which govern or restrain individuals” (196). Where “laws and systems,” including textual practices, “govern or restrain individuals,” we are necessarily discussing the conditions of citizenship, and if Howe seeks to

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make “her readers conscious that orderly systems are coercive,” she thus stages a debate about the citizen’s agency (196).

<sup>210</sup> *The Nonconformist’s Memorial* is the title of a 1775 text by Samuel Palmer subtitled “being an account of the lives, sufferings, and printed works, of the two thousand ministers ejected from the Church of England, chiefly by the Act of Uniformity, Aug. 24, 1666.” Palmer’s text abridged Edward Calamy’s 1702 *An Abridgment of Mr. Baxter’s History of His Life and Times. With an ACCOUNT of Many Others of These Worthy Ministers Who Were Ejected after the Restauration of King CHARLES the Second* (cf. Richey 1973-74; Seed 2005, 62, fn. 61). Howe’s choice of title for her 1993 compilation indicates her continuing preoccupation with the divisions surrounding Charles I’s regicide, Cromwell’s Parliament, and Charles II’s restoration, as well as with the ideas of Puritan dissidence and antinomian belief.

<sup>211</sup> One thinks of the doubleness by which reflection works in Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial, where viewers see themselves reflected amid the list of war dead; as animate, moving members of that reflected tableau, viewers become a part of the war scene, especially in the wake of the nearby Frank Gaylord statues in the Korean War Memorial: nineteen larger-than-life-size figures in motion towards an invisible enemy, across graveyards. For a fuller consideration of memorial, see Young (1993), especially his sensitive reading of Nathan Rapoport’s *Scroll of Fire* (1971), pp. 219ff; Young reveals the way monuments can become a “text to read and interpret [...] turn[ing] this memorial space into an open-air classroom” (223).

<sup>212</sup> The notion of the book itself becomes uncertain: are we engaging one book (*The Nonconformist’s Memorial*) with two sections (I. TURNING; II. CONVERSION) each divided into two subsections, or are we engaging a compendium comprising four separate books, among them the book *A Bibliography*, itself a rewriting of other books? Howe’s question here is less, What is a book? than, How does a book get (ab)used?

<sup>213</sup> This new orientation of text was a “new direction” for Howe since *A Bibliography* marks her first (and most sustained) use of this technique.

<sup>214</sup> Howe’s definition of the bibliographer, in the preface to *Eikon Basilike*, is of one engaged in the “systematic description or classification of writings or publications considered as material objects” (1993b, 58). Her own work abrades the systematic while engaging the materiality of the book-as-object.

<sup>215</sup> *A Bibliography* is in many ways a theatrical text, thematically if not generically. Howe notes that many of the most violently scattered pages in *A Bibliography* exist “in my head as theatre” (Keller, 1995, 13) and in both *A Bibliography* and elsewhere links her text, and Charles I’s execution, to the political genre of masque.

<sup>216</sup> cf. Montgomery, 32, for a linked discussion of pronouns in this section.

<sup>217</sup> Montgomery discusses the relationship between Foucault and *A Bibliography*, pp. 30ff, especially 39. By the time Howe first published *A Bibliography*, Barthes’ “The Death of the Author” was 21 years old, Foucault’s “What is an Author?” 20 years old. However, Ron Silliman had only just published *The New Sentence* two years previously, and Steve McCaffery’s *North of Intention* came out the year before that (1986); such texts were part of a reconsideration of Barthes and Foucault’s ideas by the “so-called Language poets” (a ‘group’ whose poetics Howe overlaps without neatly fitting into). Perloff (1999) contextualizes the questioning of the author for Language-oriented poets during the 1980s.

<sup>218</sup> Nelson and Daems (2006) discuss the history of *Eikon Basilike* and *Eikonoklastes*, noting that “the impact of *Eikon Basilike* on its readers” was in part connected to its “masterly logocentrism—its ability to identify the words of Charles I with the Word” (26), an argument that reveals the extent of the text’s sovereign status even in the absence of the living sovereign. Numerous other texts sprung up in response to the Regicide as well as prior to it. For instance, Sir John Denham’s *Coopers Hill* was an attempt to “avert the civil wars by espousing a *via media* that embraced principles of both Parliamentarianism and Royalism” (Summers and Pebworth, 6). Other similar texts are discussed in Summers and Pebworth’s *English Civil Wars in the Literary Imagination* (1999).

<sup>219</sup> Howe discusses the significance of the regicide to Puritan ideology in her interview with Foster, included in *The Birth-Mark* (1993a); that she does not do so in *A Bibliography* highlights the extent to which she is more interested here in questions of textual composition, in “something filled with gaps and words tossed, and words touching, words crowding each other, commands and dreams, vertical and circles” (175).

<sup>220</sup> Bastwick’s rallying cry is quoted in Eisenstein, 52. While there remain questions as to the relative levels of literacy and access to literature among the populace, as well as the opportunities to freely engage with that literature,

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“pamphlets, and pamphlet culture more generally, have frequently been located amongst the most inclusive or democratic aspects of early modern English society” (1). For an account of similar issues of literacy, publication, and access to textuality as motivators for the 1381 Peasant’s Revolt, see Justice (1996).

<sup>221</sup> Nevitt’s terms playfully introduce the rhetoric of *American* citizenship into the historical context of English sovereignty at the moment of its alteration; in so doing, he helps us to see how radical Milton’s claims were, and yet how restricted they remained within their immediate context. Milton does not use “citizen” within *Areopagitica*, but it does occur in his “A Defence of the People of England” and elsewhere (cf. Worden, 2007, 167).

<sup>222</sup> Andrew Lacey has analysed the “literary nature” of the cult of King Charles the Martyr in the wake of the regicide (76ff). Rachel Tzvia Back’s account of *A Bibliography* suggests the importance of literary publication to the English Civil War (126-7) while also offering a detailed description of the historical context surrounding the *Eikon Basilike*.

<sup>223</sup> While I have in mind Hank Lazer’s perceptive reading of Howe’s “dialectical or oppositional lyricism,” my sense of dialogic tension focuses on one element of that lyricism: the clash between texts and textual elements; this is where Lazer begins his discussion, but from which he departs (64). See too Perelman’s argument that “the ‘patriarchal’ impulse is not simply an external enemy in Howe’s work [...] Her writing is on both sides” (132).

<sup>224</sup> McHale discusses Howe’s “singularly elusive” voice as it occurs in *Europe of Trusts*, similarly noting that “the first-person pronoun is utterly unreliable here as a marker of the poet’s personal presence” even as the some of the first person pronouns do “behave something like the ‘lyric I’” (241).

<sup>225</sup> Howe’s lines recognize the ways Charles I was constructed by others’ style; as Joan Hartman has pointed out, “Clarendon, then Edward Hyde, was chiefly responsible for the style in which Charles, his station challenged by Parliament, addressed his subjects” (45). Charles I was a written identity—Hartman feels that Hyde “violated the decorum of kingly expression by writing a deferential Charles” (45)—even before *Eikon Basilike*.

<sup>226</sup> At times, this practice offers “a new form of visual citation that is distinct in important ways from the modernist tradition of textual citation” (Montgomery, 132).

<sup>227</sup> Howe repeatedly links disruptive textual practices to a resistance to hegemonic authority, particularly when she describes Europe and European literature as “that sovereign source” against which Emily Dickinson had to “break poetic structure open” (1985, 116). Nick Selby registers this force of textual authority and resistance to it in Howe’s work; he draws on mapping theory to show how “the metaphor of the map provides a crucially important analytic tool for disentangling the ways in which systems of power may be seen to work within—and through—a text” (41).

<sup>228</sup> My sense of mirroring in Howe’s work draws, of course, on Dworkin’s “The Politics of Noise” (in *Reading the Illegible*), where he traces Howe’s “mirror pages and repetitions of inverted and reversed text blocks” as part of her work’s “litmus test” in which the reader is inscribed: “you are implicated and complicitous as well.” Elisabeth Joyce also discusses mirroring (90-2), drawing on Howe’s own discussion of mirror practices from her interview with Lynn Keller (8-9; Keller’s word). While Howe suggests, speaking of “Thorow,” that “The facing pages reflected and strengthened each other,” and Joyce agrees, my argument is that mirroring in *A Bibliography* extends beyond reflecting, breaking the reflection—hence the ‘third’ page in the mirror.

<sup>229</sup> For Agamben, sovereignty is an always already conflicted phenomena, the sovereign at once inside and above or beyond the rule of law; *Homo Sacer* thus critiques “the contractual origin of state power and, along with it, every attempt to ground political communities in something like a ‘belonging’” (181). While Howe’s conception of sovereignty is somewhat romantic (see fn. 239), we can see that it addresses a similar inconsistency—what Stephen Krasner has termed the “organized hypocrisy” of sovereignty (1999)—in an exploration of both Caroline and Cromwellian positioning of “the people” through texts.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. Field, 13ff. for an account of the mirror tradition as it preceded the Renaissance.

<sup>231</sup> As Brian Weiser records, the “mirror of Kings” tradition was to be invoked in Charles I’s name by merchant supplicants to Charles II (2004, 169).

<sup>232</sup> Quoted in Rhodes, 2003, p. 210.

<sup>233</sup> Howe’s source is *King Charls His Speech*, a 1649 publication printed by Peter Cole. The bibliographic data for a 1660 edition of *England’s Black Tribunal* lists the date of that earlier publication as 1648 (via EEBO, first accessed 12/31/11).

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<sup>234</sup> Elisabeth Joyce also notes the addition of “His writings” which is “scarcely legible” and “nearly completely obliterated”; She reads the overlay as suggesting that “the king’s words are not valid, that they are really the words of his ghost-writer and that they are discredited by Milton’s *Eikonoklastes*” (127). However, to do so risks equating validity with authority and originary status, which Howe seeks to subvert throughout *A Bibliography*. Howe particularly does so in mentioning two different versions of *A Bibliography of Eikon Basilike*, one Almack’s and the other Francis F. Madan’s, which differently interpret the authorship of that book (the former assigns it to Charles, the latter to John Gauden; cf. 1993b, 57).

<sup>235</sup> Milton, *Eikonoklastes*, EEBO 14.35, 1/2/12.

<sup>236</sup> Howe’s characterisation of the relationship between Milton, credibility, and the *Eikon Basilike* does not offer a neatly anti-Miltonic stance; it indicates the ways all of these texts, no matter their provenance, were concerned with definitively locating (appropriate) sources, with providing an authoritative position—all activities *A Bibliography* makes visible without reproducing.

<sup>237</sup> cf. Hughes’ article, “New Evidence on the Charge That Milton Forged the Pamela Prayer in the Eikon Basilike” (1952), and Sauer’s “Milton and the ‘stage-work’ of Charles I” (2000).

<sup>238</sup> Howe derives the term from mathematician René Thom: “the singularity [...] is the point where there is a sudden change to something completely else. It’s a chaotic point. It’s the point chaos enters cosmos, the instant articulation.” Key to singularity is not idiosyncrasy but alteration: in algebra, Howe notes, a singularity is the point of change “where plus becomes minus” (1993a, 173). Fragments of source texts entering *A Bibliography* provide this “instant articulation” and “sudden change,” a change that affects how we see the source work and the new composition. Howe discusses Thom’s ideas of singularity in her interview with Edward Foster (1990, 30-31).

<sup>239</sup> Pamela within *Arcadia* was a figure of problematic succession, as Blair Worden has discussed (1996, 176-177); as such, she makes a provocative but logical choice for both *Eikon Basilike* and *A Bibliography*.

<sup>240</sup> In *The Birth-Mark*, Howe explores the formation of the United States in direct relation to the regicide. Situating her argument in light of the poetry of Emily Dickinson, “who antiquely spelt Sovereign as she capitalized the ‘S’ to both fracture and fuel its power” (81), Howe suggests that the “United States, peopled by citizens fleeing into freedom, had no sovereign after the Revolution”; she quotes J.S. Mill’s dictum “over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is Sovereign” as an indication of the shift in understanding of authority and sovereignty in this new version of citizenship. For Howe, the regicide dispersed sovereignty, a claim we might well treat with some suspicion given the experience of government and authority in the New World. Howe herself notes the duplicity of the word “sovereign” as spoken to Amerindians, indicating the continuing conflicted nature of sovereignty, even when fractured by Dickinson, who “takes sovereignty away from God and bestows it on the Woods” (81). (Where Howe is concerned, these must also be read as the word-forests of books.) Even within such a romanticised version of nature, sovereignty remains a troubling concept, even after the Revolution and in the absence of the monarchy; transformed by thinkers like Mill, it still exerts an influence on the socio-political spaces of America and on inter- and intra-communal relationships. For a fuller discussion of the relationship between New England antinomian debates and the regicide, see Back, 126ff.

<sup>241</sup> Another instance of Susan Howe’s poetic critique of the unitary author can be seen in *Secret History of the Dividing Line* (1978). That title combines two works by William Byrd, *History of the Dividing Line* and *Secret History of the Line*; the former was explicitly public, the latter a private text, and both recounted the same 1728 survey expedition. While these texts are in theory single-authored, Howe reveals the ways in which they are constructed in fact by their audiences, as well as by Byrd’s other “authors,” particularly his travelling companions. Howe’s single text reveals the inauthenticity of Byrd’s dual texts.

<sup>242</sup> This is one of the most discussed of all Howe’s works. I am thinking particularly of Perloff’s reading in “The Narrative Lyric of Susan Howe,” where she argues, “Hope Atherton is not a ‘character,’ with such and such traits and a definable history” (1989, 524).

<sup>243</sup> *The Works of John Donne, Vol. 5*, pp. 1-13; “Daniel’s way was to strew ashes” (6), part of a meditation on death in Donne’s sermon.

<sup>244</sup> cf. Theodora Hadzisteliou Price, 1978. p. 119.

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<sup>245</sup> Mackey, *Discrepant Engagement*, p. 122-125. Mackey here discusses graphicity as “hardly at odds with the ‘oral impulse’” (122) and links it to Olson’s “Projective Verse” in ways that echo Howe’s own assertion of the importance of Olson’s work to *A Bibliography*.

<sup>246</sup> *Arcadia* has a complicated textual history, which Back discusses in depth (207, fn. 12) My own reading of *Arcadia* uses the 1655 edition, available through EEBO.

<sup>247</sup> Matt Hart explores a similar poetics in a different context, writing of the way Hugh MacDiarmid conceived of a “radical goal [...] to modernize Scots and Scotland from a position within the vernacular, reattaching the nation to the international sphere by synthesizing the language of the future from the debris of the past” (59). What my own analysis takes from Hart’s is the indication that an apparently local use of language might have transnational effects and dimensions, what Hart calls “synthetic vernacular writing.” The suggestion is that one can be committed both to a specific political, cultural, and linguistic moment—Korea in the wake of American occupation, for instance—and participate in a more “global” conversation without surrendering particularities. It is through such logic that I read “Fell” at the end of this chapter as at once written in English and “for six multilingual voices” without needing to abstract what is meant by language or the multilingual.

<sup>248</sup> For a discussion of these markers, see Ziarek 374-376.

<sup>249</sup> I am thinking here of Deleuze and Parnet’s argument that English (and American English) “is all the more vulnerable to the subterranean workings of languages and dialects which undermine it from all sides and impose on it a play of vast corruptions and variations” because it is a “hegemonic, imperialistic language” (2007, 58). In other words, the geographic coverage of English increases its surface area of exposure and thus its porosity.

<sup>250</sup> Such moments of linguistic encounter might be read in a tradition of contact, as Laura O’Connor has done in her analysis of “literary creoles,” via Mary Louise Pratt’s identification of the “contact zone” as a space “where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (quoted in O’Connor, 2004). Although there are grounds for such a reading of Kim’s work, particularly in *Under Flag* and *The Bounty*, her latest books investigate what is produced through encounter, rather than the clash itself. That is, her version of translation is not about the fit between two languages but concerns the Korean/English language that emerges through contact.

<sup>251</sup> A slightly different version of this passage appears in the earlier *Tripwire* interview with Yedda Morrison. There, Kim speaks of “grafting” rather than “traversal”; the revision is significant, indicating the developing importance of physical travel to trans-scription in Kim’s work.

<sup>252</sup> Kim’s notion of “translatability” calls to mind, even as it departs from it, Benjamin’s argument in “The Task of the Translator,” that “translatability is an essential quality of certain works, which is not to say that it is essential that they be translated; it means rather that a specific significance inherent in the original manifest itself in its translatability” (254). Kim’s own use of the term constitutes a more radical notion of translatability: not as the capacity for being translated, but as the state of existing *in-translation*, already negotiating conflicting ways of speaking and understanding languages.

<sup>253</sup> Another connection to the projective tradition is through Kim’s pedagogical uses of Robert Duncan’s archive in her teaching at SUNY Buffalo. Zack Finch’s essay in the e-collection *Building is a Process / Light is an Element* (Rippeon and Cross, 2008) documents Kim’s interest in Duncan’s practice and in his archive at SUNY Buffalo. For a discussion of Kim’s pedagogy more widely, see the other essays collected therein.

<sup>254</sup> For a detailed discussion of the history and orthography of Hangul, see Kim-Renaud (1997) and Sampson (1990). Xiaojing Zhou explores Kim’s use of Hangul in Chapter Seven of *The Ethics and Poetics of Alterity*, “Speak and it is Sound in Time,” arguing that “the agency of the speaking subject” is achieved by “multiple speakers and different, even contending, voices and utterances” (274) as well as the complexities of Hangul adoption and its subsequent banning by Japanese imperial rulers (253-4). Joseph Jonghyun Jeon (2004) discusses Korean transliteration, arguing that Kim’s usage of competing Romanization systems in *Commons* implies that “standardization subtends authority, which compromises the individual” (137ff).

<sup>255</sup> Jeon argues against the presence of “a representative ‘Asian American’ or ‘Korean American’ voice that seeks recognition” within Kim’s poetry (130). He reads *Dura* as exploring the “physical operation of speaking” (127), the muscular positions the mouth adopts, which allows for an articulation of individual experience of national language (127): in foregrounding the different ways we each speak, Kim undermines projects that would proof language. To

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Jeon's contention that her poetry "undermines the tight association between language and national identity, between English [as language] and American identity," I would add that it also undermines associations between language and citizenship; see also Carbado, who notes the intricacies of national, racial, and citizenship identity when he writes: "I became a black American long before I acquired American citizenship. Unlike citizenship, black racial naturalization was always available to me, even as I tried to make myself unavailable for that particular Americanization process" (2002, 947).

<sup>256</sup> Walkowitz's key term, adapted from digital art, is *born-translated*. I opt not to use it because, although it accounts for the ways translation can exist within a monolingual work, prior to its having been translated, *born-translated* might suggest an inevitability of, and even a lack of necessity for, translation.

<sup>257</sup> The novel is Walkowitz's focus, on the grounds that "novels travel more easily than other genres" (571). Although I accept that she is right in a materialist sense—poetry is published in translation very slowly in the contemporary era, if at all—in reading Kim's work, I hope to put pressure on what might be meant by "travel."

<sup>258</sup> I am thinking of Brent Edwards' point that "the cultures of black internationalism can be seen only *in translation*" (7). While he is also invoking the conventional sense of that phrase, since "the great majority of peoples of African descent do not speak or write in English," his reading articulates "the way that discourses of internationalism *travel*" (7). My focus here is not internationalism in his specific sense, nor African diasporic literatures, but his ideas instance a process by which translation itself, rather than the product of translation alone, makes certain positions and logics visible—in part through moments which resist translation, and in part because "translation both provides support for the 'domestic' agenda and continually threatens to undermine it or reconfigure it" (116). The kinds of "mutual answerability" that this version of being *in translation* involves are very much in dialogue with Kim's own explorations of the ways members of a linguistic community without an equally shared "national" language are more responsible for attending to each others' articulations, to "letter syllable and word model plurality" (2008, 99) or what she calls "every locuter world of particular" (1996, 86).

<sup>259</sup> Kim has situated her writing within the context of narrative: in an interview with Yedda Morrison, she speaks of how "there is a narrative, there is an urgency to speak, but the means by which we narrate are very different and must be different. Part of the meaning of being a historical subject is to engage in how to tell" (80).

<sup>260</sup> Kim, triangulating Korea, Japan, and America as militarized spaces involved in forms of occupation and oppression, resists a binary opposition of East and West as she traces inter-Asian and intra-national conflicts. Her work exhibits the "heterogeneity, hybridity, multiplicity" evident in "the material conditions that characterize Asian American groups" (Lowe, 1996, 67).

<sup>261</sup> Kim's poetry forms part of a tradition of Asian American writing in response to the exclusion of Asians in/from America dating back to the Naturalization Law of 1790. Such exclusion, Patricia Chu points out, uses a range of "discriminatory practices designed to prevent Asians from identifying themselves as Americans" (29); these exclusions do not only target national affiliation, but also restrict access to citizenship, as can be seen from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1892 (which led to the development of the Immigration and Naturalization Service) and the Cable Act (1922), which indirectly targeted Asian citizenship. Liam Corley, analyzing Chang Rae Lee's *Native Speaker*, argues, "like all citizens of non-Anglo European descent, Asian Americans undergo a double scrutiny when attempting to enjoy the full spectrum of rights guaranteed to Americans regardless of race" (in Lim et al, 2006, 57). For a fuller account of the exclusions, legal and social, that affect Asian Americans' citizenship and their artistic expressions, see Duncan (2004).

<sup>262</sup> Jeon explains that these consonants "obliquely refer to the Korean word *naka*, the imperative form of the verb *to leave*" (130), although he argues that "knowledge of Hangeul does not dramatically change one's reading experience because the author's central preoccupation is with sound" (137). While I would disagree with that claim—knowing the Korean, we can see how the colonial subjects are in the position of not being able to confidently enunciate their own desire for the departure of their imperial rulers—I would contend that Kim's aim is not to have us gloss her words, but to notice the breaks in communication that occur through division into national languages, a realization that might lead to an exploration of language and literature in-translation.

<sup>263</sup> My reading of Kim's work in terms of institutional authority is part of what I would see as a larger turn towards questions of institutionality within Asian American studies. This critical development is rooted in a growing awareness of the ways that institutionality has informed Asian American literature and art of the past half-century (and more), from Maxine Hong Kingston's novels to the photographs of Tseng Kwong Chi. Malini Johar Schueller

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discusses Chi's photography in her essay "Claiming Postcolonial America: The Hybrid Asian-American Performances of Tseng Kwong Chi" (in Ty and Goellnicht, 2004), seeing in his self-portraits, dressed in military uniform at iconic American scenes such as the Lincoln Memorial, "the unboundedness of the 'Asian-American' subject and the leakages from one side of the hyphen to the other" (184). Such readings emerge in part from Lisa Lowe's suggestion that "the American *citizen* has been defined over against the Asian *immigrant*, legally, economically, and culturally" since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, leading to what she strongly calls "the failure of citizenship" (4, ix). Recent analyses of literature in this vein focus on a range of works, including Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* as it investigates documentary citizenship ("I have the documents. Documents, proof, evidence, photograph, signature. One day you raise the right hand and you are American. They give you an American Pass port" [56]); Maxine Hong Kingston's exploration of the potentially liberatory destruction of government records during the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire ("An authentic citizen, then, had no more papers than an alien. Any paper a China Man could not produce had been 'burned up in the Fire of 1906.' Every China Man was reborn out of that fire a citizen," *China Men*, 1980, 149); and Chang Rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1996), in which John Kwang's attempts to become mayor of New York City are thwarted largely by corporate spying and the investigations of the FBI. In placing Kim's work in this series of critiques of institutionality, I seek to show the tensions between individual and state uses of English and translation.

<sup>264</sup> For considerations of *Under Flag* in general, and "Into Such Assembly" in particular, see Jeon (2004), Chiu (2004; in Ty and Goellnicht), Park (2006), and Zhou (2001). These works have also been the subject of dissertations by James Kyung-Yin Lee (1995) and Jane Park (1995).

<sup>265</sup> For details of the requirement that one demonstrate the ability to read and write English in order to become a citizen, see the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services website, including <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.749cabd81f5ffc8fba713d10526e0aa0/?vgnextoid=5efcebb7d4ff8210VgnVCM10000025e6a00aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=5efcebb7d4ff8210VgnVCM10000025e6a00aRCRD> (retrieved Oct. 21<sup>st</sup> 2011, 6:30pm).

<sup>266</sup> To be (allowed to be) American is not, of course, coterminous with being an American citizen and vice versa, a fact evidenced by the experience of Filipinos in the 1930s who were technically American as a territory of the United States but were therefore unable to apply for citizenship even though they did not enjoy the full rights of citizen status (Duncan 36). The Tydings-McDuffie Act (1934), which declared the Philippines independent, "limited Filipino immigration to fifty persons a year" (43), replacing colonial authority with bureaucratic measurement and control of Filipino/a bodies moving within a global economy.

<sup>267</sup> My focus on citizenship as authorized through language does not mean to ignore the restrictions to citizenship imposed by constructions and perceptions of ethnicity, which have been particularly disturbing in relation to the history of Asian peoples within the United States of America. The forced internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War marks one of the most visible redefinition of citizen status along ethnic grounds.

<sup>268</sup> This question over the poem's narrative site reflects wider debates in Asian American studies as to where we should look for Asian American literature: the new country or the ancestral one? Eleanor Ty and David Goellnicht argue in *Beyond the Hyphen* for a need to consider North America as a whole, rather than limiting Asian American criticism to the United States alone, while Lim et al accept a primary location for Asian American writing in the United States rather than in the "home" countries of Asian American writers, but warn against readings in which it is assumed that "the site of narrative perspective [...] is that of the United States" (3). Asian American poetry specifically emerged as a self-conscious canon in the 1970s with the publication of anthologies such as *Asian-American Authors* (1972), edited by Kai-Yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas, and *Aiiieeeee!* (1974); both anthologies, however, included or mentioned only three national groups: Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino Americans (Lim et al, 6).

<sup>269</sup> Strom Thurmond (Dem., NC, 1954) and Lisa Murkowski (Rep., AL, 2010) are the two most famous examples of successful write-in elections for Senate positions. Ralph Nader discusses his write-in campaign in New Hampshire in 1992 as part of "a citizens' movement that would campaign on the people's side of the electoral fence by denying the regular candidates their vote" (35, 2000). The ways in which this preserves rather than breaks with *habitus* are clear: unlike the improvisational dimensions of an "act" of citizenship as outlined by Isin and Nielsen, the action of writing-in a candidate has an entirely predictable result.

<sup>270</sup> *Dura* has been described as a "refashioning of the American long poem as initiated by Whitman" (Park, 241) and as "a kind of strange autobiography that avoids the 'I'" (Spahr, x), while Stephen Hong Sohn has noted the "incredible plasticity with which it is possible to conceptualize this volume" (105). Sohn's sense of the conceptual here is particularly provocative: while Kim's text has an errant narrative, telling the story of the Los Angeles riots and



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of Korean-American migration (including the Korean experience of American military action), Sohn suggests the text makes itself available to allegorical readings.

<sup>271</sup> See my introduction, pp. 42-9, and fn. 83 above.

<sup>272</sup> For a discussion of the “paper sons,” the purported offspring of American citizens of Chinese descent who appeared after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 became the first (and only) Act to deny citizenship purely on the grounds of ethnicity, see Thomas Kim (1999), who explores this historical event through a literary analysis of Asian-American texts as “sites where ‘identity’ and ‘authenticity’ are investigated” (41); Daniels (1997) offers a historiography of Asian-American immigration, with particular attention to Angel Island.

<sup>273</sup> To note that the category of the citizen is material even prior to the claim of citizenship is both to recognize the centrality of the undocumented to an understanding of citizenship and the question of immanence raised by Isin: we understand citizenship, he suggests, because of the possibility of both non-citizens and citizens, a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion. See also my discussion of C.L.R. James in Chapter 1.

<sup>274</sup> The migration “Cosmography” describes, and the documents which make possible that migration, reflect the conditions of what Aihwa Ong has termed “flexible citizenship,” a way of understanding “the cultural logics that inform and structure border crossings as well as state strategies” (5) and the processes by which “mutually reinforcing dynamics of discipline and escape” (21) contour transnational experiences and expectations of citizen status. Beginning with the example of the handover of Hong Kong from the British to the Chinese, Ong explores the significance of holding multiple passports and having allegiances to multiple nation-states, including “refugees and business migrants who work in one location while their families are lodged in ‘safe haven’ elsewhere” (214). Ong positions her argument between, on the one hand, post-Fordist claims that modern capitalism proceeds with no regard for human agency and, on the other, arguments like Arjun Appadurai’s about the global “production of locality” (1996, pp. 178ff) which see the local as opposed to but subservient to the global macro-political economic. Instead, Ong focuses on *transnationality*, which she links explicitly to translation and defines as “denot[ing] both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something” (4). Recognizing that citizen-subjects exist within “mutually reinforcing dynamics of discipline and escape” which are played out less in the “vertical” sphere of multinationalism than in the “horizontal” sphere of transnationalism (104), with its roots in 1970s corporate practices of engaging with the local in the interest of their own profit margins, Ong is able to suggest that we practice citizenship in and across many locales and thus under the jurisdiction, however indirectly, of numerous governmental and state interventions “in the production and the destruction of cultural values” (244). While Ong sees flexibility as “a product and a condition of late capitalism” (240), she calls for “a kind of nomadic thinking that allows us to stand outside a given modernity, and to retain a radical skepticism toward [its] cultural logics” (244). Kim’s in-translation, I argue in this chapter, produces such a nomadic thinking and writing, one that might exist beyond ascription to ‘national’ spaces.

<sup>275</sup> As Anne Carson has pointed out, “Cliché is a French borrowing, past participle of the verb *clicher*, a term from printing meaning ‘to make a stereotype from a relief printing surface’” (2008, 179).

<sup>276</sup> Chang continues: “The interpenetration of languages acknowledged and performed by interlingualism allows us to re-imagine these languages and cultures not as discrete entities, but as radically relational” (93). Her argument suggests Kim’s interest in the porousness of languages, but Kim’s argument has different emphases. Kim casts language as inherently relational rather than just open to re-imagining, and while she likewise works against the notion of languages as “discrete entities,” her focus on sonic particles might be thought of as more than interlingual, as my reading of her work as in-translation aims to show. For a discussion of Chang’s concept, see also Robert Grotjohn’s essay ‘Kimiko Hahn’s “Interlingual Poetics” in *Mosquito and Ant*’ in Lim et al, 2006.

<sup>277</sup> Peter Coates notes this reference, but not this interpretation (2006, p. 209).

<sup>278</sup> “Thirty and Five Books” shares a mode with Lyn Hejinian’s *My Life*, which also uses a biographically-derived form to shape its social commentary and was likewise first written in the author’s mid-thirties. Similarly, lines such as “Sewen stamped considered delinquent” (*The Bounty*, 52) recall Susan Howe’s poetry, reminding us that Kim’s work overlaps with so-called Language writing as much as with Asian American literature.

<sup>279</sup> Beyond a single language, or even the translation that Balibar sees as the language of citizenship, Kim has suggested that “form is fascinating because it is *enunciatory*” (Morrison, 84), a development of Olson/Creeley’s

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“FORM IS NEVERMORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT.” Kim’s phrase suggests that form is itself a way of speaking: form announces meaning both to the poet and her readers.

<sup>280</sup> cf. Fernández-Armesto, pp. 1-26, for a discussion of Behaim’s globe and an earlier Korean counterpart (14-5).

<sup>281</sup> For a different reading of “banter English,” see Park, who argues that these lines suggest the ways “a spoken English gathers and carries along these aliens,” seeing in them evidence of “the extent of naturalization: a shared, spoken banter that brings together its speakers” (250).

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