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Recombinant

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RECOMBINANT

by

Ching-In Chen

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in English

at

The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

May 2015

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ABSTRACT

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The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, 2015
Under the Supervision of Professor Brenda Cárdenas

The hybrid texts (poems and prose) in the following dissertation investigate female and genderqueer lineage in the context of labor smuggling and trafficking. In this book-length project, I examine the challenges of communal memory by juxtaposing voices from Asian, African and indigenous communities in the Americas. Set in a speculative future, these voices simultaneously inhabit their own spaces and share pathways, a theme developed through manipulation of white space on the page. The narrative speculates about the origins of M. Lao, a snakehead matriarch who has created a business empire from a fictional edu-tainment park, CoolieWorld, which traffics in the history of coolie labor. In the narrative, M. Lao is forced to confront her troubled relationship to her gender-non-conforming child who has disappeared as she considers her own history of migration, trauma, survival, self-invention and complicity in the trafficking of migrants. These writings force voices from various communities to interact with each other through the poems' experimental graphic and representational practices. Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan asserts that "diasporan realities do show up the poverty of conventional modes of representation with their insistence on single-rooted, non-traveling, natural origins. But this calls for multi-directional, heterogeneous modes of representation." By drawing on Radhakrishnan's ideas, I create a diasporic poetics that contains multiple voices within a single space on the page. Poems that attempt to make sense of historical remnant share space with M. Lao's fragmented narrative. I also blend historical incidents such as the 1899 anti-Chinese Milwaukee riots with the speculative realm of Coolie World, and in doing so think about how a city renegotiates its identity during long periods of constant redevelopment. To this end, I utilize historical artifacts

including photographs; newspaper articles; maps; city directory listings; and records of immigration, birth and death, as well as scholarly research and archaeological records. These kinds of materials contain the shared memory of a community, and by juxtaposing, re-mixing, re-combining and erasing these found texts, *recombinant* examines both the erasure and reconstruction of community history.

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AN ALTERNATIVE SPECULATIVE POETICS IN *RECOMBINANT*

In recent years, the Allied Media Conference, a gathering of activist cultural media makers and grassroots community organizers, has hosted a programming track exploring the visionary qualities of speculative fiction. One of the aims of this programming is to learn practical lessons that might be applied to social justice activism and community organizing. One example of a session was an interactive workshop entitled “Emergent Strategies,” in which community organizer, editor and writer Adrienne Maree Brown focused on how disenfranchised communities could gather survival strategies from Octavia Butler’s writing. This includes centering the adaptive, intuitive and shared leadership of trans and women of color protagonists to re-envision a just world liberated from prisons, police violence and other oppressions.

This kind of interpretative work in which the Allied Media Conference organizers have been engaging reflects a belief that all organizing is science fiction.¹ As Walidah Imarisha, co-editor of *Octavia’s Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*, states:

When we talk about a world without prisons; a world without police violence; a world where everyone has food, clothing, shelter, quality education; a world free of white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, heterosexism; we are talking about a world that

1

Many activists, writers and scholars use various terms to describe various kinds of speculative literatures, including science fiction, speculative fiction, science fiction poetry and speculative poetry. Unless I am citing or referencing another activist, writer and/or scholar, I will use the broader category of speculative literatures. According to the Speculative Literature Foundation, it is a catch-all term meant to inclusively span the breadth of fantastic literature, including hard science fiction, epic fantasy, ghost stories, horror, folk and fairy tales, slipstream, magical realism and modern myth-making.

doesn't currently exist. But collectively dreaming up one that does means we can begin building it into existence.

This kind of visionary thinking is rooted in transformative justice practices, which seek community-based solutions to deal with harm and violence caused without resorting to the criminal justice system.

Though the study of speculative literatures has continued to grow in academia, critics who analyze speculative literature have tended to focus on speculative fiction; there are few critical studies on speculative poetry as a genre. Though Steve Rasnic Tem, editor of *The Umbral Anthology of Science Fiction Poetry*, argues for the long tradition of Science Fiction poetry, including even *The Odyssey* within the scope of science fiction poetry, he acknowledges the difficulties of categorizing “speculative” poetry by narrating the story of a friend who says that the problem with the category is that all poetry appears somewhat speculative. According to Tem, speculative poetry is “poetry of change, of transformation. It is the *exploratory intent* which drives a speculative poem” (2). In addition, speculative poetry is “myth-writing and dream-writing—a visionary poetry that makes theoretical interpretations of the real world” (2). Rose Lemberg, editor of *The Moment of Change: an Anthology of Feminist Speculative Poetry*, also asserts that speculative poetry is part of the field of literature of the fantastic and allows us to “re-imagine the world, re-narrate society and history” while acknowledging that the lack of diversity in the genre limits what visions are possible (xiv). Recently, the critical success of books like Cathy Park Hong's *Dance Dance Revolution* and Doug Kearney's *The Black Automaton*—both which have won national awards for poetry in recent years—point to a growing number of works in speculative poetry which have crossed the boundary into a more mainstream consciousness. In addition, Hong and Kearney's recognition amongst mainstream poetry organizations also contribute to a recognition of speculative poetry which alludes to a poetic lineage departing from earlier white speculative poets.

In this introduction, I map the lineage of works which may fall under a loose category of speculative poetics and consider what their poetic strategies might add to these discussions of social activism and community organizing. My work is interested in how speculative poetics might contribute to science fiction's "exploring ground," a laboratory where visionaries can test new tactics and strategies without real-world costs (Imarisha).

An example of this is an activity entitled "Imagine Alternatives Activity," facilitated by Mariame Kaba at a recent transformative justice gathering in Milwaukee. Kaba is the director of Project NIA, a Chicago-based prison abolitionist organization which uses the principles of participatory community justice.²

Kaba provided context for the activity by arguing that it has taken over 500 years of oppressive policies and legislation to develop the Prison Industrial Complex and policing policies in the United States. Often, those who are critics of abolition cannot conceive of a possible world without policing and prisons. Kaba acknowledged that there are no easy answers and emphasized that it is unrealistic to expect an immediate change or transformation of a system which has developed and been allowed to take root over a long period of time. Instead, Kaba encouraged us to think through our own experiences with the police. Some questions she asked us to consider:

Have you ever called the police? Why? What did you gain from calling the police? Do you know what the result of your call was for the other people in the situation? Have you ever chosen not to call the police when it seemed like an option? Did you find an alternative response?

Thinking through these questions is an example of a continual practice to imagine other ways to respond to harm in day-to-day interactions. Though this activity is an example of how this type of

² According to the Project NIA website, participatory community justice is an alternative name for restorative or transformative justice. Though these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, there are variations in terms of how much practitioners attempt to work within the current system or seek to develop alternatives wholly outside of the current system.

imaginative thinking manifests in real-world contexts, I am particularly interested in how visionary literature can contribute in real world applications.

In addition, I am interested in other contributions to visionary thinking which have not been as theorized as speculative fiction, including poetry and what many would term “genre-queer” (or what Kazim Ali calls “trans-genre” or “trans(gressive) genre”) texts. In fact, I would argue that “genre-queer” texts, by the nature of their crossing and blurring of genre boundaries, engage in speculative thinking. I believe that “genre-queer” texts incorporate helpful strategies from the various genres in their modes of composition.

Critic Seo-Young Chu argues:

The qualities that (either individually or in some combination) make a work of science fiction 'science-fictional' tend to coincide with the qualities that (either individually or in some combination) make a lyric poem 'lyrical.' Lyric voices speak from beyond ordinary time (13)

Poetry's compositional strategies involving structure and form which incorporate silence, rupture, collage and repetition seem particularly apt to explore the making of worlds that traffic in non-ordinary time. Some of these strategies add another layer to the genre-queer text, which a purely fictional work may do less.

Octavia Butler is primarily known as a fiction writer, but her Parable series might serve as an example of a genre-queer or trans-genre speculative work. The majority of the two books which comprise the series—*The Parable of the Sower* and *The Parable of the Talents*—is presented as a prose narrative. However, protagonist Lauren Olamina switches to verse to compose her new Earthseed philosophy, which is the belief in the idea that the only God which exists is change. Much of Olamina's Earthseed philosophy is a response to her circumstances in a dystopian future where her world falls

apart and she loses much of her biological family. Olamina must go out on the road and create her own chosen family through trial and experiment. In these moments, the narrative and the “ordinary time” of Olamina’s journey cannot hold the belief that

All that you touch

You Change.

All that you Change

Changes you.

The only lasting truth

Is Change.

God

Is change (*Sower 3*)

In these verses, Earthseed’s philosophy is best encapsulated in the structure of the verse. The first line stands on its own yet is transformed by the following line in a moment which adds a layer of understanding to the narrative, but does not contribute to the action of the narrative.

Butler’s *Parable of the Talents* is also structured via the integration of various manuscripts by Olamina's daughter, who is trying to make sense of her own identity in relation to her mother and father. The conceit for the structure of the book is that Olamina's daughter creates her own narrative through the arrangement of these various found narratives. Each chapter begins with verse from *Earthseed: The Books of the Living*, which contains Olamina's philosophical words. Her daughter says, “the words are harmless, I suppose, and metaphorically true. At least she began with some species of

truth” (9). In the Parable series, though the prose passages move the story forward, Olamina turns to verse to step out of the ordinary time of the narrative and to point to a philosophy which is simultaneously “time-less” and also organic since she develops her philosophy as represented in the verses. Thus, Butler's strategy to incorporate these various forms points to the possibilities each genre may bring to the type of visionary work that Butler constructs in the series.

At Belladonna's Advancing Feminist Poetics and Activism conference, poet Cathy Park Hong framed her own commitments to the kind of speculative poetry her book *Dance Dance Revolution* exemplifies—one that participates in a fresh imagining of the world as we want to live in it, a poetry that talks back and predicts a future, as opposed to the practice of merely reporting and representing the fragmented world we currently live in. In an interview with the Poetry Foundation, Hong states,

My interest in speculative landscapes is manifold It’s almost impossible for us to perceive the present because it’s all around us. Speculative landscapes give us a binocular perception of the present moment—it’s a strategy of indirection (Hong, “Q & A”).

Hong's intention to build imaginative capacity as a way to re-envision the current world we live in now—and her intention to achieve this vision by imagining an alternative future—points to poetic strategy and the kind of flexible time which speculative poetry could possibly provide. Hong shares these strategies with other poets and hybrid writers such as Bhanu Kapil, Will Alexander, Daniel Borzutzky and Kamau Brathwaite.

Hong's *Dance Dance Revolution* is a narrative in verse, which interweaves a history of collective trauma and an uncertain future. Critic Brian Kim Stefans argues that there has been a recent turn toward the speculative in experimental fiction, poetry and “conceptual writing,” which share similar formal concerns such as “working with closed sets of words, a preoccupation with number, and

recursive structures among them—in an act of synchronicity” (160). Hong's narrative can be read as belonging to this series of speculative experimental works that have been constructed following the post-modern turn.

In her Poetry Foundation essay, “How Words Fail,” Hong discusses her connection to the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets, reaching back to Gertrude Stein. Hong traces the lineage of poets such as Lyn Hejinian and Ron Silliman, who emphasized the materiality of language and asserted that the persona in the poem is a fabrication of the self rather than a transparent representation of the author's lived experience. However, Hong ultimately places herself in closer affiliation to poets who “severed syntax out of a sense of cultural or political displacement rather than for the sake of experimentation,” such as Paul Celan. These poets were alienated from their own language because of “history and circumstance,” as are both narrators of *Dance Dance Revolution*.

Hong's main character, an exiled former South Korean dissident, narrates in an invented dialect composed of a mash-up³ of existing and extinct English accents. Hong explains that the impetus for the dialect is the spoken English, which Hong sees as “... a busy traffic of dialects, accents, and slang words going in and out of fashion” (qtd in Kryah). She is a tour guide to an imagined resort city set in the future. The tour guide's sections (or lineated poems) are juxtaposed to excerpts of a memoir written by a historian, who uses standard English in prose form.

It is difficult at first for the reader to place the voice of each narrator. The tour guide was born in South Korea and slowly reveals that she was a dissident involved in the Kwangju Uprising in 1980. The other narrator, the historian, reveals little linguistically, although slowly the “memoir” reveals that the historian's comparatively bland voice has been constructed in an international boarding school in

³ A mash-up is a musical term which refers to an act of composition involving cutting and pasting samples and loops from two or more music tracks to form a new track.

London, Hong Kong and Connecticut; a military school; and even in ubiquitous airport lounges associated with much international travel.

Even though these two voices are set up in opposition to one another throughout the narrative, by the end, the reader comes to understand that their lives are linked in history and an ominous future. The historian's father, a doctor who travels to regions that are at war, is a former lover of the tour guide. In the historian's last excerpt which ends the book, the historian remembers a scene where the father has stayed home from work and studies a jam jar against the landscape. Though the father repeatedly tries to nap and dream of his former lover, he is continuously awakened by the “ghost limbs” of his patients' war-torn bodies and by “the occasional unrest” (*Dance* 120). Eventually, even the grains of salt grow to a crowd that fills the frame of the jar. For Hong, these two characters (and their dialects) are inflected by a connected sense of empire and wartime histories which they cannot escape.

I read Butler and Hong's narratives within the lineage of speculative art-making existing outside of the dominant canon of speculative literature. For those writing speculative literature engaging the questions of racial formation and identity as a speculative category (though with very real impact on lived everyday experience), Butler and other Afrofuturistic artists and thinkers such as Sun Ra operate as foundational texts. The Black Arts Movement, with its emphasis on self-determination, references ongoing conversations around transforming material realities in Black communities. These artists have participated in a type of speculation by creating art in conversation with Afrofuturism.

This strain of conversation parallels dialogues around race and experimentation vis-a-vis L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry. A recent anonymous communique from The Mongrel Coalition Against Gringpo, purportedly written collectively by poets of color, has strongly critiqued a white conceptualism which they feel produces only further whiteness. A recent controversial example is conceptual poet Kenneth Goldstein's positing of a reading of Michael Brown's autopsy report as a conceptual poem at a conference at Brown University. Goldstein, a white male poet known for

“uncreative writing,” read the autopsy report while positioned beneath a photo of Brown, an unarmed black 18-year-old who was killed by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. TMCAG's reaction is an angry no, stating that “The Murdered Body of Mike Brown's Medical report is not our poetry, it's the building blocks of white supremacy, a miscreant DNA infecting everyone in the world. We refuse to let it be made 'literary.’”

Similarly, in an interview on conceptualism, poet Divya Victor argues for the need to “circumvent a Western, primarily imperialist pedigree,” which traces much conceptual writing back to Stein. Victor argues:

The critical effort (Goldsmith, Perloff, etc.) has portrayed conceptualism as a historical continuity between two origin myths—one set in European, sometimes transatlantic, modernism (Duchamp, Stein, Klein, etc.) and one set in North American conceptualism in the 60s and 70s (Huebler, L. Wiener, Acconci, Cage, Schneeman, Kosuth, etc.). These artists and writers supply our ur-texts that then essentially allow us a convenient, but narrow, regionally- and racially-specific way of imagining the projects that present as conceptualist right now (Victor).

Victor and other speculative writers of color locate themselves from a different vantage point and reference other histories and aesthetic traditions.

In this vein, Sharon Bridgforth's work in *Theatrical Jazz* situates itself in imagined African American histories with a focus on incorporating the stories of queer African American voices. The tenets of *Theatrical Jazz* are virtuosity, honoring simultaneous truths, and improvisation, often incorporating audience participation and witness in the creation of the work. Sharon Bridgforth's writing can be read as genre-queer or trans-genre, as her work willfully crosses genres as part of its conception. In the preface to *love conjure/blues*, Bridgforth tells her readers that it “is performance

literature/a novel that is constructed// for telling **love conjure/blues**⁴ places the fiction-form inside/ an African-American voice; fitting/ folktales poetry haints prophesy music and history// within a highly literary text” (1). Thus, Bridgforth places the construction of such a genrequeer telling within a necessary speculative framework where “folktales poetry haints prophesy music and history” all play a role in developing an African-American collective story. In addition, the inclusion of “conjure” in the title of the work signals to readers and audience members that what they will witness is part of a speculative tradition.

In “‘Making Holy’: Love and the Novel as Ritual Transformation,” which serves as the introduction to the published version of *love conjure/blues*, critic Joni L. Jones states that “transgressing the social order requires a transgressive aesthetic, a sense of beauty and order that is as transgressive as the politics that undergird it” (xvi). Jones situates Bridgforth's work as a “new genre” of performance novel which necessarily is intended to live off the page for it to enact its intentions.

However, according to Jones:

this transforming does not happen with the words set on the page; rather igede exists in the saying, in the naming, in the embodiment of words Slave narratives, in which the blood and bone facts of slavery are blunted by the remote fixedness of print, give way to freedom shouts – the fully embodied, urgent, self-conjuring that calls into existence a new day (xvi).

As Jones points out, Bridgforth's goal is to tell a communal story that incorporates various modes of knowing, remembering and speculating. Because of this, Bridgforth also chooses speculative strategies for the page:

⁴ The bolded and unitalicized reference to the text here is Bridgforth's choice, as printed in the Preface to the book.

The novel is meant to be sounded out while read – so that the punctuation guides the feeling in the sentence, so that the bold type speaks differently than the capitalized letters, which shouts a story unlike the words that are no words at all So when the novel opens with

cool water

rum

beer vodka gin

liquor liquor liquor liquor milk

centered on the page with no capitals, we know that the look of the text will tell us as much as the words themselves (xvii).

Thus, Bridgforth incorporates font changes and placement on the page to signal both different individual and collective voices. These voices inhabit and share the page; in Bridgforth's Theatrical Jazz aesthetic, multiple truths and voices (and purportedly genres) are honored. Thus, Bridgforth's text queers the boundaries between poetry, fiction, performance and song, both on and off the page.

In the creation of a more recent work entitled *River See*, Bridgforth enacts the Theatrical Jazz aesthetic in constructing an improvised performance. For *River See* performances, Bridgforth acts as conductor for a cast that incorporates the audience in the making of the performative and speculative offering. For instance, throughout the performance, Bridgforth calls out to the audience for volunteers to contribute an improvised “translation” in another language of lines on a scrap of paper, or a line of gossip, which is cued by various hand gestures Bridgforth performs. On the *River See* website, the performative experience is described as “*A series of blues stories set on a river boat, with juking women, queers, deviants and Seers.*” In this performance, the protagonist named See tells the story,

while Bridgforth as the composer “roots the experience,” but “everyone present is responsible for the journey.” See improvises from words composed by Bridgforth which have been transformed by multiple “workshopping” sessions that enact the performance in a community setting. In this way, Bridgforth and all those who come into contact with this performance build the story through a practice of speculation and improvisation in a structured setting devised by the composer.

M. NourbeSe Philip is another writer who is working in the practice of speculation within an African diasporic context. In *Zong!*, Philip constructs her text from the language of Gregson v. Gilbert (1783), the sole remaining document left of the *Zong* massacre, in which the captain of the *Zong* slave ship ordered close to 150⁵ slaves thrown overboard in an effort to recoup financial loss. *Zong!* is a speculative work of literature created out of the disassemblage, re-assemblage and accumulative workings from the only surviving court document. Philip enacts creative strategies such as deforming and breaking down the words, which Victor points to as “conceptualism ... doing with language what language has always done for itself—resembling something that it is not” (Victor). The work is one which can “imagine” affinity across time with those who are victims and survivors of the 1781 journey. This text arises from:

... a diaspora that is born of catastrophe inflicted on the collective [which] suffers trauma and usually becomes a community to which the work of memory, commemoration, and mourning is central, shaping much of its cultural production and political commitment (Tölölyan 649).

This work of memory, commemoration and mourning forces Phillip into confronting the ethical dilemma of narrating a horrific event that cannot be understood yet still must be witnessed. “There is

⁵The numbers of those thrown overboard vary from 131-150 depending on which source is accessed, a detail which Philip incorporates in *Zong!*.

no telling this story; it must be told” is a fragment that begins “Notanda,” an essay placed near the end of *Zong!* which explains Philip's creative process of refusing to make sense of “the irrationality and confusion, if not madness ... of a system that could enable, encourage even, a man to drown 150 people as a way to maximize profits – the material and the nonmaterial” (189, 195).

Philip alludes to the violence of this archive produced by:

those individuals – members of the judiciary, one of, if not *the* most powerful segment of English society – who were themselves an integral part of a system that engaged in the trade in humans. A system of laws, rules, and regulations that made possible the massacre on board the *Zong* (199).

This violence is reflected in the erasing of specific names of those murdered. When Philip tries to track down names, she discovers that “purchasers are identified while Africans are reduced to the stark description of 'negroe man,' [*sic*] 'negroe woman' or, more frequently, 'ditto man,' 'ditto woman.' There is one gloss to this description: 'Negroe girl (meagre)’” (194).

The first section of *Zong!*, titled “Os,” consists of 26 poems which create a ledger-like catalogue of phrases and words that Philip refers to as the bones of the project and which enacts the violence of the erasure of individual names and histories of the dead, but also creates clusters of relations amongst the terms and items that populate the columns. In an interview with Patricia Saunders, Philip refers to this process as performing “the task of reconstituting those dried facts – the water in the ocean has filled this case with all of the bodies, all of the stories of those bodies that were squeezed out of this case to arrive at this two-page report” (66). In the following sections of the book, Philip replicates her own violence on the text by tearing apart the sentences in the court document, then even the specific words into sounds, until even these are blurred and partly incomprehensible in the later sections of the book.

I murder the text, literally cut it into pieces, castrating verbs, suffocating adjectives, murdering nouns, throwing articles, prepositions, conjunctions overboard, jettisoning adverbs: I separate subject from verb, verb from object – create semantic mayhem, until my hands bloodied, from so much killing and cutting, reach into the stinking, eviscerated innards, and like, some seer, sangoma, or prophet who, having sacrificed an animal for signs and portents of a new life, or simply life, reads the untold story that tells itself by not telling (193-194).

In putting the words back together and multiplying and scattering them across the page, Philip attends to the polyphony of voices that arise from the margins. Fragments of narrative surface including personas she would not have chosen to write about, such as a white, male, European voice who confronts his own responsibility in the massacre by throwing himself overboard. These marginal textures and fractures of language accumulate in “Ebora” until the layers accrue on top of each other, almost making them illegible as the text is faded, almost as if this language is surfacing from the past.

In contrast to Philip's murder of language, Afro-futurist-inspired multi-genre artists Mendi+Keith Obadike create generative work based on a fusion of documentary, mythic and speculative influences. For instance, the Obadikes describe their multi-media project, *Four Electric Ghosts* in the context of a cross-genre and hybrid way of working:

An OM (or opera-masquerade) is our interdisciplinary and collaborative performance system, which includes songs, poems, choreography, symbolic actions, photographs, and installations Each OM compound contains one or more 'story complexes' built on foundational myths, source texts, and documentary and autobiographical components (*Ghosts*, inside cover page).

The Obadikes' work embodies the mash-up ethos Hong employs in creating her invented dialect. They often start their projects from two preexisting origin stories and use these stories as a way to tell a new third story in a different form: "The mental image we've had for the process has been those iconic two turntables, mixing elements to create new moments of sweetness and dissonances, making use of the conceptual friction that arises from this process" (107). *Four Electric Ghosts* continues in this vein, taking inspiration from Amos Tutola's 1954 novel, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* and Tori Iwatani's 1980s video game Pac Man. Though the Obadikes ground their work in African diasporic imagery and themes, they engage a wide spectrum of collaborators from various backgrounds.

Though it would be too totalizing to read the work by other speculative diasporic writers and thinkers as direct descendants of the Afrofuturistic tradition, there is a conversation occurring among contemporary writers and artists which investigates cross-community intersections and possible solidarities and collaborations across communities. For instance, a recent collaboration in Fall 2014 between Onye Ozuzu and Peggy Choy, entitled "River·Mouth·Ocean: Explorations in Afro-Asian Futurism" focused on intersections between Ozuzu's work, created from African diasporic practices,

and Choy's work, which is invested in Japanese and Korean gestures. The description of the collaboration, printed in publicity materials for the performance, points to an exploration of "water issues linked to cultural survival, environmental justice, and hybrid identities." Further, their work responds to music recorded by jazz artists in the 1960s:

a period of fertile development in jazz history where conceptual, technical and instrumental territories between American jazz and Asian musical forms were being actively explored by jazz greats such as: Yusef Lateef, Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, Alice Coltrane, and Pharoah Sanders" (publicity materials for performance).

Ozuzu states that one of the works presented is "Seven," with music composed by Rajesh Bhandari. The work began with Hurricane Katrina and was re-stimulated in response to the tsunamis in Indonesia and Japan and as well as responses to the shootings of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown. In a promotional video, Ozuzu says that the collaboration comes from the conversation that Ozuzu and Choy create in relation to the Korean and Japanese gestures, vocabulations, contexts and philosophies that Choy's body is steeped in and the African and African diasporic ones Ozuzu creates.

I envision the conversation that is conjured between Ozuzu and Choy as part of the lineage to which my creative dissertation *Recombinant* belongs. I am a writer who currently identifies as genderqueer/fluid, but who grew up reading and identifying with women of color literary projects such as Gloria Anzaldúa's and Cherrie Moraga's ground-breaking anthology, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writing By Radical Women of Color*. As a younger writer, I saw myself coming from Borderlands consciousness, a place where one must remain flexible by accepting contradictions and ambiguities and many alternate ways of speaking. I situate myself within this history, even as I trace how Anzaldúa, though sympathetic to some women of color's possessiveness of *This Bridge Called My Back* and their view of it as a safe space and "home," asserts in the introduction to *This Bridge We Call Home* that "no

bridge lasts forever” (1). In this preface, she describes the process of watching workers rebuild a historic bridge landmark and draws on that analogy for the new anthology – leaving intact some of the original foundation (i.e. old traditions) while integrating it with new materials for continuing to rewrite oppressive traditions and histories. At the recent Writing Trans Literature conference, artist and writer micha cárdenas acknowledged the ground-breaking work of radical women of color, but also criticized the work for its lack of inclusivity for trans women of color.⁶ I believe that this broadening up of space is the direction Anzaldúa was working towards in *This Bridge We Call Home* and is also a conversation my creative work participates in through some of the tenets of theatrical jazz such as honoring simultaneous and multiple truths.

recombinant is a hybrid collection of poems that investigates female and genderqueer lineage in the context of labor smuggling and trafficking. The narrative speculates about the origins of M. Lao, a snakehead⁷ matriarch who has created a business empire from a fictional edu-tainment park, CoolieWorld, which traffics in the history of coolie labor. In the narrative, M. Lao is forced to confront her troubled relationship to her gender-non-conforming child who has disappeared as she considers her own history of migration, trauma, survival, self-invention and complicity in the trafficking of migrants.

In this book-length project, I examine the challenges of communal memory by juxtaposing voices from Asian, African and indigenous communities in the Americas. Set in a speculative future, these voices simultaneously inhabit their own spaces and share pathways, a theme developed through manipulation of white space on the page. To write my poetry, which investigates Asian diasporic labor, it has been imperative to educate myself about the other adjacent communities in relation to that stream

⁶ cárdenas made these statements as part of her “Identity & Poetics Across Genres” plenary talk as part of the Writing Trans Genres: Emergent Literatures and Criticism conference at the University of Winnipeg, Canada on May 24, 2014.

⁷ A snakehead is a slang term used to refer to Chinese human smugglers.

of labor. Thus, to create a structure which can hold the content that I analyze, I have had to break down the source texts and information into “seeds” and re-process them in a generative process.

In *recombinant*, I force voices from various communities to interact with each other through the poems’ experimental graphic and representational practices. Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan asserts that “diasporan realities do show up the poverty of conventional modes of representation with their insistence on single-rooted, non-traveling, natural origins. But this calls for multi-directional, heterogeneous modes of representation” (765). By drawing on Radhakrishnan’s ideas, I create a diasporic poetics that contains multiple voices within a single space on the page. Poems that attempt to make sense of historical remnants share space with M. Lao’s fragmented narrative. I also blend historical incidents such as the 1899 anti-Chinese Milwaukee riots with the speculative realm of *Coolie World* and, in doing so, think about how a city renegotiates its identity during long periods of constant redevelopment. To this end, I utilize historical artifacts including photographs, newspaper articles, maps, city directory listings, and records of immigration, birth and death, as well as scholarly research and archaeological records.

These kinds of materials contain the shared memory of a community, and by juxtaposing, re-mixing, re-combining and erasing these found texts, *recombinant* examines both the erasure and reconstruction of community history. Because I am particularly interested in voices that may not have survived in the historical record such as the voices of women and/or genderqueer people, I have taken a speculative approach by creating imagined voices.

I write in a hybrid manner, incorporating nonfiction historical materials such as the census data, old maps, fragments from oral histories and official reports alongside fictional poems. Some of the poems are written in the voices of artifacts which have been collected through the Asian trade and found their way into museums such as the Peabody Essex Museum, which was founded to house the

artifacts from that trade. This hybrid process of generating work based in historical debris as well as imagined voices borrows from the Obadikes' creative blueprints.

Where I depart from the Obadikes' process is in my conception of and experimentation with language. Critic Dorothy J. Wang argues:

Asian American poetry ... occupies a unique place in both the American national body and the American literary imaginary as the nexus of constitutively and immutably 'alien' racialized subjects and the vaunted English-language poetic tradition (xix)

My creative work wrestles with this question of language and my relationship to it as an Asian American writer. Recently, when I presented some of these poems in a public reading, the organizer of the event asked me if I was influenced by Gertrude Stein because of the way that I incorporate disjunctive syntax and repetition. I replied that I am only influenced by Stein in the way that most writers are probably influenced by those who are upheld in the canon—we are aware of their work, whether or not we identify with it or want our own conversation with it. However, I cited as a more direct influence on my work the practice of correcting the written English of my immigrant parents to whom English was a second—and a third—language, depending on who is doing the counting. This repetitive process taught me about the possibilities of slippage in language and what it can generate.

In a poetics statement, poet Doug Kearney writes, "Forms and approaches with repetition-driven progressions bring these possibilities out for me. How much weight can the words I've amassed for repetition bear?" In the process of recombining and colliding various voices within the same space, I practice a critical imagining for a generative process which can leave room for those to come.

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RECOMBINANT

Singular Oppositions: Some Notes

in conversation with mutated broken-city text, choral rendering iterations of bodies within this space

*

[Grand Avenue: Lee Chung's where Wah Lee had complained of theft in fall of 1885, police detectives found little white girl hiding underneath bed]

*

Last few Milwaukee months, poems about 1889 Milwaukee anti-Chinese riots. A correlation between this singular event and x's on the map all along the West coast.

*

[Third Street: Chen Quen where the laundryman at 203 Third Street had 2 names, Superintendent Whitehead scouring Business District for Chinese laundries and saw at residence and business an adult white woman who was wife of "Jim Young"]

*

The global body of coolie follows me. Wherever I go, evidences and I try to write. A body next to, laid down beside, amongst, tied to other flesh. A body which points to the ambitions, needs, limits of United States empire. Whatever I write must be relational, must investigate and teach itself the histories and stories and traditions and struggles of other peoples and communities. This is not one body. This body does not exist without other bodies. In-between motion, in-between oceans, in-between mountain blasts, in-between body and body. If I a body of artifact, if I a body of future, if I redevelop cartilage, bone, will you excavate?

*

[Fifth Street: Hah Ding's laundry where Clara Kitzkow and other girls "visited"]

*

The evidences regarding an episode of Milwaukee's "forgotten" history, the 1889 anti-Chinese riots. Two middle-aged Chinese men – Hah Ding and Sim Yip Ya – arrested for allegedly taking sexual liberties with white and underaged women. In the census, in the Milwaukee city directory, I ethnically profile by name. I cannot find any like-minded photographs.

*

[Fourth Street: Ring Shane's laundry (@ State) where windows smashed + Sam Yip Ya's laundry where Clara Kitzkow and other girls "visited"]

*

The color we are assigned doesn't even register on Milwaukee's segregation map. At lunch, I ask the others who grew up here what it was like. Tightknit or singular.

*

[Chestnut Street: Joseph Caspari's saloon where effigy of lynched figures + 618 Chestnut where men

smashed windows of Chinese laundry @ 1pm >> 2 Chinese escaped up Winnebago Street]

*

In her influential essay, “Notes for an Oppositional Poetics,” Erica Hunt outlines the projects of dominant languages, wedded to common sense, which serve to anesthetize us, contain us and encode that containment within our bodies. The struggle and challenge of writing which reconstructs “our recovered histories ... filled with tales of the wounded,” histories which, according to Hunt, “have been omitted, replaced and substituted.”

And yet to investigate history, to difficult attempt history, to reconstruct history, to re-configure, to struggling with/against the “nostalgia for a lost culture or a sense of unity.”

*

[Jefferson where laundryman described how didn't dare to leave laundry during worst of riot (@ Huron)]

*

What I don't want to forget: despite { }, there is pleasure here. The body is evidence.



island where these things happen (origin)

Twenty hours a day Your mothers before you all robot, all hand

*Your streetmarket mother bear you
 desert Your rich woman mother sell you father
 for ricebowl Your mother heady with wrong-
 amphibian love deposit you in boarding school to avoid the shame-
 life This hallway mountain-shoulder grandmother coin-operate tack into place
 Your captain mother sell whaling bone to first museum of Americas
 Your stayput mother fly away wisp of smoke
 Your starlet mother bury backyard career
 in B-movie director's velvet couch Your mom stay
 at home mix arsenic into cake
 Your mamma off her-
 self warden's suggestion
 Your ma run to equator*

*end like your father sweet
 air who become mother too*

inspector of journals makes introductions

winter sibling mold and office
fire line a desk
building paper
drown records
kept men with failing bodies

Mocha, Red Sea, Lisbon, Madeira, Manila, Sumatra, India, China, Australia, Sandwich and
Marquesas Island

this matchmaker of tiny details
this young man of the bitten seas

dear nightpeople we couldn't ferry

on our backs. *Who do you*
 east. *chant* *calm and open stream,*
 do you leave *wide palm to receive.*
 skindoor *this nightnews*
 intact. *How many*
constrict *stretch, how many*
names beyond *windless, beyond shape.*
 do you draw
 another dark *penny on porch*
 river. do you *heat* *make light almost*
 name *in windy grass.*
Who contain door
within another, who listen and breathe in careful key.
 do you terrain and safe *If body folds into*
my whole life and life before that. *I wonder*
 deep heart *now who*
move through world, warm sun
and all days branch out. *If repeat machine,*
Who *with quicksilver heart,*
flash *recognition*
Breath and breath, filling
guilt body *over and over,* *faucet not stop run.*
A wink *move down street.*
make small
tree grow deep, who *settle into home made* *sweet.* *A repeat machine.*

dear basket,
 (possibly Twana/Coast Salish #E3624)

They say your salt vein captain snatch
 me up, wouldn't let the gilded East Wind
 go. Couldn't see
 him, but his rust gate breath

navigate circular tongue

swim around him –
 whale oil, bone crunch.

From one daylight woman
 to another, I want
 to know
 skin

fan
 (1835-1850 #E9631)



island where these things happen (deposit)

bake future threat eggs build
body comfortable
smash all hazy question

grip cash teeth
safe arms legs deliver
bring payment number
call next belly

details pass inspection

how open heart

				<i>against interests</i>		
flicker						
small notes reply we						
				<i>open would be</i>		
<u>Surname</u>	<u>Given Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>		<u>Location</u>

Throat

heritage

When *"To say"* a woman
 become monument *"in front of all these people"*
 never sang

porridge songs
 or pull by my hair
 into line

she place me row by row *"men and boys"*
 black heads *"surging"* uncover production
"in knots of half a dozen or more"

I became not her stone
"who have paid money for their wives"

she *"reckless"* stood tremble in fire

"get a rope"

the crowdface *"regular traffic"*
"black with people" stare her down
"the little mite" corridor *"a good many times"*
"the unprintable" *"sneak[ing]"*
"advance a foot"

"string

them up

to a lamp

post"

dear story of a risk,

1878. I found them in box. Wright's Directory of Milwaukee. Their printed names dusty on page. Shane Ring 276 3d. Wing Wau, 86 Mason. Clean as sheet, near in their rows. Shelved,

a thin woman's back *attempting to see*
covered, paths cut off.

as if war on skin [*how many left behind*
this book] and paper this sergeant
this gunmaker she says *I do not want a window*
in the fucking sky.

*

dear fan,
(1835-1850 #E9631)

What if a typhoon
ground a long look brother in good earth?

Your painted reflections captured
by each gilded gold eye

His eye must have fit into my belly,
they would say
your captain's pleasure name
also made of bone.

basket,
(possibly Twana/Coast Salish #E3624)

dear basket,

Story is each
curio is witch seed

for a taking

of artifact breath. What is possession
but a desire to hold

a body in frozen ground.
Brothers lost in the trade

stations, punishing sky becomes
rooted in the baggage

sent for home.
Tell me this isn't so.

yours,
fan



**letter for export
(june 6)**

Dear C -

sin. a pear. *City*
full of pilgrim, looking for plague.
Each carried diary, noting down who settled what.
I wait to be incorporated, writing in my own longhand.

Sincerely,
Golden Venture, New York

oral history revisited: interview with assistant

after Michael Lin

Each house curves a may-open story if you follow his way. Do not open any touch-up doors. Some days each empty family get magnify, get reproduce. Under blue pattern, specific parameter. Only within my limits, our glazed family under spotlights. I place myself in pattern of protection. My brother bright and bent over each small man, kiss belly and grip, each whiskey put off to sea. I dreamed door came

open in my hand, dream you open my hand, back rose in air, no limit to our small men empty, your back free of payments, your brother in doorway, grew teeth at dawn.



island where these things happen (footsoldier)

begin scrap irrelevant
date counter space price
tack maroon head
pin snaky arm
map heavysset
marker black vein
line temporary
address fix up 700 tomato
hide behind easy
money vent metal
box hold seal hands better
die full
belly numbers sewn
waistband hundreds
know her hostage
name

how heart open [32 feet of chain]

for animals

_____	<u>CHAW FRANK</u>	40	M	C	CHIN	21-WD
_____	<u>FLANG CHAW</u>	46	M	C	CHIN	9-WD
_____	<u>FRANK SN</u>	31	M	C	CHIN	6-WD
_____	<u>FUN LEE</u>	34	M	C	CHIN	11-WD

one would not wish this account

sharing every complaint,

down river	
	<i>an incorrect thought, don't you know, recombinant.</i>

What that means, she asks. goodbyes, I try to curl

<i>Be come a cat alog ue of this dis appeared</i>	Ton gue.	<i>Liste n, liste n, liste n.</i>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------	-----------------------------------------------

skin pushes you & warning? next city. They could bring influence to bear on a man.

blueprint

The day
you cross line,
somebody else's ideas

hold
two stories, red-faced

navigation, meridians. Foot width, body length measures between mine
and her rooms. Under sand, subway, which tunnel lead to open, high
prosperity.

take to bed before dusk

my government
name, form path

preserve

with mouth
an alternative vein.

You begin say
sorry all the way.

I do not want

Some sugar to follow.

dear fan,

Future is rooted in this
 story. Each sea layer, crowd,
 desire elsewhere.
 Wild pepper seed and women, this city
 leads to what will
 burn, what is mirage.
 Two towns countries at war
 with all their finery on
 display in the street. 125 voyages
 and still.

yours,
 basket

basket,

In this town, you speak

prophecy. Sweet calf

glove, soft freckle
 and lace. A stomach

to devour disease,
 a gentleman's white lies

along the road. Who we
 exchange in the meantime.

yours,
 fan

good life. Dress plainly. Avoid moth, dusk, lightning, burnish gongs. One foot in front, fill pot. A friend tells me,

other side

“strange stories” “hanging from a death-dealing ... dressed in blue” “shuddered” “trophy”

transactions. Enter, prosper, forward.

“the face, an ashen white” “eventually spend one day and one night” “congregate” “around the collar and the body” “besieged in Wisconsin”

Sun hides gathering season, pick dry

“a stuffed together apparition” “simmering”

done arrives, dusted, sated with hours. Pickled

developments” “imposed”

birds outside my door pennies

movement controls” line up a jar. Daughter “stretching across four days” “committed” “threatening letter”

we turn a corner, how you “prisoner within” at ready, body city-full. “discipline”

“what looked like a man” “tendencies”

strain, maybe. Some days, a line isn't
enough to hold.

re-context. I've tried to notate simple things too. Ashes on page lift fingers. Years rush by. All evidence have no paths. Give way once, another female wringing slabs, burning wood stories down.

one testimony (m. Lao)

(A) Conceived on metal and leather

scrap By time I born, original

gather for phoenix
sculpture frame weigh a ton,

This mother a regular

worker, sing belly

air-full, hulk

above workers, boot

from town to town, gather from outside city. This father
conduct unlike anything whole

enterprise, only visit worksite

Mondays, Wednesdays and seen except on stage. Fridays, inspect
operation

progress. He initially thought her – shorn

become 12 ton remnant, hair, smooth face – some boy he brought 12 in line
around world.

abroad long ago. Demolition and debris,
steel and beam. Gifts to remark on – how

lovely, like drinking
tears; how remarkable, migrant

sweat; how kind,

Isn't why they start

bring mother little food

offering when she stop

talk; her mouth No one – shed a flaking skin – I'm no one they've seen

before.

(C) Conductor bear me when I have no mother –

learn body in absence of his.

Every night flee into cold-room museum, rehearse next productive day.

(make phoenix; counterpoint -
melody; up smokewisps –
hang in air. Not hold your weight in ground.)

This elder does not teach origin.
Love someone not interest in bodies.

All he know – mother's metal bed, worn

hide, hair-lost head, mouth

eventually close.

Every night,

I chase through stinkstreet, stomach
and pain aware, undersurface growth, sweat mire.

Last night, he pelt walls with liquor-fill glass, shake head all time.

I pin self onto floor, pleasure
barter. Into his unwilling arms, another

day, another sun.

Two eggs break ice-floor.

Newchild born share bothface and conductor

won't talk to me. Shed
daughter into they-child
plant stubborn inside

this father's thighs make

unnatural beast from junk

skin, pad throat,
miniature bite. This disobedient

body blame its furnace.

They-child I lead through taxis and luxuriant
unown rooms, search for what this

flesh's barter produce. To house
within its corridors, within its night

vision. This thigh

translate to onion (forty cent), this shoulder

to melon (ninety-nine), this soft
to hide (first time, one hundred), this table
to bite.

They-child I watch for telltale
sign peelage, skin

slippage into rot
layer. They-child never
do, they-child keep

intact, skin and eye

firm. This tight painkiller,
this worker army
produce memory from garbage.

(D) A compress child flake day by day, your skin
unnatural down, as if stick.

They don't remark on it, they watch this mother string up
shovel and hard hat, old sewing
machine

plastic into phoenix carcass.

They watch conductor circle solar monster, face quiver between pleasure and disgust.

That day she fall from fake blue sky, he interview foreign press.

Migrant sweat, he repeat, and value of junk. A side

illustrator sketch conductor's spider fingers,

heavy-grain face. Before

this, black and white solemn workers' photograph.

This photograph survive her, only woman (though shorn,

hairless) in a field of men.

They-child ask me for

Lineage, they say,

photograph memory.

as if explain.

Days misplace living in gardener-run-fortress

after they-child

fame and print elsewhere.

Nobody come to ask
question even
when they-child surface
missing. Follow official
report deliver door to door, even sell
from my high-ladder perch, only undead
trace, only evidence of this lineage.

Now that I'm in this swamp, metal bars, directions don't matter.

(E) Look, each story shit another

nest. Phoenix travel
sea, bear goodwill in 12 directions.

Invited to accompany⁸
originating
structure, speak in its creature

voice, give howl

8

After empty

time each month, body

push out natural

egg, start fall

into place. Layer by layer

shed to center. Eat

nothing first days. Bones

start grind, gnash. Feed

them layers of body

until preen, shine, grow

to skin's end.

to this conductor's compassion.

I board this vessel, sign up for my payment.
Every monster has a snail.

(F) Do not cry when

mother leave, her body incline to mother bring me food (persimmon,
cart back north, along with no use value clementine, pear juice)
to sooth; those

inclined to
process scraps. She go away
then hot city judge (heavy pig blood chunks, marrow and
spectacle, ghost-seed within me. clot) to appease.

She leave me Only ritual
I carry into tarnish

city – care for this no muscular beauty.

ghost, learn natural history
of its body, sing

well back into stomach, feed
its baby as my own.

She say, nothing go from soil, nothing grow from seed.
Each payment birth payment.

Conductor leave this ticket and this photograph.

In hot blood city, I still have seed
and let they watch over me. They feed cash register at times when no patron cross threshold,
bring grinding sauce to correct

shelf. They pour bamboo
into spigot, cut beansoak

into milk, sweep flake from bed.

(G) No one find they-child

Now at night, headless

wire voices

I might lose, this version

perforate skin. Billyclubs
 bear my name. Some
 kind

burn water, imagine
 missing

body slip into river, face
 they-child surface a home for fish.

smooth and shorn blow

up grain.

They-child enter

No one snitch, no one pay.

channel, if only
 to slip out.

(H) They-child never return

in this version. As if world
 peel them down, words
 rise,
 leave, greet morning
 air.

Hours before, wait

for secretary distant
 morning horizon. These twenty years, precise

dress to please. Regardless,
 count up hours

owe, minutes
 borrow offshore sex.

Who you spend whole life love?

Ask secretary as gardener escorts himself

off compound. Love price :: strip

belongings, one body ship

off continent, one body remain

to empty the song.

(I) Account produce ghosts:

As if two sips of water save fourteen jumping into eight hour bunk beds, two sips of water collect muscle for payment. As if they-child would not leave. Alkaline and ridge. They-child cannot be imprint into native informant. They will not come back into any recognizable form. As if narrative from my sketchy notes – throatless tongue in court of law become no-memory faces.

They testify all against me as if my body bears theirs.

14. 300. 200,000.

58 airtight truck, June.

Several teeth in gun barrel.

Punctured territory, intestines of children buyers.

Middlemen board house, pack fruit, counterfeit DVD.

Cigarettes arrange wages.

As if structure hierarchy leads to 18 sleeping in flame processing food.

Farm out minibuses. Incoming tide drowners sue for compensation.

Sugarcane pig daddies close vent.

Canoes set up and burn shop.

(J) As if city of cabbage make a leatherskin egg.

If sulphur, ammonia.

Seven pounds of clay.

Wood ash.

Sea salt.

Quick lime.

Rice hulls.

As if gate I lift tomorrow pickles tea tightly. Metal, small key.

In dark before sun, let root harden, sit between teeth.

Oil, noodle, ginger, spice packet for boiling

chicken happy family. No cabbage milk here, no leatherskin permit. But morning
quicklime comfort

can be approximated, impersonated.

Three passports.

(K) Thursday, flat machete side.

Bird visits from future, bought

for hanging. (demolished) will be tear from balcony, lost skin seeds. No one wear them.

Each sent a letter in its name.

This head needs a help.

This handcuff asks for 2 liquid sips.

Became winter in morning. Money from machete summer. Airport become sent prey.

At marathon's end, I do not apologize in terminal. Ask pregnant prosecutor,

(L) What will you **one year apart**.

understand once
you shed
that child

Eyes give way, lungs hard to read.
This body a blot.

Your name listed twice, once male, another female.

Same occupation, wringing out of backroom fear,

prayer daily in wood. Conjoined by water and land

into world?



**letter for export
(august 1)**

Six confessions

Though you always did search. Two days in, I hear scratch through thread. I say

Dear C -

If I half life what vector
couldn't be danced

Keep open, organs know their own
Story, a line does not belong to me

Father
claim origin
carry to complete
in his belly

*“My daddy is a pilgrim,” on its own
white strip, insert into turnstile to exit.*

Admittedly, Batter & Fire, Como

next

In harbor, I can't say what happen next.
My doorway brother I didn't recognize.
Sentence roll on in rain.
Captain turn his back, shoulder stretch to place,
face melt from pattern. No history here.
Between them, mouths wet with river, glass bodies.
Nothing specific tie me, our mother's
smile I put out to sea familiar. I place myself,
my payments, luck through

doorway trade-bent. Under blue

sky, green highway skin break,

mesh bone and bud,
then boat.

fan,

Story starts of skin. Abscess,
lung, cough to wake

the dead. Which we
collect, inflamed.

Irritants, weeds. We speak

plucking our bodies
thick with twine. What they give,

how they sway. A tale

tall in the grassy night.
Do you believe

in tongues now?

yours,
basket



island where these things happen (seed)

*in this flashskin house our lives in oldchain object
ears may not friend A closet rent-full No hands
listen but fathers rise yellow
B flat tongues incubate song pearl mouths
birds bear discordant boat chords
dream cargo ceilings yank downstream*

origin

rough trade. *settlers appear on scene, explore surroundings,*

themselves at home.

This is also how

conventional history books begin. Other cities, a tree and pass

I can write in dark and sound so like myself, I could be mistaken for a city
solemn resolutions

plaster against wall. I'm dug deep and there's not much left, even for one.

day
proceed to make

a spine, as our family visit

give my government name

mouth form

path

1884-1913. Dear unknown foot setter. Dear lonely rat eater. Dear cook visiting as Wisconsin State Fair stove company product demonstrator. Dear lonely 16 hours and six days. Dear lonely heathen deed. Dear does not believe in advertising. Dear lonely rat eater. Dear good people are you aware. Dear lonely opium addict. Dear 3,000 men in 12 hours. Dear damage. Dear municipal court. Dear joss house display. Dear Immanuel Presbyterian church missionaries. Dear colored shirts. Dear night shirts. Dear apple pie feast with roast chicken, beef and pork. Dear hired carriages. Dear chosen picnic ground – Union Cemetery. Dear rare day of leisure. Dear fancy goods and teas. Dear “enticing,” dear “immoral purposes,” dear public anger. Dear march 11, 1889.

open heart how

city of last
NOTE: DOB 1865

<u>CH</u> <u>AW</u>	<u>FRANK</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>CHIN</u>		<u>21-WD</u>	
	<u>FLANG</u>		<u>46</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>CHIN</u>		<u>9-WD</u>
	<u>FRANK</u>			<u>31</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>CHIN</u>	
	<u>FUN</u>	<u>LEE</u>			<u>34</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>CHIN</u>

shout and street where
 these things ghost

SINGLE

a body to **1883 YR IMMIGRATE**
17 YRS IN US
 bullet **LAUNDRY, CAN READ, WRITE & SPEAK ENGLISH**

Don't waste your time By replace her scrapped arm with fragrance, ***Master unit***
with lock brake she exit lighter than she came.

who crash to lightning
 who burn our feet to print ***hang on trees try live as if true:***

composition

I want to know how to make myself color. Wassily Kandinsky looked sideways, then the sky.

sitting still. First time since
 she home away, head
 down to rest, wait you to finish,
 to exit. How comfortable on
 bed, lying down. Bring out
 instrument pour voice, will she
 remember different city we
 walk muggy summer road. *Don't look at my mouth, she said.*
 Years later, memory alters *It doesn't make my decisions.*
 something eyeless. We took a
 small scar around island and
 that's how we knew – we were meant to walk together partway.

A straight sentence, even music disobey eardrum.

To diagram [the ghost did not] city

A NOTED CONFESSIONAL: I can't write DOB

birds of avenues with no trees [no origin], YR IMMIGRATE [alters]

[x] YRS IN US, rebind CAN LAUNDER, RECITE CHAW scrapped
a 40 contaminant

AND TESTIFY M books in shaking WD houses

[ex. A city cleans dirt, wipes fingerprint on a boat.

We asked only

complete proper usage – lacunae LEE]

[to house a ghost]	s/he yr immigrant birds with no trees
when yr chaw is scrapped when yr books contaminant	shaking WD houses
then she says yellow is a city clean as dirt	then the radio host with all his boats wipes the fingers
teaches the lacunae last name LEE and CHAW	no avenues but write no sings but FUN
LEE for sure has an epidermis proper complete	a voice of an animal to be exfoliated and locked

	as a brake hangs a tree		
		last I heard, s/he lived in	
a house contracted fire			grew the ungrateful
		syllable skin	
			no one could verify
though the knockers parked outside the door			the recitations
	early morn, during hot-tot lunch		
		evenings wet with questions	
the counters said		quizzes must be	administered
until the houses are exited			
		until the boxes forget	the ghosts
this is what belonging			
	equals		

nobody sings FUN eye green
crisscross epidermis.
for 34 money
changing in dawn

No birds
exfoliate and goose

lake head grow evidence in the forgetting

**letter for export
(september 1)**

Somewhere in Boston

loom [a shrunken head]

your kidney box

grave

segment belong each

pen your white field
secure catalogue

some lonely bathroom man

blue a fabricated sour

Organs have their own intelligence, she says.

deduct pattern. contract livelihood. Shame
my father's heir

Later, in interrogation room, a line of evidence, a swath of code.

Earnestly,
Posse & March, Selma



b ---

I've heard rumors
of flawless tongues,
stories unroll heads,
open mouths of small hips.
To release the human
form into bird, belong

to salt these bloody streets.

ghost of a diagram

city generates birds
 who pour complete
 who immigrant trees
 who dirt the body
 clean as cedar
 white as machine we decorate our face to night
 to compose each family
 without contracting
 the underground fire
 last I heard
 s/he drench the ground a liquid
 if not careful
 could lose your sight
 though your mouth
 that mouth
 will never sleep

***island where these things happen (knock-off)***

urine egg
mottle tile
cleanse paper fluid
plastic yo-yo recycle
wood into drumstick synthetic
ice cream cone wind

lacy underwear discard after one use
toothpaste travel
guitar pick eyeglass rim washing machine knob

heavy suns flood market

f--

What he needed from me I have no idea.
 So I spread the blood rumors out
 front of me, stuck
 them cedar spines high,
 shifted their bird locations,
 let them out to wind,
 to ghost, to surface streets.
 I saw you wooden box,
 the microscope, the eye
 of the visitor rolled down
 into the coinbox collection.
 What do you think
 of me now?

b



**letter for export
 (october 18)**

dear sea captain ancestor
 opium trade ancestor
 what do you own ancestor
 store up bodies prisoner ancestor
 unroll cabinet tongue family name ancestor
 war machine daddy

I imagine you father Forbes

*"You not pilgrim. Why you think you pilgrim!" Face a storm, father coming to drench
 me down.*

A real possibility,
 Lynch & Knife, Los Angeles

sunrise. If “no people in the true sense of the word” is mutated cartography of island. Then shipwreck, then borderman. Egg an 11th quadrant machine. A production of feed back – rent home:: repeat ::

a seething in sea lay down detour and archipelago. Not-quite past is brother can read. He machine then, he wind then.

Produce coast, home not yours. Secrete slab on map, each sideways smooth. Night by night, that murky territory when doorknob loose, blue men come through. In morning, demand for who missing, who substitute, who grow.

war

Sister in-between, danger [orange]. Hips sway, feet stomp [gold rush]. I listen
remember that sound. lightning. I practice
 hiss, we form
 boat in night, we become

cut

jaguar. What correction mob [which direction] form vigilante.

String wire *in half*. [watch eyes].

somebody else's ideas. Before me, body rang curling voice, island milk,
 oil splatter. Were you easy and burnt, one and two, light feet, never settle
 basket, your mother a breath taken by sea, land, freight.

[is it safe?] if we quiet, [another envious morning after]

what heart sit high
 among lights watch
 bodies pass
 lonely who
 rise weight
 bear rain

Unit must survive. Draw sunrise, obey wild. *I say, all paths begin in water.*

What learned –

Girl on synthetic girl, push me down to dirt. Mating ritual [braid, stomach, hair follicle,
grow silence
metal, something to last
 sliding hands] begin.

diagram a ghost

in January, I was a girl
not a city
streetless and star remote

these friends whistle me up
in my wolf cap
saw me and my ceiling
for rescue

I whittle down my cheekbones

we joyride
flash and cried I couldn't
be a boy that heard the news
the next daylight
lay swollen not a city
nameless feet march up
demand my name
be crunched in each mouth
remorseful bite
full of fist

if our breath manufacture

sometimes even this ending

“congregate” “around collar and body”

lit lineage. High in air, raise a girl bomb. To pluck, along neck, breath.
Under water, I cannot burn her down with matches bent to orange.

then sharks break
small men upon door
crack open
burn windows

a path *In summer;*
ground
a small *moth-selves*
fish with all teeth

away.

make flat parasite
then hunt
 spartan
ancestors.

who **we be**

holds next weed to

fly

[as a space to occupy] crossing the source

mash-up harvest from/in response to words & images of Michael Lin & Nick Cave

In history of skin composition, my mother floats the sea.

I – I stitch story from your mouth,

switchboard birth ransack which hair. sentence cannot hold your *no operator* mouth

chorus midst a sugar brother,

the one in charge of flight.

born of paper,

a code father made of grains pages keep no bodies. Mailslot letters.

If I - I take your tongue, I ask for his name.

He pushes her shoulder past the starting line.

No exits town.

Only hair stitch on my tongue.

Each unchain sentence know no limit.

They hold mouths under sea.

She could have her own memory, but her eye belong To translate :

Floating bodies surface containers

polarized muscle full /thrift museum

parameter in your forage/eye border

300 of a thing provoke

create itself as keyhole

In each ransack morning, *She whisper full and soft.*

I obscure exits.

There is procedure to ransack sentence.

Each sentence intimate with her chain of command.

Her hold onto book mouth, each stroke empty spider.

Her voice

infected with sperm, her mouth a roof split at river.

Distance town
letters through mailslot
notice enforce silence
her mouth a river in place
no guests spare chain
separate horizon from infection

What composes town :: this neck
lace dark owl
a kill cave
burst
flower.

Two discard
muscle and neck compose
skin

We dance two letters, one
story lose their ladder.

i never really work alone
two rivers into keyhole
a ship make public
highway original live as skin

Two continents stitch each other shut.

hunting ancestors

brittle words
 so concerned :: bottom rivers

ironcast
 pot.

She walk backwards – hard
 to open :: A friend

tells me, I could

your fingers, but there ::

write poems, I
 think. Difficult

in light, graceful ::

gathering season, everything pick dry. Hungry, my door

step. We
 pickle birds
 outside
 turn a
 corner, how you

strain, maybe.
 Some days, a line

a lit ghost

winter made me 18 shots a January city ghost no trees become clear of immigrant

don't tell me who contracts the dawn

no fingerprint speaks to risk the sun with all their whistle-up

boys

don't tell me who shot the drought

with all their flash-thin voices

don't tell me who clears the coming

with all their pigskin sold stories

who smooths their cheeks

who turns out to break the news

f --

There was tension in the air, a pair of black
boots, pink-eyed horses, my mother's
hands limp against her thigh.

The prisoners bending over
like great white sails,
their black and brown hands,
their male bodies held no language
of their own, a red handprint,
the fallow season of autumn
looking at a tree. All the women
had gold teeth, hearts like withered
raisins. I began to run,
the mirror was broken.

b



island where these things happen (if this beginning)

*Forget when emerge aliened from this house.
Teeth and heart back garden plant, origin story too.
New metal millennium woman, ferret sturdies bucket
by bucket to certified shore.*

Everyone need proper. Witness hands journey forward into midnight.

*Learn gravity, watch how she collect
ears, starting with your own.*

dear island letter writer,

Once I held onto her glass
voice, my mother a sentence

pour into book's
mouth, each spider
in pages stretch
into place.

My mother eat river,
mouth rain-fill.

Do not repeat past,
she kiss me, my face
wet with procedure.

I step to next
harbor.

closed sky

Morning rose empty
 as pigeon, beak
 on horizon.

Cleanse.

Someone else, another body
 cooks in dense air.

What song lives each
 time sun goes out.

Lightbulbs then, wood
 oil flames.

*

Someone cleans sea.
 A body fragrant in air breaks
 molecules and surface.

This body cleans
 surface. A song comes
 out to peck and pray.

Sun feeds on prey.
 Make body alight
 Rest thing which
 can't stay
 infection

*

A pathogen cleans fragrant
 body. This body eats
 skin, repeats song
 in infected morning.

Whatever abnormal has
 no story. I composed
 my host and what they
 replicate. I fear
 only to repeat.

*

Pathogen clean body

fragrant a body in morning
 a rose inert against its agent
 sun feeds this coat

An envelope of protein.
 A surrounding system
 of damage. A host
 makes body light
 and break.

**

Look, no one cleans sea. Their surface recombines with dirt. Molecules another bird.
 Pathogen in morning
 song insect flying into sun

*

Look, sea does not want to participate. No one on the side of sea.
 Oilslick mouth is a her.
 What does not close is a skin next to skin.

Drops of a body birds come to host.

diagram

a January city become immigrant

no houses have girls

complete and clear fingerprints

who whistle up boys

this city

who flash their feet south

who thin out their voices

who bleed out their pigs

who grin and bear their changing hands

turns up to turn out

their growing breasts

their smoother cheeks

breaks the news to pieces

when they hear what stories are sold

various various

I hate to tell you this is not what the captain recorded.

*

What my mother bought –

the west coast of India, a shoulder full of fort wall
a thousand everyday hands
cutting the clay to put on the table

*

Here the cities gather to watch the divisions *To know absolutely there will be an end to this
relationship – apart from keepsakes.*

*

after the loud journey and the birds

*

die. Suddenly,

imperial decree a forced resurrection of the boulevard.

*

Enclaves in the english factory ports

*

the mouth like a hull
two teeth cracked to a sigh

*

Years later, I opened the book, a wooden box for a treasure, the captured lines sank gently to the floor.

*

only approachable on foot

the network of cities water tanks

*

There were stories of this pillar road which ate and ate through ears, stubs of toes. I avoided the road in my walk to market; a carriage pushed me off the home road. Follow the tributary into a marked section, recently emptied of plague. There were stories.

*

The book begins with an epigraph: "every body that is not my body is a foreign country." Then the water tank is a growth I paid for with my eye.

*

Though the map was muddy, I forced my sore body. Muddy, I through pane-glass hedge. I measured the air in my mouth. I missed my eye.

*

The caption – no ear belongs here.

diagram: early coroner's songbird

island where these things shorn
a salt dress speculate
a chrysalis
turned chesnut bullet and dance
twist and shout
your last name could be mine
could be a moor

printed on your anklet



island where these things happen (asylum)

*what does liberation what does self-determination
squat cornerstores of the world get ready*

Notes

“origin” and “blueprint”: Italicized words from “Conclusion: How to Study the Landscape” by J.B. Jackson

“heritage,” “envelope/recombinant,” and “good life/other side”: Italicized words from Victor Jew's “Chinese Demons': the Violent Articulation of Chinese Otherness and Interracial Sexuality in The U.S. Midwest, 1885-1889”

“how open heart,” “how heart open [32 feet of chain],” and “open heart how”: uses borrowed language from Srikanth Reddy, Keith + Mendi Obadike, Selina Tusitala Marsh, “10 Steps to Loving Others,” 1900 US manuscript census.

“sunrise”: I came across James Anthony Froude's statement that the Caribbean had “no people in the true sense of the word” in Shalini Puri's “Canonized Hybridities, Resistant Hybridities: Chutney Soca, Carnival, and the Politics of Nationalism.”

“war”: while watching Ananya Dance Theater's Kshoy!/Decay!

“inspector of journals makes introductions: Fan and Basket reference two artifacts in the collection of the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. The poem borrows language from Anne Carson, Jeanette Winterson, Linda Hogan, Muriel Rukeyser and Terrance Hayes.

“various various”: Daniel Borzutzky's *The Book of Interfering Bodies*, Kimiko Hahn's *The Artist's Daughter*, Shalini Puri's “Canonized Hybridities, Resistant Hybridities: Chutney Soca, Carnival, and the Politics of Nationalism.”

CURRICULUM VITAE

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University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

M.F.A. in Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts, June 2010

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B.A. in International Relations and English, June 1999

Tufts University, Medford, MA

PUBLICATIONS

Books:

The Heart's Traffic: a novel in poems. Los Angeles: Arktoi Books/Red Hen Press, 2009.

Anthologies and Chapbooks, Edited:

Co-Editor, Milwaukee-area Hmong Writing Project. Anthology in progress.

Co-Editor, *Turn up the Volume: the States of Wisconsin.* Madison: Little Bird Press, 2013.

Co-Editor, *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence Within Activist Communities.* Boston: South End Press, 2011.

Co-Editor, *Here Is A Pen: an Anthology of West Coast Kundiman Poets.* Berkeley: Achiote Press, 2009.

Literary Journals, Edited:

Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor, *cream city review*, 2011-2015.

Senior Editor, *The Conversant*, 2014-present.

Guest Curator, Midwest Remix edition, *Verse Wisconsin*, 2014.

Co-Editor, "Writing the Desert." *Phantom Seed*, 2010.

Editor, "We All Belong to the Same Love Song: a Kundiman Feature." *Delirious Hem*, 2010.

Selected Publications (Anthologies):

"bhanu feeds soham a concession," *Best American Experimental Writing.* Wesleyan, CT: Wesleyan University Press, in press.

"one testimony (m. Lao)." *An Alphabet of Embers: an Anthology of Unclassifiabes.* Albuquerque: Stone Bird Press, in press.

"Identification Song." *The Animated Reader: Poetry in the Surround Audience.* New York: New Museum Triennial, in press.

"derived love: flying boy does it all," "noah: a reassembled zuihitsu." *The &NOW Awards 3: The Best Innovative Writing.* Lake Forest: Lake Forest Press, 2015.

- “Kundiman: a Zuihitsu.” *Local Ground(s)--Midwest Poetics: Selected Prose Verse Wisconsin, 2009-2014*. Madison: Cowfeather Press, 2014.
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- “Things I Wish I Could Tell My Fifteen Year Old Self.” *Stay Solid! A Radical Handbook for Youth*. Oakland: AK Press, 2013.
- “Dream: the Disappeared Lover,” “Chinese Workers at USDA Lab, 1904,” “American Syntax,” “The Sentence Lovers.” *Another and Another: an Anthology from the Grind Daily Writing Series*. Durham: Bull City Press, 2012.
- “Chin’s Monologue in the Bucket.” *A Face to Meet the Faces: an Anthology of Contemporary Persona Poetry*. Akron: The University of Akron Press, 2012.
- “Blueprint,” “Heritage,” “Four hours before departure,” “1884-1913,” “War.” *When We Become Weavers: Queer Female Poets on the Midwestern Experience*. Minneapolis: Squares and Rebels, 2012.

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"Confessional: Derailment," "Two River Girls." *Collective Brightness: LGBTIQ Poets on Faith, Religion and Spirituality*. Alexander: Sibling Rivalry Press, 2011.

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"Love with the Gravedigger." *Don't Blame the Ugly Mug: Ten Years of Two Idiots Peddling Poetry*. Huntington Beach: Tebot Bach, 2011.

Selected Publications (Literary Journals/Magazines):

"[as a space to occupy]." *Valley Voices* (in press).

"Census: x/June 6," "dear story of a risk,/1878," "testimony K (m. Lao) and "testimony L (m. Lao)." *Mission at Tenth* (in press).

"Origin," "Testimony C2 (m. Lao)." *Indiana Review* (2014).

"Testimony J (m. Lao)." *Spoon River Poetry Review* (2014).

"underground shiny city drag," *Court Green* (in press); "leaving shiny city," "Next," "dear nightpeople we couldn't ferry." *Court Green* (2014).

"A Natural History of My White Girl," Poem-A-Day, *Academy of American Poets* (2014); "Simulacra." Poem-A-Day, *Academy of American Poets* (2011).

"Predator," "i fiber sunlight (fotos)," "divestment haibun 2," "Our History of Sight," "Saturation." *LIT* (2014).

"Oral History Revisited: Interview with the Assistant." *Better: Culture and Lit* (2014).

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"Sunrise," *Black Warrior Review* (2013); "Gestations: a Pathology," "island where these things happened." *Black Warrior Review* (2012).

"The Switchboard Operator." *Codex* (2013).

"party blaze." *Shepherd Express* (2013).

"Composition/Sitting Still." *EDNA* (2013).

“Agent Orange Infection – I Go to School with my Friend/Peaceful Country.” *Lantern Review* (2013).

“Various Various.” *Mead Magazine* (2013).

“Leaving the Shiny City.” *Eye to the Telescope* (2013).

“Dialektik Skool, a Sampling of Correspondence, Interrogation, and Other Materials.” *Volta/Evening Will Come* (2012).

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“The Letter Q.” *Academy of American Poets blog* (2012).

“Milwaukee’s Pacific Heritage.” *Best American Poetry blog* (2012).

“Feeding the Water.” *Brilliant Corners* (2012).

“I Force Myself Upon the Soldier,” “A Town Where There Are No People,” “In the Beaten-Rice Factory,” “Kundiman: a zuihitsu.” *Verse Wisconsin* (2012).

“three seeds,” “six seeds.” *Dirtcakes* (2012).

“Dear B.” *Kweli Journal* (2012).

“Chinese Workers at USDA Lab, 1904,” “Parable of the Shiny City.” *The New Sound* (2012).

“Eleven Seeds,” “Confessional 5b: a Zuihitsu.” *Sententia* (2012).

“Queer Poetry: a zuihitsu.” *Metre Maids* (2012).

“American Syntax.” Poem-of-the-Week, *Split This Rock* (2011).

“American Syntax,” “Sentence Lover’s Letter to Her Girl.” *So To Speak: a Feminist Literary Journal* (2011).

“Bookburning in the Shiny City,” “Shiny City Loves,” “Our Histories Not Found in a Book,” “From the Month of the Book,” “The Shine of the Frozen City,” “The Next Lesson,” “Path for Shadows in the Shiny City.” *Asian American Literary Review* (2011).

“Dream: the Disappeared Lover.” *Drunken Boat* (2011).

“seven seeds.” *Whistling Fire* (2011).

“Bag of Plaster,” “Love with the Chinese Lion Dancer.” *Sinister Wisdom* (2010).

“Dream Upon Arrival to America,” “Rummage: Haibun,” “Skyscraper.” *Connotation Press* (2010).

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- “Conjure in the Shiny City.” *580 Split* (2010).
- “Bar Japon: a postcard haibun.” *Quarterly West* (2010).
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- “Bag of Plaster,” “Love with the Chinese Lion Dancer.” *Sinister Wisdom* (2010).
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- “Killed Memory Together,” “Instructions from the Postcard Maker,” “3. Breakfast Tray.” *Tidal Basin Review* (2010).
- “Shiny City, Origins.” *Everyday Genius* (2010).
- “The Sky's Full Contents.” *Monday Night* (2009).
- “Arrestable,” “This Girl.” *make/shift magazine* (2009).
- “Praisesong for Sisters,” “Leftover,” “For the Girl Who Nearly Broke Me.” *Poemeleon* (2009);
 “Cowrie: a riddle,” “Fighting Over Stars,” “Xiaomei's Father, Again,” “The TrueTale of Xiaomei.” *Poemeleon*. (2008).
- “Marriage.” *San Antonio Express-News* (2009).
- “Translation.” *BorderSenses* (2009).
- “Luo.” *Rio Grande Review* (2009).
- “Seven Fragments: a Zuihitsu,” “cool Li?: a riddle.” *Fifth Wednesday Journal* (2007-2009).
- “The New World.” *Verdad* (2009).
- “Ferment,” “Kundiman for Those You Must Say Goodbye To.” *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal* (2009).
- “Disciple.” *SundaySalon* (2009).
- “With.” *Iron Horse Literary Review* (2008).
- “Thousand Year Egg,” *Water~Stone Review*. (2008).
- “[3. Girl.],” “Fifth Day of Silence,” “Xiaomei's First Heartbreak,” “Lightning Love: a Zuihitsu.” *OCHO* (2008).
- “After Virginia Tech,” *New Verse News* (2007).
- “fob,” *Tea Party* (2007).

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Graduate Teaching Assistant Intern, Communication Arts Department, College of Lake County, 2015
English 122: Composition II, Gender & Sexuality (1 section: traditional)

Graduate Teaching Assistant, English Department, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2010–2014

ENG 260: Introduction to Poetry (1 section: traditional, web-enhanced, instructor of record)

ENG 233: Introduction to Creative Writing (5 sections: traditional, web-enhanced; 1 section: online, instructor of record)

ENG 101: Introduction to College Writing (3 sections: traditional, web-enhanced, instructor of record)

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Creative Writing Department, University of California, Riverside, 2008–2010

CRWT 57: Introduction to Poetry (1 section: traditional, web-enhanced, instructor of record)

CRWT 56: Introduction to Creative Writing (6 sections: traditional, web-enhanced)

THEA 67: Introduction to Screenwriting (3 sections: traditional, web-enhanced)

SELECTED AWARDS, HONORS AND FELLOWSHIPS

2015

Junior Fellow, Image Text Workshop and Symposium, Ithaca, NY

Writer Full Stipend Award, Can Serrat Art Residency, El Bruc, Spain

Waldslaw Cieszynski Memorial Award for Poetry, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

Senate Appropriations Grant, *cream city review*, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI; \$7,115.14, grant for Spring 2015

2014

Nomination, Association of Writers and Writing Programs Intro Journals Award, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

Cultures & Communities Community/University Partnership Grant for “The Other Side of the Mirror: Fostering Creative Expressions and Literacy in Communities Impacted by Incarceration,” *cream city review*, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI; \$1500, one year grant

Senate Appropriations Grant, *cream city review*, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI; \$10,153.87, grant for Fall 2014; \$10,225.60, grant for Spring 2014

Distinguished Dissertation Fellowship for 2014–15, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

Finalist, Subito Poetry Prize, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO

Achievement Award, Asian Faculty and Staff Association Award, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

Women's Studies Student Project Award Winner, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

Finalist, Kundiman Poetry Prize, Alice James Books, Farmington, ME

Finalist, Library Scholar Award, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

Fellow, Callaloo Writing Workshop, Providence, RI

Residency, Patio Taller, Carolina, Puerto Rico

Residency, Ragdale Foundation, Lake Forest, IL

Travel Award, English Department, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

2013

Pushcart Nomination for “Confessional: Hijacked” from Cowfeather Press, Madison, WI

Sappenfield Award, Department of English, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

Senate Appropriations Grant, *cream city review*, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI; \$2,668.75, grant for Fall 2013; \$1,890.45, grant for Spring 2013

Wisconsin Arts Board Grant, *cream city review*, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI; \$2,000, one-year grant

Travel Award, Graduate School, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

2012

Organization of Chinese Americans–Wisconsin Rosa Carr Fellow, Milwaukee, WI

Residency, Norman Mailer Center, Provincetown, MA

Travel Award, Graduate School, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI

2011

Publicly Active Graduate Education Fellowship, Imagining America, Syracuse, NY

DePaul Theatrical Jazz Institute, Links Hall, Chicago, IL

Robert W Simpson Fellow, Millay Colony for the Arts, Austerlitz, NY

Residency, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Amherst, VA

Travel Award, Graduate School, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

2010

Chancellor’s Graduate Student Support Award, Department of English, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

Mapping the Desert/Deserting the Map Grant for “Writing the Desert,” University of California Riverside Sweeney Art Gallery/University of California Institute for Research in the Arts, \$1,000, grant for Summer 2010

Hearst Community Arts Fellowship, University of California, Riverside, CA

Travel Award, Graduate School, University of California, Riverside, CA

2009

Graduate Student Humanities Research Award, University of California, Riverside, CA

Gluck Community Arts Fellowship, University of California, Riverside, CA

Pushcart Nomination for “With” from *Iron Horse Literary Review*, 2009

Eaton Best Science Fiction Story Contest Winner for “Kawanies, Colony,” University of California, Riverside, CA

Finalist, Borders Open–Door Poetry Contest for “Black Light” and “Two Truth and a Lie.”

Full Tuition Scholarship Award, New York Summer Writers' Institute, Skidmore, NY

2008

Travel Award, Graduate School, University of California, Riverside, CA

2007

Honorable Mention for “Two River Girls,” Gival Press Oscar Wilde Award

Chancellor's Distinguished Fellowship Award, University of California, Riverside, CA

Writer Conferences and Center's Scholarship Competition Winner, Association of Writers and Writing Programs

Scholarship Award, Archie D. and Bertha H. Walker Foundation, Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, MA

Fellowship Awardee, Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT

Residency, Paden Institute, Essex, NY

Residency, Soul Mountain Retreat, East Haddam, CT

Scholarship Award, Community of Writers–Squaw Valley, CA

Scholarship Award, Split Rock Arts Program, Minneapolis, MN

Scholarship Award, Pine Manor College Summer Solstice Writing Conference, Chestnut Hills, MA

Travel Award, Graduate School, University of California, Riverside, CA

2006

Selected Artist, Artist Exchange on Gentrification; Asian Arts Initiative, Philadelphia, PA

Zora Neale Hurston Award Recipient, Naropa Summer Writing Program, Boulder, CO

Fellow (also in 2004, 2005), Kundiman Asian American Poets' Retreat, Charlottesville, VA

PRESENTATIONS

Selected Invited Readings, Talks and Performances:

2015

Featured Reader, University of Wisconsin–Waukesha, WI

Writers Week Conference, University of California, Riverside

Reader's Loft Feature, Green Bay, WI

2014

Nepantla reading, Poetry Foundation, Chicago, IL

Visiting Writers' Series, Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Galloway, NJ

Big House Holiday Show, Racine Correctional Institution, Sturtevant, WI

Poetic Justice: an Evening of Radical Poetry, Left Bank Books, Seattle, WI

25 for 25 Lambda Fellows Reading, Seattle, WI

Featured Reader, Woman Made Gallery, Chicago, IL

MFA Mixer reading, Cat Club, San Francisco, CA

Lights Trauma Revelation – a night of Asian American Poetics, Outer Space Studio, Chicago, IL

Midwestern Friendlies Meet (hosted by Indiana University), Back Door, Bloomington, IN

Objets d'Art: A Literary Showcase of the Senses (fundraiser for Still Waters Collective/Wisconsin's Brave New Voices teen slam team), Milwaukee, WI

2013

Transformative Justice Workshop Facilitator and Public Talk/Q&A, “The Revolution Starts at Home,” Multicultural Student Center, University of Wisconsin–Madison, WI; Lectures, talks, workshops and anthology readings, *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence* (University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada; Food for Thought Books, Amherst, MA; Matahari Global Women's Forum, Encuentro5, Boston, MA; Rhizome Cafe, Vancouver, Canada; The Vera Project, Seattle, WA; University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT in 2012)

Flicker and Spark International Queer Anthology reading, Boston Alliance of LGBT Youth, Community Church of Boston, Boston, MA

Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics anthology launch readings (Club Cafe, Boston, MA; Red Rover Series Experiment #68 at Outer Space Studio, Chicago, IL; Poetry Project, New York, NY)

Writers Read From Their Work: Authors from the VONA and Las Dos Brujas Writing Communities, Make Shift Boston, MA

RHINO Reads! Open Mic Feature, Brother K, Evanston, IL

Boneyard Arts Festival reading, Champaign, IL

Girl-not reading/performance, Milwaukee PrideFest, Milwaukee, WI

LGBT Poets on the Midwestern Experience Queer Voices reading, Minneapolis Public Library, Minneapolis, MN

Banned Books reading, Woodland Pattern, Milwaukee, WI

Poetry & Pints reading, Harmony Brewing Co, Grand Rapids, MI

Hidden Culture Tap, Downtown Books, Milwaukee, WI

Echolocations, Poets Map Madison launch party, Madison Public Library, Madison, WI

Big House Holiday Show, Racine Correctional Institution, Sturtevant, WI

2012

Ancestors: a Queer Writers of Color reading, Free Center at Halsted, Chicago, IL

Stand with Wisconsin reading, People's Books Co-operative, Milwaukee, WI

LGBTQ Artist Showcase Exhibition Featured Reading, Foxglove Gallery, Milwaukee, WI

Featured Reading, Southeast Wisconsin Festival of Books, University of Wisconsin–Waukesha, WI

Visiting Writer Reading, Silver Lake College, Manitowoc, WI

2011

Revolving Door Series feature, Red Kiva, Chicago, IL

Tidal Basin Review reading, Washington, DC

Baby Bonk! reading, Gallery B4S, Racine, WI

Queer Border Crossings reading, Asian American Writers' Workshop, New York, NY

Sappho's Salon, Women and Children's First Bookstore, Chicago, IL

100,000 Poets Organizing for Change, Woodland Pattern, Milwaukee, WI

¡Yahora! Reading, El Grafógrafo, Tijuana, Mexico

Selected Conference Panels and Presentations:

2015

Member, “The Poetics of Construction,” Massachusetts Poetry Festival, Salem, MA

Member, “Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation Reading,” Thinking Its Presence: The Racial Imaginary: Race, Creative Writing, and Literary Study, University of Montana, Missoula, MT

Panel Organizer, “*cream city review* Celebrates Returning the Gift Native American Writers,” Association of Writers and Writing Programs, Minneapolis, MN

2014

Panel Member, “The BONK! Performance Series: Turning Local Weirdos into Artistic Powerhouses One Library Program at a Time,” Wisconsin Library Association Conference, Wisconsin Dells, WI

Panel Member, “The Poetics of Neither and Both,” From Trauma to Catharsis: Performing the Asian Avant-Garde, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA

Plenary Panel Member, “Plenary Panel: Identity & Poetics Across Genres;” Panel Member, “Fucking Form, Fucking Gender,” Writing Trans Genres: Emergent Literatures and Criticism, University of Winnipeg, Canada

Keynote, “Mutate: Flirting with Boundaries,” University of Wisconsin–Parkside Writers' Conference, Kenosha, WI

Panel Member, “Editors' Panel,” Lions in Winter, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL

2013

Youth Poetry Respondent, “Performance Poetry: First Wave,” Wisconsin Book Festival, Madison, WI

Panel and Reading Organizer, “Intersecting Lineages: Poets of Color on Cross-Community Collaboration,” Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference, Boston, MA

Panel Member, “Southeast Wisconsin Literary Magazine Panel,” Southeast Wisconsin Festival of Books, University of Wisconsin–Waukesha, WI

Panel Participant, “Revolution and Art: Ekphrasis by Kundiman Asian-American Poets,” Massachusetts Poetry Festival, Salem, MA

2012

Panel Member, “Queer Poets of Color on Craft: the Art of Decolonization,” Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference, Denver, CO

Panel Member, “Ritual and the Supernatural: the Aura of Poetry-Writing,” Massachusetts Poetry Festival, Salem, MA

Panel Member, “Nature of Wisconsin Poetry,” Lorine Niedecker Wisconsin Poetry Festival, Fort Atkinson, WI

Panel Co-organizer, “Intersecting Lineages: a Solidarity Showcase of African American and Asian American Poets;” Featured Reader, “*Collective Brightness: LGBTIQ Poets on Faith, Religion & Spirituality* anthology reading,” Split This Rock Poetry Festival, Washington, DC

Panel Member, “The Creative Side of Publishing,” Wisconsin Book Festival, Madison, WI

2011

Panel Member, “Consumption: a Reading and Roundtable with Asian American Poets,” Association for Asian American Studies, New Orleans, LA

Panel Member, “Kin: Mixed-Genre of Color,” “Arktoi Books Celebrates Five Years of Lesbian Publishing!,” Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference, Washington, DC.

Panel Participant, “Kundiman: Love Songs for the Peabody Essex Museum,” Massachusetts Poetry Festival, Salem, MA

Panel Co-organizer, “Which Selves Built Up From Image: Visual Arts and Asian American Poetry,” *&Now Festival of New Writing 2011: Tomorrowland Forever!* Conference, San Diego, CA

2010

Panel Member, “Decolonial Poetics: Womanist, Indigenous, and Queer Poets of Color on the Art of Decolonization,” “Re-writing America: Complicating the Poetics of Identity,” Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference, Denver, CO

Reading Co-organizer, “AWP Cave Canem/Kundiman Salon,” Mercury Cafe, Denver, CO

2009

Panel Member, “Kundiman Kindles the Flame: New Asian American Poetry,” Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference, Chicago, IL

Panel Co-organizer, “Asian American Avant-Garde Poetics,” Advancing Feminist Poetics and Activism, New York, NY

Panel Co-organizer, “Disrupting the Page: Hybridity & Asian American Poetics,” Association of Asian American Studies Conference, Honolulu, HI

Panel Member, “Zuihitsu Performance,” National Association of Ethnic Studies Conference, San Diego, CA

Selected Artistic and Performance Collaborations:

2013

Artist Collaborator and Live Event Writing Co-Coordinator for Kundiman, “Writing Race and Belonging: a Protest Poem for Trayvon Martin,” Gramsci Monument, Dia Art Foundation; “Writing Race and Belonging: a Live Monument,” Writing On It All, Governor's Island, NY

2011

Artist Participant, “ReFrame: A Gathering,” Rumble Arts Center and Links Hall, Chicago, IL

Writer, “Kundiman for Kin,” Theatrical Jazz Institute, Links Hall, Chicago, IL

2010

Writer, “Two Rumors in a Bucket,” TeadaWorks Performance Lab, Los Angeles, CA

Writer, Mapping the Desert, Dry Immersion Roving Symposium, Riverside and Joshua Tree, CA

2008

Script Manager, Cornerstone Theater Company Summer Institute, Los Angeles, CA

2005

Producer, Writer, Performer, “Missed Sigh Gone: A Community Response to the Musical Miss Saigon,” Jorge Hernández Cultural Center, Boston, MA

2004

Writer, Director. *We Will Not Be Moved: A Story of Oakland Chinatown, a film*. Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project, San Francisco, CA

Selected Film, Journey Home Sisterz! film screening, National Queer Arts Festival, San Francisco LGBT Community Center, San Francisco, CA

Cast Member, Performer, Writer, “Bone Songs: Echoes of the Unknown Mother” performance, The HerStories Project, Oakland, CA

2003

Facilitator, Performer, Writer, “The Movement and the Moment: Arts in Asian American Activism: a performance/dialogue,” Energies in Residence Asian American arts collective, San Francisco, CA

2002

Narrator, *The Energy Rangers in Soot City*. <http://www.colmoriain.com/sootcity/episode1.html>

Campus/Departmental Talks, Presentations and Performances

2015

Speak, Poet! reading, Library Grind, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

2013

Speak, Poet! reading, Library Grind, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

Exquisite Uterus Opening Reception featured reading, Union Art Gallery, Milwaukee, WI

United We Read readings (Trocadero; Boswell Books in 2012), Milwaukee, WI

2012

Eat Local Read Local reading, Cafe Hollander, Milwaukee, WI

Genderqueerious performance, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Sex and Gender Spectra Conference, Milwaukee, WI

Imagetexts ~ Visual Poetry ~ Poet/Artist Collaborations, Woodland Pattern, Milwaukee, WI

2009

Writer, “When She Singing Flame Battled the Broke-Down Bus Narrative: a Choreopoem Opera,” Playworks Festival, University of California, Riverside, CA

2008

Writer, “The Geisha Author Interviews,” Playworks Festival, John Cauble Short Play Award nomination, University of California, Riverside, CA

DEPARTMENTAL/UNIVERSITY SERVICE

University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Midwestern Friendlies and Exchange Reading Coordinator, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI, 2014-2015

Discussion Facilitator, Transforming Justice workshop: Racism, Anti-Black Violence, and Mass Criminalization, Milwaukee, WI, 2014

Workshop Facilitator, Sister Talk: Multicultural Women's Circle Writing Workshop Leader, Union Sociocultural Programming, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI, 2014

Member, Violence Against Women Interdisciplinary Research Group, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI, 2012–2013

Graduate Project Assistant, Common Read Experience, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI, 2012–2013

Planning Committee Member, Returning the Gift Native Writers' Conference, Milwaukee Native American Literary Cooperative, Milwaukee, WI, 2012

Queer News on Campus Coordinator, Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Professionals, 2011–2012

University of California–Riverside Graduate Student Representative, University of California Students Association, California, 2008–2009

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION AND TO THE COMMUNITY

Poetry Reader, Callaloo, 2015-present

Shift Reading Series Curator, Woodland Pattern, 2014-2015

Member, Wisconsin Poet Laureate Commission, WI, 2014-2015

Poetry Reader, First Book Contest Reader, Union anthology project lead, *Drunken Boat*, 2013–present

Board Member, Woodland Pattern, Milwaukee, WI, 2012–2015

Manuscript Reader, Kore Press, 2013–present

Judge, Scholastic Writing Awards, Still Waters Collective, Milwaukee, WI, 2015

Creative Writing Workshop Facilitator, Java Scripts, Still Waters Collective, Milwaukee, WI, 2014

Poetry Chapbook Judge, Imaginary Friend Press, 2013–2014

Co-Coordinator, Milwaukee Transformative Justice Learn-to-Action Group, Milwaukee, WI, 2012–2013

Poetry Judge, Willow Books Literature Awards, 2012

Poetry Workshop Facilitator, Speak Peace Milwaukee workshop and exchange, Milwaukee War Memorial Center, 2012

Community Outreach Committee Member, Save Our Chinatown, Riverside, CA, 2008–2010

Reader, California Writers Exchange, CA, 2009

Board Member, Inlandia Institute, Riverside, CA, 2009–2010

Director of Programs, Asian American Resource Workshop, Boston, MA, 2004–2006

Employment Advocate, Chinese for Affirmative Action, San Francisco, CA, 2001–2004

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

2014

Teaching & Learning in College (GRAD 803), University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI
 Theory and Practice of Literary Pedagogy (ENG 820), University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

2013

Participant, Online and Blended Teaching Program, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Learning Technology Center, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

2010

Teaching College Composition (ENG 701), University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, WI

2009

Teaching Practicum: Creative Writing (CRT-302), University of California, Riverside, CA

Problems in Pedagogy of Comparative Literature (CPLT-222), University of California, Riverside, CA

2006

Organizers of Color Initiative, Center to Support Immigrant Organizing, Boston, MA

2004

Women of Color Leadership Forum, JRI Health, Boston, MA

2003

Activists of Color Media Training, SPIN Project, Oakland, CA

2002

Anti-Racist Alliance-Building for Activists of Color, Institute for Multiracial Justice, San Francisco, CA