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The Greatest Films

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The Greatest Films

by

Faizal Forrester

A Creative Writing Project
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
through the Department of English Language, Literature and Creative Writing
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at the
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Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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The Greatest Films

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Abstract

“The Greatest Films” is a poetry manuscript accompanied by a critical essay that explores Indo-Guyanese-Canadian subjectivity in the late 1970s. The poems address themes of cultural hybridity as they are fomented *through* passages between real and imagined homelands and hostlands. The manuscript employs disjunctive poetic techniques that exteriorize histories of Indo-Guyanese-Canadian cultural and ethnic dispersal and encampment. While by no means an exhaustive list of sources, “The Greatest Films” assembles poems from timelines, cinematic language, letters, lyrical flourishes, oral histories, and world literature. “The Greatest Films” revivifies these sources into repeating lines of verse that pulls readers back-and-forth from the left to right margin with tentative stops in the centre of the page. Regardless of which direction the poems pull readers towards, what always awaits them is an encounter with the residual nostalgia for ‘origins’ activated by narrative fragments of embroidered ancestral memory *before*—and distant from—Guyana and Canada.

Dedication

for Mom & Bob

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The Greatest Films

MOM & BOB: Matinees

*

Pink man turkey neck & Mom never brings home doggie bags.
that's Demico chicken in a basket, take away twinkle eyes, Mom don't forget
no negro Indian whiteman in the veins. or how Funk Wagnalls
does Caucasian cha cha cha. So: Mom brings Bob home in the dark.

*

Bob from Manitoba, somewhere near Brandon; he'n Bartica made snake eyes together.
"73, 732 sq. m. in W. Canada," the Assiniboine speaks & when Mom comes back she doesn't bring
scraps; but she has plenty of left-over bones from the mooneye she kill.

*

"Manitoba," Funk Wagnalls says, "not Magyar. Aryan Anglo-Saxon. not Breton race-stocks."
& when Bob asks, "who is she?" who is Mom? Uncle Sultan says,
"my sister will never any whiteman capital Winnipeg touch. she fancy Mr. Rochester country
where the animals have faces so many damn right!"

*

when the Liberty opens in Old Spice, Mom & Bob in balcony all alone no chaperone & no Asha Boshle
 flickers let's misbehave
 Brando & pit erupts "scunt!" bottles flung
 at the screen: poomb!

Mom & Bob eyes shut in this derniere tango Paris derriere
 wish they could throw the Parigi story at the screen get married move to Ottawa

but dead Brando hurts the eyes to read this English in Anchor butter
 bend the pirouettes at the end

this right wrong show that flickers, hold on!
 fellatio fedoras the film because!

*

a high-noon, bug-out unhappy endings kids we don't know,
 Guyana izzan island Gary Cooper must win? no?
 listen kids Uncle Sultan yells, "& does piss & white rum coming up on you?"
 cutaway Sacred Heart me behind Sister Brian nodding off at 11am.
 Mom at Palm Court Main Street with Uncle Sultan.
 Georgetown to Timehri to Madiwini trucking shots & no anaconda passing traffic.

*

Cheddi Jagan next door squeezing a post-stroke rubber ball on the terrace is a boom shot &
The Merryman in from Barbados & the rule of nouns I've learned from Mom & Bob
& Bob smells Lucky Luke-like.

*

Mom: "I don't want another white rum coolie man, 'Another one, bhai! Another one!' pissing his
pants."

of course, this is only a matinee.

no late shows, pictures without sound. "How do they go? The songs?" I ask.

*

a kiss made the red man red, I think Mom has jugs like all the men will one day look at me.

I sing "Chaiyya Re Chaiyya Re" through recess, through lunch room
scholar me

too much world cinema, that radio there, a ceiling fan, hooves running in the yard
next door, hear?

when 20,000 leagues dissolves into the flickers.

BOYHOOD THINKS: Outside Foreign

last boy stands.

Gibraltar.

the vaak villain junk mash-up coolie screams, "Put your helmets on!"

did you wake up the scientist for me? where will I touch ground?

approximately.

on TV

they say: the Nubian desert.

grab Atlas laugh through the jib shots

hurtle down from space without Sentry System sissy

red Sandals Grande Antigua alert

that's quite a crater, eh?

what Indu sadhu leaves rifle barrel at bullet speed?

remember?

Bharati? Avadhi? Bihari?

smashing glass in the underpass Dollar Bills Alternative Tuesdays really gay.

on TV

they say: the Nubian desert,

though no one says it like that, least not in Kingston, Ontario, 1988

before grandpa dies *joins the car crash set*

Mom to Georgetown toothpaste 140 Guyanese dollars.

learned a new word today *Rajastaniatombomb*.

"in the shape of an ibex with wheels" steaming up the night rooms

Canada izzan island

a soju zombie in Jongno. a burnished book, Yooshij, poet stolen from grandpa. me,

a retreating sign from Gilan.

not Ghana. Guyana.

In Hyoung says, "The Japanese turned Changgyeong into a zoo."

Thursday night fights in Alta Vista, a family tree is a house.

Billings Bridge Bus (#148) scattered Guyanese Labour Day weekend Scarborough ole higue auntie

memorize April showers! tonight spring fights birds bees my Tony Leung blue waterfall

wet dreams. Caetano laughs

out his stitches

sheds skin as Champlain chomps into Linden Forbes

“jerked off rain a few blocks away

sketch Arawaks along the Rideau River

their roadside minarets tall in hollyhocks.

remember?

there is no masjid on Arch Street.

on TV.

& grandpa’s house sharpens knives against your mangled *pyla kalma twya*,

cut auntieman out,

nightmares scout Ray Harryhausen blanket hippogriff mister

hides the marzipan from his witching hour sweet tooth

I shoot my orchestra in hoarse Sydney Sheldon.

grandpa knows I spill my beans in *outside* discos.

Gibraltar.

on TV, foreign,

they say: the Nubian desert.

alligators awake la petite mort

I squander my white hotels

Bellies upright,

ABCs photographable love.

in the morning,

ajoshi sweeps up the used rubbers

serviced by rainstorms this morning all I want is a Western breakfast

get cracking ice

spring sinks.

MUSEUM: Fish-eyes

jungle

coughs

jumbie

sucks

blood

chews

sheds

skin

you know it as Hajee soul, massa

see Ba'ap in strange feathers on the sam

Amazon masquerami

commonpoor continental nanny wine down so

laughs past midnight

no, i know, Guyana izzan island

colossal afternoon pang. i make matinees. drippy features. Bob by the Demerara.

all that white-man-gone-primitive shit. shuffleboard, sweets. Mom. dessert fork. right hand.

praemonēre we'd crawl out've portholes, die again 6th Form Latin ocean.

Bob said: "go ahead. Try the custard."

more Coke bottles lost in that photo. bury fish rhymes in a kiss. lazy eyes.
blue eye bottle neck bye bye bushy mouth.

tonight,

don't dream

crowded mind horns

where ears sing

less than Greek

little weak

open

speak.

WAR CRIMINALS: Recherche

i am in an ocean in an oven

and the white boys drink Pelasgians in Libya

bring Ovid lustier than connect the dots Wolfe Island

a plaid laugh in Madras underlined in pencil

grow the kind kids make and leave on dinner tables

hearts eyes of Mom so many streets of Billy

a piss a toke a feast of warm coke as the Neapolitan drips

return to find Archie's geography click clack Port Sprainers

windy drive home to Westmoorings stickball doubles *oye como va*

sated Spanish pencils rubbers

Flipflash islands 20th Century acetate

family portrait by dead Archie dead *ab* we never said *father*

he drove a Mercury strong-nose Amru al Qays.

Dear Billy,

In Tobago, my tongue still spews Smokey & Bunty's in St. James.

I see the Rafeek Mosque drive in from Piarco. Of course, I had to write a calypso.

Not a naughty one. Everyone knows big bamboo. Or, a newspaper one: Adolf Hitler

get kick red, hot & blue: feet taps floor

finger drums table everywhere

love turn the fallen

anaconda back

my Cuffy up top

Cuffy anaconda back on the back

surprise parade of parrot fish

eyelash wink

send him back

blink blue essequibo love

turn anaconda back

to you Henri-Julien -27

Guyana izzan island

on BBC Weather

Deleted Scene.

~~Archie my father now stuck in mannerist frames
 on a mantle above a fire I don't keep me warm
 like the poet says, it's pornography up there
 look at him join the dead ones lined up on Christmas morning
 on this coast Heart of the Amazon don't ask don't see, but it's OK to sing a bit in the morning
 the deal he makes with me
 him in story cotton wool tree
 presents from Guyana Stores
 kerchief.~~

~~Mom & Archie's trick to equal night and day beat beat shadows~~

~~Colonel Wilde in The Naked Prey~~

~~With Mom, I hunt Archie~~

~~why? he die too far across the sand~~

~~he dies, darling, beneath the moon~~

~~under the sun I sit atop Archie~~

~~adoptee~~

WAR CRIMINALS: La Boîte Noire

45 years all the ears listen for Tarantula!

Later, Barbara Streisand *I went down to the demonstration to get my fair share of abuse.*

Flashbacks by Inigo Jones. Lisgar Street rabbit warren. Mom in one cube, Bob in the other.

In Canada, palm end porno speeds up free of Archie's death play. A marble façade foyer rises in space.

I wear white like Horatio. Brando's lusty back. In Mellors, Alec Scudder parlor smoke whorehouse music & prayers I can't pronounce. bismAllah? hiruvman? niraheem?

Eid-ie sweet tooth money. Sunday kites praying

fathers Camel Walk into a world of marvels. Doug McClure's lips. Dinosaurs. Gods.

Lost national geographicals in Mowsie teeth. Snow cone National Park.

I surrender the last metro to broken down folks.

Au Revoir Amerindia. Bacchic disco, Proust in innocent Spring. Rough in age,
red rocket smashing moons in Spain.

Steve McQueen mamas barbed-wire border sings oh Someone To Watch Over Me.

Edgar Rice wooly rhino burrows in pop! Thomas Kisbees. Poseidon bulwark. Gunwale.

Shelly Winters hangs from a chandelier.

Canada izzan Omar Sharif tamarind island.

mangled Maureen McGovern rolling sea. Fuck you to the morning after there's got to be.

Vorspiel, Godspell, rain?

I'm curious, Billy.

Mr. Perel. Zipper factory. The 7th day snip. Frenulem Fitra. Fuck off!

I remember The Alamo.

MUSEUM: Drive-in

star gazing expired father lost in me

debris of mirrors

ornate

fret

work

on fascia boards and window sills

mid-afternoon oh fuck there he is he can't even wait for the night

Archie

grabs

oily

poulouries

Köppen

throws up ocean

don't

scorn

Efreeti

the voyage across

Two-storey wooden house with enclosed bottom flat and open front stairs entering the gallery in its centre with gable end roof design features

boy

school

high

Prospero

book

drown

get

sunk

my father was a Fullahman.

BOYHOOD THINKS: Fazlah Decoupage

Sticky.

Weewee I not wake not in up.

sci-fi Fukushima tangles up sons as Elizabeth Taylor chooses this time to die with no anthems.

waterspout daughters turn up the TV.

India gets study in books left in cafés beside melted cakes.

approaching pavonis mons by balloon we hear mazurkas with coffee again again a true night of Minnie Ripperton

bump grind Bob smells sex everywhere in the jump up.

mind flames fires up the archipelago stops at St. Lucia, no aunties there.

awake Ottawa into plantation dream, press into broken morning bread
Guyanese.

tell me in

Khatoon's clockwork orchid blooms above sweaty suitcases before Canada
Bob's 3-prong country.

Tell me

walk around the block Zombie on repeat empire of piss rivers

far out pharouch instead of pow! I bang the drum acapella cluster bomb buy L'isle Noire in English

Bob said downtown Ottawa looks like London. It doesn't.

In spring, worm guts boots watches

dogs.

pissy holes left by

like Gena Rowlands the fight to live must make the kids notice Mom. cross your ocean hope to die.

Mom transfers Bob to give her property municipally until her said son reaches 35.

I take her inter-tropical suggestion: tear Levi-Strauss open to a champagne send off.

Dear Grandpa,

Ottawa is tighty whitey goosebumps bum.

To keep warm, Mercutio shows me his Queen Maab.

Mom forgot the mars-she-and-ob cherries in the sawine.

We whistle while we work in spacesuits.

38 cms.

Deep snow!

cucumber cabbage Sir Clifford Sifton kills the Indian summer in my blue lagoon

grown up Monte Cristo counts 52 villains in a deck of cards

joker Uncle Sultan searches coolie villages on hatched postcards

approach Guyana by peacock in the shadow of Olympus

dusting off Fazlah.

MOM & BOB: Matinees

*

Uncle Sultan: "See she with she Funk & Wagnall Sakatoon berry jelly."

*

Mom'll bring Bob home in the dark.

Puppy, Dasher & Mouse: "Patois Patrols, if you see jumbie, bark!"

Frenchie the Watchman'll be asleep. & he'll wake up with "Sorry, Mistress. I'll swim like Papillon.

I promise Devil's Island."

Shhhhh!quiet!

*

With grandpa I see the Indian pictures, Mom & Bob watch Peter Benchley

Jacqueline Bisset bubbles beneath & there's more sex in the books, Mom cusses

& Nick Nolte's girlfriends run their lips up down this island chalked

on blackboards, she in him eye, these notes I take as I grow outside dead Archie *ab*

into antieman & now an American out with Bob, Mom dresses

like she looks good tonight

she will send her aura off with champagne, Gena Rowlands.

Deleted Scene.

~~Mom drinks Bank's Beer, listens to Tim Maia.~~

~~gives rise to the~~

~~doublement soul~~

~~ref. to the Gothic~~

~~Massola (read him)~~

~~incognito not just any faggot~~

~~before we jerk off I reread Kant~~

~~last word last meal~~

~~ref. to Walpole queer scream~~

~~In Hyung, the hero, gives me a secular squeeze~~

~~cheers the battymen~~

~~open fly afternoon~~

~~Bruce Lee dungaree~~

~~corpse microphysique~~

~~Sister Brian says "Your father was a fullahman."~~

~~so I chase down "&s" speak in Bahasa~~

~~papayas mangoes many more red tapioca assalamwalaikumsand sand sand earth like this before
"breathe"~~

BOYHOOD THINKS: Omnibus

0 “rice flour rotis? fuck off.”

18 to 42 disco horizons
 -less that means never
 die pow!
 there’s sex after, so saying, he caught up, and without wing
 or hippogriff, bore through the air
 over the wilderness and o’er the plain.
 read more hippogriff where the masters let them
 all hang out come on sons Daddy Night Mephistopheles
 bring the rubbers
 of course
 you and me,
 nuh?

29 Intermission

Khatoon says, “I know we fond of comfort in the Savior. But we still cry. When they die we still cry. That little doubt in the comfort of the Savior.”

I says, “Huh?”

Khatoon says, “You want some marzipan?”

6 *Hunt for Sweets*

plain SEPTEMBER 13, ____ | BY **KNEWS** | FILED UNDER **LETTERS**

Dear Editor,

On a purely utiliteforthetillerman and theoreticull basis, the Feed the Nation campaign was (what?). Same goes for the PPP’s updaytwo on the old model with its Grow More Food campaign. But such a concept sipping Cokes & playing games was badly (what?) executed by Burnham. The PPP’s current campaign suffers from some of the frayaltease of Burnham’s (what?). Banning food first (don’t-feel-good-like-a-steel-pan feelgood) then seeking to grow later is plain (what?). Dictatorships don’t make (what?). (what?) of failed (what?) can result in (what?) starvation and People eat several times every day. (what?) by wheat flour. Guyanese consumed anywhere from lbs of flour daily before the ban. Khatoon says this

pan! Indians. Indians in Guyana *really* are Indias.
not Amerindians how wide we grow wow wow pow

19 head griffin claws
hooves horse tail
Moors from Afrique?

37 to 43 disco with horizon means
yes yes it does all end
bump and grind bump and grind bump and grind
like Mom & Bob you and me Canada izzan island
berth death dearth birth like in Ray Harryhausen
a thousand arms

Burnham was
350,000 to 400,000
done against
Amerindians really
pow

hands everywhere
Sinbad, Sunday, 3pm
at Plaza

6 to 7 Mom put green aliens on the birthday cake
Mom poses mon chews wends thurs fry sat sun morning downward dogs
at half past dinner
short pants time
little master
in panties

14 “the moonshine
the noontide sun
the work mine

a taste
of see
smell touch

OHMAMAMIA!MAMAMIA!”

15 to 18 Mittelholzer,
ever get sick slaves?

ever get sick servants?

ever hold shit in

on a sugar estate?

“don’t spill the juice,

Shabba!”

16

boy school high
Prospero book drown
I get

3 to 4

instant ego before hush hush shut
up do it this way Mom in the gallery you can’t always get what you want
loud
thinking “been here before
atom bomb”

18 1/2

read more hippogriff mister
half of her half of him, some Bob some Mom

41

skincareformendoiputaTMafterit?

in French bum hydramononctante that you left behind expires
scratchy shins now that Fall’s starting, no Soraksan,
can I still use it?
no noraebang & the mamamias mamamias & after the Cass you
sing the high n’ dry song
peacock balloon planet telex later in a Seocho love motel approaching
pavonis mons
I can see you jizz
jaw chin
baby’s got the bends
blows loud balloons.

0.2 to 45.9

in hybrid hands; Ottawa special effect. “*see, Orientalist!, see?*”
 ramsammy (fingersnap!) Albion (fingersnap!) puja Guyana (fingersnap!)

9

before Trudeau’s fag-end Ottawa Greedo in the Old Somerset me & Bob,
 before our final morning in Georgetown & yesterday Mom sold the fridge,
 before I made this secret petition to Kali: “Give back Archie even in stone!”

Mom standing in the back
 turns walaikum
 into laughing Sparrow.

WAR CRIMINALS: Voice-Over

(VO: yum drool yum drum roti & rum & yum drool yum drum roti & rum & yum drool yum drum)

InHyoung: What's roti?

(& faster again & repeat again & again & "To All the Boys I've Loved After"
& drool yum torch twang grew gay outside Guyana, eh? & Who cares about Ba'ap Mowsie? & Who
cares about "wouldn't you like to be Guyana you?"

& Grew-Gay-Billy borrows Mittelholzer & Grew-Gay-InHyoung: "Wow! You look like Archie!" &
"This is achar. My grandmother, Khatoon, makes it with tamarind. My mother's mother with
tamarind."

& the museums & Billy & InHyoung & like latkes & like panjeon
& who I "love" more & where I "love" more & what the fuck? jean jacket leather skirt heels
"...gotta do with it? ...gotta do with it? & yum drum Uncle Sultan was that rum-rotten coolie Mom
warned me never to grow into &)

MOM & BOB: Matinees

*

as "art," as "poetics"

Wild Rose Manitoba no not a territory is Yukon one too? Prairie Lily? Crocus? and yep in that order Dogwood Blue Violent Mayflower Lady's Slipper I wait for the red man shush let him blush in private OK? no Newfoundland White Lady Bob don't speak as Fazlah asks bhai, which one is Trillium? How outside you grow?

*

If baby you're the bottom then I'm the sideways. Georgetown, Guyana 1973. Do the Tower of Pisa. Do the Mona Lisa. Palm Court Saturday Night. Spy Bob tops Mom, Mom tops Bob.

Bob: "In Canada, doughnuts. I promise."

*

The audience: Ba'ap, Mowsie, Archie, later Mom, later Bob, sometimes forces "you too Mom you too Mom" Khatoon too

I practice Canada with cruise pansies Prince Albert Pelee

Glacier.

Terror, of course, when Lady Auntieman get into Jack n' Jill dream where I kiss two time out for flapjacks.

before DVDS, you could find *Push! Leolo! Push!* on cassette in Shindongnegori:

Montréal Gloria showing me how to heat up rice without a stove

spy on Etienne: wild carrot shirtless

sur le coin de Clark et St. Viateur

(never walk with me in Yeouido regard the cherry blossoms; hear ajoshi say some boys just wanna
 spend money on Camaro penis cars.
 not you I'll tell him.)

set fire to a Sir Walter Raleigh effigy in a car park.

(why does what makes the red man red hanamannadunga feel so boyish? and, what's wrong
 with the Rothko pu hup kkk ablaze
 some orange up there some red down
 here?)

no I don't cheat on you when I go to the museum.

except that time

when I drank from the saucepan

of Abraham.

(your uncle was a tea farmer he would send us the best sejak from Halla. his friend Manu, the best from
 Tanah Rata. there's this movie where the actress gives the actor
 a blowjob would you like?)

Insadong cinematheque

& the intellegentsia gasp?)

all art remembers he turns tricks in Joseph's turban

Deleted Scene.

~~“death’s OK, Fazlah says. Paradise is better!”~~

~~yeah yeah since I was a kid this Roland Kirk talk to me every mon chews wends thurs fry sat a sun days
it’s the same queen there they’d say to me in 1939 Fazlah visits Germany with 60% reduction in railroad
fares British Subjects need no Visa just like here Gordan’s Gin comes from London, England there.~~

MUSEUM: Dancefloor

faggotguts gots
 spit paradise garage phantasmagoric, Saint
 flick prick
 wand pretty, nuh?

"it was the lure of the big lights. Mephistopheles tunnels in the tubs
 Saturnight's the best though surprised at Sunday afternoon's scorecard
 fucking."

after stonewall this that
 and fucking

spit: milky way hand hungry
 pays pays watch it and stand
 warm tug mouth son

imaginary got guts
 lights! concrete! modern!

("...tantrum in dad's yard

("...disappointed on dancefloors

("...on your knees whimsy skid

raleigh's guiana dabbles in alchemy
 before london tower lock up spies far up the river
 galileoscopes for spaniards.

Raleigh's guiana canoes fugitives upcountry
 searches gold deposits fallen foul of his English expedition

few ornaments
 twists NAMILCO cheese hope
 "in sight of the great river
 Orenoque."

pretty prick, nuh?

BOYHOOD THINKS: Jihaji Bhai

Latchmee sleeps on a *Katya*, a bed made out of knotted rope.

1983

Bub

shaved ice

condensed milk

sugar

Mexico vanilla

nutmeg

limejuice sometimes

Mom says Khatoon likes it with rum. Mom's mom likes it with rum & don't talk about Archie's mom. Mowsie sticks scorpion peppers in your mouth. I'll tell you about *Latchmee* is how Khatoon spells her not Lakshmi light & stayed that way despite

a quake of fish & between India, Mauritius

make foamy with a Zulu Lulu

swizzle

stick

tuntun private parts laughs

Latchmee marries a Muslim doctor

there is no God except Allah

coolies on the Hesperus

leaving Mauritius

for Demerara.

a glass of *Bub*.

Latchmee.

asleep on a *Katya*.

MOM & BOB: Matinees

oh yeah

find them plates

on the wall air brush roses

kid!

*

the genius of drinking straws is plaster of Paris listening

under her nails

soon, they'll be home. the 148'll pull up on Canterbury Ave. Gilligan's Isle at 4. Mom'll laugh.

no ahir. no brahman. no chatri.

Calcutta. Natal. Demerara.

chop chop nostalgia.

my kid don't know the kind,

you know?

*

this afternoon: burgers, fries, centuries serve no shakes.

sugar kills cities.

oh yeah

*

cooliewoman

dogears

photobooks

kid!

God leave this suburb unlit

London shadow

in winter

in my head not here

*

Bob said downtown Ottawa close its eyes dream of London. It doesn't.

In spring, worm guts boots digs pissy holes left by dogs.

Wilkie Collins flips the bird at Mom's camera.

Georgetown jealousies

pinning pine tarts.

Mom cries stories.

WAR CRIMINALS: Escape Roots

The night you woke up again
 leaving Hebrew Academy in Cote St. Luc someone assassinates you again
 Art's mother never got Dachau scratch out she again
 killed herself before he turned twelve
 these dreams of getting round up murdered do you remember the dirty you?
 how Lauzon shows them? that we kept far away from the French again.

That night I read Edgar's bone flute he could hear French & German &
 English & Italian but the tongues
 he could not identify "too deaf ear to describe" that made the Kit Kat a swastika &
 a frozen end & a song & a dance dead cabaret Sally Bowles faraway how push Leolo push echoes
 through an empty bus station as Christopher Isherwood backs back into Britain
 can you see that? & the cloak and dagger coating his cock
 those boys still swimming bad hard bags along the Rhine Moselle Mosul in California
 he'd resurrect willkommen bring the music play back to the fag ends.

Edgar spent a year here before the cold drove him back to Guyana
 he wrote "a degree of negro parentage"
 in a cafe he told me "I am an offshoot" he told
 "I am an offshoot of a Swiss-German plantation manager of the 18th century
 of a Frenchman from Martinique of an Englishman from Lancashire" but that little black in me
 used to live somewhere near here maybe next door
 to Bains Coloniale? Next door to the Family Robinsons?

We'd swim bear hug the dream pull our trunks down at La Cite bienvenue low culture stoned
 can you hear the drums
 Fernando listens even to Portuguese love songs next door bem vinda in drag
 where the orchestra leaves your troubles at the door
 Pirate Jenny's shoot em ups piled higher and higher in the "that'll learn ya!" countdown
 escape routes the Indians like the Jews
 Steve McQueen root root escape Uncle Sultan even got his mistress out
 tell me again about Baumgartner through Bombay into Venice.

Deleted Scene.

~~Erect Cinema L'Amour beefcake~~

genealogies

~~my body on the other side Mephistopheles at midnight,~~

a "Modern Soul" wow!

Canada is ~~an~~ island

did you say that?

~~that~~

MOM & BOB: Matinees

- ✓ *Je viendrai courir pour attacher vos souliers.*
- ✓ don't forget the punk rock bop at the end.
- ✓ you don't recognize me, huh, Guyanaizzan
- ✓ an island? Mom says.
- ✓ & I've come home
- ✓ Robin Hood rotis
- ✓ avec guitars & Veronica Lake hair
- ✓ & Fazlah asks, "Do you speak French?"
- ✓ I speak cartoon Khatoon bumper car cartoon
- ✓ not humpy
- ✓ not dumpy
- ✓ dumbtea
- ✓ ahjee for Archie's ma
- ✓ what? for Khatoon?
- ✓ "That's Bob with 1-oh!"
- ✓ Fernando drums
- ✓ Sleep
- ✓
- ✓ don't call her that, Mom says
- ✓ bumper car tea tea
- ✓ Tang's cake box
- ✓ dumpt
- ✓ humpt

WAR CRIMINALS: 4575 Henri Julien

in the wrong place above Fernando's

because I saw this film once *[jeez why didn't I ever fuck a side of beef?*

I heard "I Just Wanna Know" slow jams radio to stop those nights in Montréal

here, Bob brought Mom for le super-sexe Olympic Aida St. Denis sup] or

here, Ven brought me for the in-those-days-Moroccan-not-cheap-Afghani-shit

In those days, Pirate Jenny smoke some dance some

"that'll learn ya!" Manhattans in the dyke bar away from the mens let's just kiss and say goodbye

[jeez I never got to say goodbye Auntieman Lady found a letter you wrote me

on the radio, after Reagan, and Lou was right there were no parades

on Halloween] or

humid goodbye writes was I ever equatorial? I ain't got no believe you.

Iqbal was a ball motorcycle Pride Punjabi comb,

right tight? *[jeez I saw this play once where Billy kept saying gay*

without pets. Goldbloem Bogo racing through the apartment

Henri-Julien, why here? Why not a little farther up where they speak

English?] or

drunk yes drunk we'd walk up Duluth screaming

push! Leolo! push! before hitting The Main, the hippies come out the hippies come

out in springtime *[jeez there I'd go, open mad unlock the ancestors, bear them:*

we've found you! we've found you!] or

I once read this book everyone became hypertelic

hard words I looked them up click click view them exceed passage

dem get to die

on dry land water what water? Crusoe used up Caliban not again paradime [*jeez and me*
here trying this tongue like Cesaire like with all that sand? in the wee wee we
could scream the archipelago push bhair push squeeze your way out dash
the yourope equals Aziz collar back stud to Fielding] or
there was Billy beside ourselves, again belly floats
don't wake Fernando oats snoring down
can you hear the drum
sticks on stairs?

MUSEUM: Cinerama

& consider these follow-up fashion stories blood upon your Osama bin Laden shoulder
 & the way we listen to Barrington Levy in Montréal, right Billy?
 & not stroking a Persian not wanting SPECTRE SMERSH & Taliban don't rhyme
 & no Gershwin skyscraper eavesdrops on the Garvey I carry back pocket
 & from Medan to Maninjau, "you must try Padang food!"
 & Duluth above Fernando Mile End too far Feb. -44 this evening
 & I don't give a damn about hockey.
 & In Banda Aceh I rhyme Bahasa Guyanese
 & sila buka bibiru kasut have some cashews before you leave
 & "OK, Old Village?"
 & Guyana izzan an island in Java you know?
 & He swallowed Pavonis Mons with his shuttle. Early afternoon.
 & I found Kananga in St. Ann Yaphet Koto Arawaki adze
 & (the kids laugh when I say, "Not Canada. Not Canada.")
 & When I see his face, a Taliban tee.
 & and no jumbie spoke to me no Sarawak spook not Spanish X not French X not Pourtagee X
 & Don't Know What theremin dragonflies above the Forbidden City
 & that's what's closing
 & the ushers call me "Sir Sir it's time to leave the museum"
 & the five minutes palace in the Tuesday price Pu Yi's red doors
 & in out into hi hello hallow head belly full
 & Roger Moore's audio guide to the Palace Museum
 & ECHO Roger Moore's audio guide to the Palace Museum
 & Vincent Van Ven muscular alley planks stubborn to Attack of the Wood Ants! called
 & I sang Demerara Groenhart's "O lime bush ripe."
 & Neapolitan-lush like Caruso, thank you please come again, drink cloves & milk in Kalibaru.
 & hitch a ride from Jogja to Bromo dragonfly kite rucksack luck
 & But this is Sarawak & Don't Know What's talking to me.
 & Not Fazlah long arm leg rest in Berbice chair,
 & Not Mom, Muskoka chair, me & Bob & leeches at Meech Lake
 & Jay Scott dyes a draft dodger Adirondak in Toronto.
 & "Draw white light like Ba'ap in ihram bust through the back door
 & circle my bed "been around the world and I can't find my baby and I and I" don't hope to die
 & force-field against night fest toons Pa's Americas a Cast of Characters KAPOWS!
 & yardstick, wooden with silver ends, "you from outside now, bhai!" it's not the end of the world
 & don't arkestra know that yet Sun Ra?"
 & earshot Mohammedan measures says no know Kolkata to the peek-a-boo prince hard
 & as I wash my ass 100% cotton, made in India, forgive me money belt, five thousand Riyals,
 & Don't eat with the left.
 & "Cultural relics are irretrievable/Please be careful when viewing them"
 & In the Pavilion of Prolonged Sunshine, finger food history, Archie's calligraphy.
 & (he) real like earth (swarthy) real like dirt
 & yeah yeah in "The age-old and splendid historical civilization of the Chinese Nation" my heart wanked
 & Satan right-handed chauffeured car rental Jakarta trapped in Chagall's red city
 & "surely, we can be gay here? sweet & handsome?"
 & In Montréal, Ven drops by every Sunday every "So, what the war said this week master?" greeting.

& We Parliament Hill the headlines
 & high high high Lost Horizon Everest in the “that’ll learn ya!”
 & Nina defecating, as Lauryn sang, on the microphone.
 & Cook-up now “all a we” or how Bob loved Mom creolized.
 & In the deck of cards, 52 terrorists, I found Faz, Abdel, Sultan cha cha.
 & No women yet.
 & Holy Shit! Dragonfly! Sleeping Palace. I blame it. I blame it. On midnight.
 & Did these kids who lose a cricket ball in a compound know they mouth mouth with a father like mine?
 & Real coolieman nacion natio flips the bird in nations like mine
 & “So, what the war said?” Ven spooning dhall from Khatoon’s recipe into the Royal Doulton bowl.
 & You see? The we split we split ships chips against rock Limoges wrapped in newspaper
 & Mom, Bob, Mowsie, Baap & Jay Scott says William Wyler it “lemme tell you some kiss,”
 & yell like those same kids I met in Java sir! sir! postcard? postcard? Osama’s poking proud faded tees
 & nose eye Taliban piece Gregory Peck’s *Rome. By all means, Rome* on his head
 & I don’t want anything, I don’t want anything. Just to see the Buddha’s mouth open Yankie.
 & Before Jogja, in Banda Aceh I heard Ven fi true Halloween
 & the screaming God in the Grand Mosque, the djinns in the marble that kept the wave away
 & spared Hassan
 & Mom ate Thalidomide in Wales to profit in language.

BOYHOOD THINKS: Mecca to Madinah, 2009

if Ba'ap jump out boo! how can you do Umrah,
nasty mind?

AND

Zubeda says, if you get nervous, if you forget what to do, look at the other pilgrims. do what they do.
& when you first see the Kabba, put your wish hard into Abraham. He'll listen.

AND

ladadiladada ladadiladada ladadiladada ladadiladada ladadiladada ladadiladada

sing for Cairo throwing thrones a prince hip a swollen lip

leave your *somebingsomebingsomebingsomebingsomebingsomebingsomething* at the door

say safety pins

hold up ihram

bang bang

AND

forgive me money belt forgive me money belt forgive me belt

AND

stegosaurus suck
as pilgrims walked in circles kissing stone
I gave thanks for you,

your cock too

AND

pissing in the desert's not the same as pissing in the snow
 you can't know yellow white melt sunken grey dancehalls
 full of noughts

AND

Scatter!

yana hey yanoho gu ya na guy ana guya na g u y a n a heyyanaho guy

wait for Ba'ap to ok bhai,

what you do with the i-a-n-a?

Walter Scott in Twyfords toilet bowl

yeah bhai!

and me submitted

through

spilt

we split we split ran down the road with some sweet handsome porky soft bat face bwoy

Deleted Scene.

~~Tomorrow, leave for Mecca Madina.~~

~~“Just don’t let them see you reading the Mittelholzer instead of the Pickthall. That’s bad enough but even the Egyptians on the bus won’t go for that. The fake word of God is better than all that witchcraft.”~~

~~I brush my teeth with a Miswak.~~

~~I am alone in an ocean.~~

~~Jizzin’ djinnce izza Canada island wonder.~~

WAR CRIMINALS: Beefcake

- : “my uncle a tea farmer the best from Shizouka”
- : “Glenlivet in jeans disco much?”
- : “B movie brain eaters at the Mun Hwa Sauna”
- : “on a clear day we could see Fuji from Tokyo”
- : “young people spend their money on cars”
- : “yabazabbah77 a stoic cummer before the 6am to Pusan”
- : “mazurkas in the morning fucking around”
- : “glory hole mouth”
- : “sci-fi soju tongue slow down”
- : “cufflinks straddle elephants la dadi la dada”
- : “conquistador, pull thy root!”
- : “wild combos”
- : “fought in Phuket before salat again”
- : “sipping cocks and playing games”
- : “such big hands Richard Carlson potato queens”
- : “like Choi jin-sil if they catch Leslie Cheung in my mouth”
- : “curious Osan tonight”
- : “feed your buddy nuts”
- : “or d'oeuvre huts introduce my pigs in a blanket”
- : “sweaty Calvins call cruising through the gloryhole runtime 14:58”
- : “coxswain blades the first boy I ever just call me Flop”
- : “a long time ago Lake Ontario rusty padlocks”
- : “I’m the top. I’m Napoleon brandy.”
- : “PictouAndrewViewedYou5MinutesAgo”

: “without hats, bugger here”

: “POZ cuz”

: “days of being wild like Andy Lau”

: “cum eater class struggle feedin”

: “rimjob \$\$\$”

: “Canada izzan island”

: “ice cream balloons”

: “dutty choon”

: “when kaka hole is laHffing lolli ...la la la la anything goes”

: “muscle toy milk”

MOM & BOB: Matinees

*

Mowsie

ahjee

cough

up

drops

Strepsils

pocket

*

by Night big letter here cause it's a character, old black magic Night you lock out, spits
 Awar, Dasim, Sut, and Tir from its palms, Ali Baba Ali Baba, coughs up Mowsie, blood love blood love,
 she is
 Archie's mum, she'll drag the bodies of the kids away.

*

Mowsie shows up in the Antonioni psych trip Mom is having in the living room. I smell
 zeb grass Tea for the Tillerman background.

*

When

Mowsie shows,

snapsnappaddywhack

take Archie away cry so hard for him Heaven spill over get chased by wood ants

so hard I look like Archie

Mom

locks

Mowsie

out

Bob

laughs.

MUSEUM: Close-ups

Archie:

Mom: "I already know the terror of holidays. I have already buried you."

Archie:

Ba'ap: "Don't play in the masjids after dark."

Archie:

Ba'ap:

Uncle Sultan: "I cut my hair to look more like a boy in Fazlah's abstract God."

Khatoon: "Omit the unspeakable vice of the Greeks in Uncle Sultan."

Archie:

Uncle Sultan: "The Dutch will fuck their way through my wild blood."

Archie:

Uncle Sultan: "Alone with Jan Michael Vincent at the Metropole. The colonies flicker."

Archie:

Mom: "Bob appears. The real America winks at me."

Archie:

Mom:

Uncle Sultan:

Mom: "Bob is a handsome killer. Suave thriller. Tidal wave hurricane flood. He hooks me."

Archie:

Bob: "My mother runs a comb through my dead-straight European hair."

Archie:

Archie:

Khatoon: "My eyes roll through jalousies out/into New Amsterdam."

Mowsie: "Kaffirs line up outside the slaughterhouse for black pudding blood."

Khatoon: "We split wide long ago you know?"

Fazlah: "A rotted teeth Hindu sits beside me."

Mowsie: "They smell like second class cow dung."

Archie:

Mom: "Sometimes Demerara Radio speaks of women who blow themselves up Battle of Algiers."

Ba'ap:

Mom: "I keep postcards that say East Indian types typical coolie upper Canada spins around."

Archie:

BOYHOOD THINKS: 15 Movies in 15 Seconds

& I uno dos tres cuatro the Crimes and Misdemeanours
 & your brownies we never made.
 & 21 rue Fleureuse laughs at Peter Sellers, right?
 & Fernando sleeps I love you still like Alice bee toke.
 & we never made Crimes & Misdemeanours laugh at Gertrude's brownies
 & Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence Tom Conti breaks Bowie's heart
 & Ryuichi Sakamoto also and the drip from the tip David Sylvian yes him
 & Night of the Living Dead when we should've been in front of the TV
 & but who the fuck was Di die? Billy said crashing in the same car
 & Star Wars I'd say that was Mom
 & "Crying is cleansing." (Dionne Warwick)
 & Mom prays behind the men at the Rafeek Mosque it's just as well she'd say
 & they all fart when they lean over smash their heads spot on God, see?
 & yes Billy Star Wars ruined Hollywood but it's 1977 & this is Ottawa & Destination Moon
 & still here 8 1/2 Mowsie in the kitchen cooking Ba'ap big pop in the masjid plotting pipes
 & cherry tobacco that's right I smell Grandpa
 & I wish Mom could watch the end of Full Metal Jacket Hanoi in the eyes of the sniper
 & the only woman in the film is All About My Mother because it comes out the year Mom dies
 & before she gives me Truman Capote's show in the Europa, Europa Cabaret finales
 & this freedom to show our cut cocks right, brother? cross Dresden again freedom to be semite
 & Muslim semite Jew Marmite at the garden parties of the Finzi-Continis
 & I still write her like in Farewell, Children Jean Patou in the hotels of her white letters
 & Mom's Empire of the Sun bomb middle class bridge bring bandits out to play in fly away feet that pines
 & I am in sea mud Alta Vista trudge no catfish on Canterbury Ave
 & *I learned a new word today* Rajastaniniatombomb
 & I am a faggot Tom Finland who dreams a fetish fest these are my Querelle paper men lime
 & Georgetown Sew Wall from Camp Street to Kitty

Deleted Scene.

~~cruise poesie~~

~~erect theatre~~

~~impossible-Guyana-ribald bullfrog-in-the dungarees~~

~~Fazlah's library izzan island~~

~~I am not the son of God~~

~~Perfumed Garden rattlesnakes~~

~~Alcazar shoots genip seeds at my feet~~

~~are me "gonna take you higher"?~~

~~all this Hergé porno~~

~~Harold Robbins army? arm-y.~~

~~Sir Walter Raleigh laughs.~~

~~Come clean me up!~~

MOM & BOB: Matinees

*

-27

the moon settles down with a man in

star
gaze
bhai
super
nova
monkey
mountain
Paka
Raima

*

“I am searching Archie’s expiry date.”

Kolkata
gargles
Bob
marzipan
Mom

“Khatoon says Potaro-Siparuni’s haunted.”

*

Mom’s toes mix with sand Bob’s toes wait with

MUSEUM: Schlock

on warm evenings while walking in the footprints of PBUH
 he who will not be named PBUH, just in case, when I went on Umrah
 there was this prayer for you in your bent chest & with iron nails
 fixed to dragons in central Anatolia

I cut my hair between Safa and Marwah.

(when we crossed the Han River the running family without Richard Dawson
 Gwoemul in the film in my brain
 listen to it the sound of my piss wizzzzzzzzerd
 the river so full of my wizzzard)

break the pink hearts apart waterfalls the coo coo roo coo coo
 never shared with you

all these hearts in front of the beaux arts? once, Bahram IV had this dagger
 I walked thousands of years into the past

who wiped you clean at night? was it the king in the spirit of all those queens on Homo Hill that made
 you ceremonial?

(I resisted his necklaces in agate glass gold Carnelian, matched the Portuguese Dutch English
 Japan a Staebrok Market in Melaka scarlet; fleets of UFOs above Fukushima, look!

born in Georgetown.)

ever “approach Pavonis Mons by balloon”

send more

pictures

earthquakes great winds fires famine

you think Chagall the only peacock in all those mountains

make me dusty this elaborate passport lie

we only slowly grew west I keep postcards that say East Indian

typical coolie village upper Canada chingu the world

spins around you

(are you a student of history he asks which no one asks in Seoul

this insertion into the English Gatekeeper sexy, I declare

no poet of Sycorax scratches the part in his hair, not just another eye drop you in the ocean)

BOYHOOD THINKS: Best Original Score

a cassava lie: check your catch & the-mamas-and-the-papas-you're-driving-your-children-insane
end credits.

curtain close: Kaitour tears.

rhetorical flourish: *let me tell you about the Pops,
these LPs were tropical once.*

Bob to Caliban: what are these LPs doing in Khatoon's roasted breadfruit?

the bacchanal threat in minimalist disco: "I came for the ass. Wait. What?"

this part must make Fazlah dance 70s & 80s: house arrest contraband cha cha cha

& the yrs: & don't snap your fingers in the **Visitors** line & don't search Mom's Samsonite for extra
Colgate, *please, don't snap my fingers, chew bubba hubba, act the fool fool white boys I lime with.*

don't let them search that suitcase. OK, ole higue?"

WAR CRIMINALS: End Credits

Saturday night

pound
street
cake
scarf
tied

“les quartre cent coups”/i thought i heard you say

right?

it’s always some boy Genet will want to fuck
in ten years or so
shelved at Boite Noire
as the French New Wave

right?

“goodbye fucking children”/even Louis Malle shows up
Luftwaffe mouth
that’s some shit
I cried for hours
lights out lights upLet’s go to Infidels
feed truffles to Truffaut
six pack eight pack
hot stuff,
eh?fag
gutse trip avec avec avec up
to so long Marianne
6 am eternal

-27

swamped
buttspin
spin
sugar
soft

-ed

Franken
fish

-ended

the fags
Bob Fosse moves

Song
&
Cancer dance

friends in faded brown cords
nut huggers on the 55 St. Laurent
“I wanna see all my friends at once/ I wanna go bang”/back
couldn’t wait to wake Fernando up
wouldn’t you like to be Guyana you?
be Guyana be be Guyana

rough
thumb
monster

hitch rides
bleu nuit train

galaxy
dungarees

glory hole
knees

Inside The Hyphen: Reading the Poetics of *Supersyncretism* in “The Greatest Films”

Faizal Forrester

My poetry manuscript, “The Greatest Films,” treats sites of conjunctive and hyphenated subjectivity not as articulations of truncated identity, but, rather, as scenes to depict continuums of becoming/unbecoming a “supersyncretic” subject (Benitez-Rojo 12). I make this argument through two separate but interrelated postcolonial ideations of the ontological and epistemological join.¹ The first of these formulations of the interstitial is from Antonio Benitez-Rojo’s introductory remarks to *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (1992). The second example is from Fred Wah’s essay, “Half-Bred Poetics,” in *Faking It: Poetics and Hybridity, Critical Writing 1984-1999* (2000). While my focus here is on Benitez-Rojo and Wah, it is possible to locate the ideational *silt*² of a diverse group

¹ My formulation of the “join” is drawn from reading Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*. Morrison’s novel invites the ghosts of an unresolved *past* into a call and response to the ways of African-American artists to the will of spirits. The line heard at the end of *Jazz*, “Say make me, remake me” (229), refers not only to the conjured/conjuring hands of jazz musicians, their emotive freeplay of improvisation (of finding a plurality of stories from preceding stories, a process of creative palimpsest); but, also, very much to a politics of embroidering that is storytelling or the passing on of stories. What this process signals is a displacement of the notions of a cultural reliance on fixed and absolute master narratives. It is an opening up of the real and imaginary topos of hyphens, which conjoin African to/with American. Morrison’s narrator closes *Jazz* with the confession that “the kick” of an act of artistic intervention is the making/restoration of an interiority that can account for the lives of African Americans. But, what narrative reveals, it also conceals: “Something is missing there. Something rogue. Something else you have to figure in before you can figure it out” (228). To be *African American*, then, is, as Morrison’s narrator states, to be “(c)ought midway between was and must be” (227).

² I am using “silt” in the manner of Robert Bringhurst who, in his essay “The Polyhistorical Mind,” suggests that what is hidden in the “epochal split” of histories of imperialism is the “linguistic silt” of those languages that have been overrun or subsumed by the languages of History’s winners (34-35).

of writers³ in the textual terrains of not only this essay, but also in the poems under examination. The theoretical fields of diaspora criticism are vast. While Benitez-Rojo and Wah draw their suppositions from similar (though semantically different) theorizations of diaspora, the combinatory directives and effects of their ideas are exemplary of what I am attempting to demonstrate in the *mash-up* poems⁴ of “The Greatest Films.” Benitez-Rojo’s notion of “supersyncretism” and Wah’s “scene of the *hyphen*” (74, his italics) frame the creative and intellectual compositional narratives running through my manuscript. Benitez-Rojo and Wah share with my poems a desire to rethink, reread and rewrite scenes of diasporic subjectivity as processes of accepted and/or refused identification. Their contributions to diaspora criticism allow me significant critical trajectories through which to settle and unsettle my own ambivalent poetics of the “dirt” (Wah) or “subsoil” (Benitez-Rojo 12) of the (spectral) rumours and romances of ancestral origins as well as wider understandings of my own agonistic—and only partially successful—imaginative rejections of definitional approximations to particular identities of culture, race, nationality, and sexuality.

³ Though by no means exhaustive, this list includes Homi K. Bhabha, Dionne Brand, Kamau Brathwaite, Édouard Glissant, Sudesh Mishra, M. NourbeSe Philip, Nikki Reimer and Severo Sarduy.

⁴ My idea of *mash-up* poetics originates in my analysis of Nikki Reimer’s poetry collection, [*sic*], where the poet reassembles and reconstitutes accumulations of images from comic books, popular songs, TV shows, movies, advertising campaigns, newspaper articles, idioms, anecdotes, manuals of all kinds and other sources, to create a disjunctive feminist poetics with both comic and tragic implications. For example, in Reimer’s poems, “exurbia” and “leaves fall to construct this fable,” there is an extended interrogation of suburban life. While “exurbia” inventories the suburban landscapes of comatose sameness—from restaurants to car dealerships to 7-Elevens—set against the sonic backdrop of Tom Waits, Beck, and generic “gangsta rap” blaring from cars, “leaves fall to construct this fable” encapsulates the deadening effects of such environments producing female subjects, such as the speaker’s “kid sister in a coma” who, in the poem’s titular pun on *words fail*/ “leaves fall” alerts readers to the aggressive and invasive agency of patriarchal language to referentially contain and imprison female subjectivity.

Through a critical account of some of the poems in “The Greatest Films,” I wish to illuminate my own identity poetics. The following analysis is my attempt to argue that the themes of ambivalent, amorphous and antagonistic “supersyncretic” subjectivity found in the poems are the direct result of acts of reading and rereading myself as a primary source in the compositional histories of my text. I propose, therefore, to read the exilic poems in my manuscript as repeating lines of verse that disclose a deep awareness of the poetic speaker’s anxieties of his own shifting subjectivities, his own troubled hyphens. Therefore, the speaker in my poems is someone who perpetually seeks to transcend imposed narratives of real and imagined (spatial and temporal) coordinates of hostland and homeland (here and there). In these attempts at transcendence, I am also suggesting that my poems are self-reflexive accounts of my own relationship, as poet and scholar, to how I poetically and theoretically render my own anxious arrivals into a repeating (and retreating) subjectivity. In my role as artist-as-critic/poet-as-critic, I hope to lend a critical primacy to the *interiority* of my poetry manuscript as a site of archival investigation that is inseparable from, and influential to, the spatial articulations (exteriorities) of the poems as they appear on the page and as they speak to multiple sites of ancestral, cultural, ethnic, national, and, in some instances, racial encampment and dispersal.

In addition to Benitez-Rojo and Wah, the ideas of Homi K. Bhabha, Kamau Brathwaite, Édouard Glissant, Edward Said, and Severo Sarduy have all provided me with valuable opportunities to retrieve a critical language through which I might analyze the poetics of interiority of “The Greatest Films.” In my linguistic excavations, my poems re-imagine points of entry into a “supersyncretic” subjectivity where my speaker becomes simultaneously possessed and dispossessed by multiple agents of epistemological and ontological diversity and difference. Through what I describe as an “auto-Orientalism,” my poems also propose

imagined exits out of the possible mental/psychic schisms that might result from such instances of complex hybridity. “Auto-Orientalism”⁵ is a re-engagement/repossession of expressive and imaginative narratives/strategies of racialized exotification (or any other manifestation of imposing/invasive markers of difference) where hybrid writers seize opportunities to strategically construct—on *their* terms—re-exotifications of their own bodies/selves.⁶ My poems, in effect, are manifestations of the (in)capacities of language to

⁵ Edward Said’s simplified definition of “Orientalism,” from which I derive my own formulation of “auto-Orientalism,” is a discursive “systematic discipline” where Europe, particularly the French and the English, comes to define itself by “its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (2) which it locates in the “Orient”/the Near East (North Africa, the Middle East, the Levant). While the Orient is an “integral part of European *material* civilization and culture,” it becomes in the European’s imagination a *fictive faraway*, “an idea” against which Europe defines its “strength and identity” (3-4, his italics). Europe *is* Europe because *it is not* the Orient. In “auto-Orientalism,” the Other—the human subject of Orientalism—infiltrates the Orientalist imagination and identifies its constructions of Self/Other as fictions, imaginations, fantasies, ideations. While I view “auto-Orientalism” within the spectrums of strategic essentialism, in “auto-Orientalism” entire narrative economies of imposing, invading, and possessing Orientalist formulations become sites of repossession. “Auto-Orientalism,” then, is a total—and totalizing—application of appropriation (cultural, racial, sexual, national and so forth). More important than the actual/mere inhabitation of an Orientalist narrative, the *auto-Orientalist* engages the very right to act upon—and *signify* upon—an entire narratological history of exotifying Orientalist significations. “Auto-Orientalism” can only occur from inside the narrative economies of Orientalism. Through this journey into particular Orientalist fields of signification the *auto-Orientalist* encounters the epistemic violence of what Said describes as a “web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology” (27). In response to the “nexus of knowledge and power” (27) consolidating “the Orient,” the *auto-Orientalist* stages an insurrection against the dominant mode of the signifiers of Orientalism. In this decolonizing ideational manoeuvre, the *auto-Orientalist* does not seek to empty out the “brute facts” of imperialism from the Orientalist narrative. Instead, she dismantles the Orientalist’s fallacious significations of Self/Other through a contesting poetics she composes in counterpoint to the catastrophe and violence of such imperialist binaries. The decolonizing poetics of the *auto-Orientalist* simultaneously acknowledges Orientalism’s certainty in its epistemological and ontological dominance and advocates for an urgent unfixing of this certainty by introducing into Orientalism’s fields of signification the multiple consciousnesses of cultural and imaginative resistance. In these strategies, the *auto-Orientalist* seizes the counter-discursive possibilities of all available philosophical and political paradigms relating to her representational histories, including and especially those of the Orientalist persuasion.

⁶ The *essential* difference between *auto-Orientalism* and other anti-imperialist expressive and artistic strategies is that *auto-Orientalism* seeks to actually repossess the signifying fields of Orientalism. In this repossession, not only do I encounter histories of imperialism—Said’s

instantaneously make/unmake/remake identity. They contest the hegemonic interpellation of particular situational (and political) moments of epistemological and ontological containment by transgressing boundaries of subjectivity fomented by narratives of cultural, ethnic, racial, national, and sexual affiliation and disaffiliation.

Finding the “Supersyncretic” Subject

Addressing his own imagination of a Caribbean collective consciousness/unconsciousness (the “we” in the following statement), Benitez-Rojo accounts for the emergence of Caribbean culture through two theoretical conventions of his term “supersyncretism.” He writes,

either we are told that the complex syncretism of Caribbean cultural expressions—what I shall call here *supersyncretism* to distinguish it from similar forms—arose out of the collision of European, African, and Asian components within the Plantation, or that this syncretism flows along working with ethnological machines that are quite distant in space and remote in time, that is machines “of a certain kind” that one would have to look for in the subsoils of all continents. But, I ask, why not take both alternatives as valid, and not just others as well? (12)

“brute facts”—but I also repurpose the expressive signs of Orientalism into strategies for imaginative/aesthetical contestations of these histories of Empire. In my transposition of *auto-Orientalism* into a reading of my manuscript—and in so seeking—I attempt to demonstrate how some of the images in my poems retroactively possess the invading agents of Europe’s colonization of Caribbean imaginations. Hence, I read the Orientalism of Ray Harryhausen’s special effect of Kali in *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, which appears throughout “BOYHOOD THINKS: Omnibus,” as an opportunity for a repossession—not a reclamation—of an Orientalism (a stereotype, a character, trapped in Camp or Kitsch) of the special effect, of the artifice of exotification, recognizing through the open-endedness of language the abilities of hybrid writers to re-narrativize all Orientalist images within the redirected conscious and unconscious drives of postcolonial narratives.

For my project, both “alternatives” are resonant. My poems engage themes of cultural collision to suggest formations of hybrid subjectivity that resist identifications of ethnic and racial absolutism. But they also struggle with what happens *before* and *after* these moments of resisted/refused identifications, for to collapse the *before* and *after* into the *during* is to become “supersyncretic” in a metaphysics of historical retroactivity, in the terrains of the psyche, in what lies inside of the subject. My poems contain accounts of what it means for my poetic speaker to discover his own polyhistorical (conscious and unconscious) mind.⁷ My poems are exemplary of my desire to write hybrid subjects who are becoming/unbecoming aware of the “complex syncretism” of their own diasporic subjectivities. But the absence/presence of a nostalgic yearning for cultural beginnings with its planetary roots in “all continents”⁸ threatens to interrupt the transcendent possibilities of “supersyncretism.” The proliferation forward that characterizes the “ethnological machines” of “supersyncretism” suddenly reverses its trajectories with the reintroduction of a “romance of origins” (Brand 35) into hybrid subjects. This yearning suggests that the speaker still holds within his memory the narratological threads of patterns for essentialist cultural, ethnic or racial affiliations. Such emanations of retroactive feeling that spring from the linguistic insides of a “supersyncretic” subject—who is *the* generative phenomenon of the machines of European imperialism—produce within hybrid subjects a turbulent poetics of *interiority*.

⁷ Robert Bringhurst defines his concept of a “polyhistorical mind” in relation to what he calls “the principles of polyphonic structure” where “no one voice is allowed to dominate the whole” (33). For Bringhurst, Canada (and in my poetry manuscript, *both* Canada and Guyana) is a place “reshaped by immigration.” What this means is that “one story,” “one history,” “one literature” are “not enough” (34). In other words, the stories of a singular story, history and literature cannot account even for the “multiple voices” of First Nations communities, shaping relationships to place long before Canada’s colonial and postcolonial histories.

⁸ For the African-Caribbean it would be Africa, for the Chinese-Jamaican it might be Hong Kong, for the Hindu-Guyanese it could be Rajasthan and so forth.

Through his own inhabitation in language, the poetic speaker in “The Greatest Films” searches within himself for complex hybrid histories that precede his own entries into both *Caribbeanness* and *Canadianness*. In this manner, he resembles the poetic speaker in Dionne Brand’s *Land to Light On* (1997) who “stumble[s] on the romance of origins” (35). To entertain such a “romance of origins” is not a naïve desire when one considers the probable suffering of diasporic subjects in racially, culturally and ethnically hostile hostlands. In circumstances of spiritual and material struggle, the creation of an invented elsewhere would certainly seem like an attractive imaginative alternative to the hostland. In my poetry manuscript, in an irony borne of the catastrophic histories of imperialism in the Caribbean, the *fictive faraway*⁹ that precedes the speaker’s Caribbean and Canadian identities is the ancestral-historical presence/absence of the ‘East Indies’ *within* the misnomer, ‘West Indies.’ India, although embodied in the speaker as an echo, a yearning, a haunting—semiologically active in the imagination—is “distant in space and remote in time.” When India does enter the speaker’s mind, it does so as artifice, as story, as oral history. Often in the speaker’s memories of childhood, India announces its presence through the Orientalist imaginations of popular culture, particularly in Hollywood films. For example, consider the following passage from the poem, “BOYHOOD THINKS: Omnibus”:

⁹ The *fictive faraway* is a phrasal conflation assembled from Roland Barthes’ scenes of a “fictive nation” and a “faraway worlding” in his book on Japan, *The Empire of Signs*. Barthes suggests that in creating the “fictive nation”/the “faraway worlding,” the writer is, in no way, “claiming to represent or to analyze reality itself.” Writing creates, rather, “an emptiness of language,” but it is also this “emptiness of language” which constitutes writing (3-4). For a theoretical application of the Barthesian *faraway*, see my article, “Who Stole the Soul in *Wide Sargasso Sea*,” where I discuss Jean Rhys’s reclamation of a determinate childhood for her heroine, Bertha Mason—Charlotte Brontë’s ‘madwoman in the attic’ in *Jane Eyre*—as an opportunity for Mason to engage in a dialogue with her own destiny, to rebel against Brontë’s closed symbol of madness. Because Mason’s history is unwritten in *Jane Eyre*, she is, thus, empty of language. Mason’s voice is absent. Rhys, however, restores for Mason a voice and writes for her the Caribbean childhood Rochester speaks of in *Jane Eyre*.

9 before Trudeau's fag-end Ottawa Greedo in the Old Somerset me & Bob,
 before our final morning in Georgetown & yesterday Mom sold the fridge,
 before I made this secret petition to Kali: "Give back Archie even in stone!"
 (26)

In these lines, the poetic speaker simultaneously inhabits the dual spaces of Ottawa/Canada and Georgetown/Guyana. At the age of nine, the cognitive vessels for his memories of such spatial and temporal duality are the childhood movies, *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (1973) and *Star Wars* (1977). The speaker calls on Kali, the Indian goddess reanimated as a villainous statue in *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, to resurrect the deceased Caribbean father, Archie, "even in stone." In the poem, Archie is part of a filmic past the speaker associates with Trinidad and Tobago (Archie's birthplace) and Guyana (Archie's deathplace). In Canada, however, the speaker watches films with Bob, the Canadian stepfather. The reference to "Greedo," the bounty hunter in *Star Wars* responsible for the kidnapping of Han Solo, as opposed to any other villains in *Star Wars*, is significant in that the speaker might be equating his own removal from Guyana and into Canada as a kidnapping of sorts.

"BOYHOOD THINKS: Omnibus" pinpoints Guyana and Canada as political coordinates of/for cultural identity through the inter-textual and referential insertions of *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* and *Star Wars*. But the lines, "*before* Trudeau's fag end Ottawa..." "*before* our final morning in Georgetown..." and "*before* I made this secret petition to Kali..." (italics added), disturb these coordinates. Indeed, readers might very well ask: *what* happened "before" Guyana and "before" Canada? If I interpret these "befores" as linguistic directives to backtrack through the poem, to reread the poem backwards from the last to the first section, a reversal of the poem's textual logic/logical textuality, I discover a poetics highly suggestive of the Caribbean's "ethnological machines," operating as they do transnationally:

23 to 29 better than the hippogriff Kali comes to life behind Sinbad
 0.2 to 45.9 in hybrid hands; Ottawa special effect. “*see, Orientalist!, see?*”
 ramsammy (fingersnap!) Albion (fingersnap!) puja Guyana (fingersnap!) (25-26)

Rereading the speaker’s repetitions of “before” from the vantage points of these preceding sections of the poem serves to reveal the speaker’s growing awareness of the impossibility of his own desire for stable cultural, racial and ethnic identities. For example, to imagine a time and place “before” the specific and expressive exotifications of cultural, ethnic and racial alterity, whether they are found in the “special effect” of Kali coming “to life behind Sinbad” or in the speaker’s sonic *mash-up* of “ramsammy” “Albion” “puja Guyana”—carried through the offbeat of the “fingersnap!”—is to arrive in the indeterminacies of “hybrid hands.” Indeed, if I continue rereading backwards all the way to what *was* the very beginning of the poem, I end with the birth of the speaker whose first words are “rice flour rotis? fuck off?” (22). I end with the speaker’s point of entry into Indo-Caribbean collisions with colonial and postcolonial Guyanese political histories, where Indians under the Burnham regime from 1963 to 1980 were culturally and racially marginalized. In the image of the “rice flour roti,” a gastronomic aberration in a country where “atta flour”¹⁰ is contraband, an attempt to culturally starve the Indian, there is a sense of an Indo-Guyanese *marronnage* marked by loss and dispossession that precedes the burgeoning possessions of what will become—in time—the “hybrid hands” of the “supersyncretic” subject.

Hypertelic “Supersyncretism”

¹⁰ This is the term my family used for wholemeal flour. I never knew that “atta” was a Hindi word, only that it was the correct baking flour to use when preparing Guyanese rotis. “Rice flour rotis” were known through derisive humour as “Burnham rotis.” My poem, “BOYHOOD THINKS: Omnibus,” addresses some of Burnham’s oppressive policies (22-26).

My transposition of Benitez-Rojo's idea of "supersyncretism" as an eventual *débordement*, as an emptying out of all cohering pulls toward fixed ancestral points of origin, reveals a reading of "The Greatest Films" whereby the speaker secures the freedom to accept and/or refuse identities according to any number of shifting/repeating combinations of subjectivities based on cultural, ethnic, racial, national or political affiliation. These combinations might have everything to do with Benitez-Rojo's second "alternative" of defining a "supersyncretism" as "ethnological machines that are quite distant in space and remote in time" and "that one would have to look for in the subsoils of all continents." In my poems, one need not look as deep as the "subsoils of all continents" to locate the internationalist proliferations of Caribbean culture. For example, in "MOM & BOB: Matinees," an ornament of "air brush roses," "on the wall" of the speaker's suburban Ottawa home, becomes a gateway through which Mom rereads/reimagines the passage of South Asians to Guyana: "Calcutta. Natal. Demerara" (35). This movement from Asia to the Americas happens in "London shadow" or, more specifically, as a consequence of the histories of "Gladstone's coolies,"¹¹ of British imperial systems of Asian indentured labour imported from India to work the Caribbean's sugar plantations. According to Stanley W. Mintz, in *Sweetness and Power*, because of Europe's demand for the commodity of sugar, the emancipation of millions of African slaves imported to the New World to supply the demand was followed by "East Indians, both Moslem and Hindu, Javanese, Chinese, Portuguese," among other diasporas (71). Of course, the ornament in its representation of England's national flower, the rose, is itself an echo of such histories of colonization; these histories acquire additional

¹¹ For a comprehensive historical account of John Gladstone's policies on Asian indentured labour in the nineteenth century—and the term "Gladstone's coolies"—see James Epstein's article, "Freedom Rules/Colonial Fractures: Bringing "Free" Labour to Trinidad in the Age of Revolution."

syncretic resonances in that the ornament hangs in a home that becomes Canadian/USAmerican “through burgers, fries” (35). Nevertheless, in the line, “centuries serve no shakes,” Mom references a syncretic moment *before* Canada through her awareness of a Caribbean history where “sugar kills cities” (35).

The flow of the “ethnological machines” of Caribbean “supersyncretism” beyond all pragmatic geo-political boundaries allows Benitez-Rojo to theorize another scene of Caribbean hybridity that informs my poetry manuscript. In his formulations—and as a direct consequence of imperial histories of contact and possession—the Caribbean emerges as a “cultural meta-archipelago,” an arc of repeating islands¹² that conjoins the Americas (4) with its transnational reach of attitudes and sensibilities. In other (other) words, the Caribbean is an unnamed, unmapped and indeterminate “island that ‘repeats’ itself” (3) ad infinitum and, as a result, resists all fixed coordinates of spatial and temporal location. For my project, this rereading of the Caribbean as “the repeating island” (elusive, evasive) provides a useful theoretical lens through which to reconsider the images of a repeating Guyana scattered throughout my poems. For example, in “Museum Schlock,” the lines, “I resisted his necklaces

¹² This idea of the Caribbean as a “cultural meta-archipelago” recalls Kamau Brathwaite’s poem, “Calypso,” with its polyrhythmic sonic textures of *kaiso* music and its chaotic mapping of the Caribbean as a site of linguistic and cultural diversity grown from the collisions of natural and historical violence:

The stone had skidded arc’d and bloomed into islands:
Cuba and San Domingo
Jamaica and Puerto Rico
Grenada Guadeloupe Bonaire

curved stone hissed into reef
wave teeth fanged into clay
white splash flashed into spray
Bathsheba Montego Bay

bloom of the arcing summers... (47)

in agate glass gold Carnelian, matched the Portuguese Dutch English/Japan a Staebrok Market in Melaka scarlet” (56), suggests insertions—through a checklist of nouns—of the imperial histories of Guyana into Malaysia and, later in the poem, Java, Indonesia, known under Dutch rule as Batavia. The comparative postcoloniality of these lines charts a shared historical genealogy of European imperial conquest (“matched the Portuguese Dutch English”) between Melaka/Malaysia/Java and Georgetown/Guyana/South America. The invasion of the Malay Archipelago by the Japanese Imperial Army is a history of colonialism specific to the Asia-Pacific region and is indicative of Malaysia’s own particular “supersyncretic” colonial and postcolonial histories. The scarlet colours of Melaka become a visual echo of Dutch architecture, of “Staebrok Market” in Georgetown, Guyana. Thus, in “Museum Schlock,” the poetic speaker makes visual inventories that reify the planetary reach of the Caribbean whose presence because of the histories of sugar “covers the map of world history’s contingencies (Benitez-Rojo, 5). But what fascinates me most about such scenes of débordement, the excesses of influence and dissolutions of all geo-political boundaries, is the production of individual and collective sets of consciousness that result from its repeating psychic machineries.

If the Caribbean is, as Benitez-Rojo contends, a “supersyncretic manifestation” in that when one believes to have finally “establish(ed) and identif(ied) as separate any of (its) signifiers,” there “comes a moment of erratic displacement” (12), then all formations of Caribbean “supersyncretic” subjectivity would be informed by this “moment of erratic displacement.” Consider, for instance, the “erratic displacement(s)” of spatial and temporal diversities as depicted in the following lines from my poem, “MUSEUM: Cinerama”:

& In Banda Aceh I rhyme Bahasa Guyanese

& sila buka bibiru kasut have some cashews before you leave

& “OK, Old Village?”

& Guyana izzan an island in Java you know?

& He swallowed Pavonis Mons with his shuttle. It was early afternoon.

& I found Kananga in St. Ann Yaphet Koto Arawaki adze

& (the kids laugh when I say, “Not Canada. Not Canada.”)

& When I see his face, a Taliban tee.

& and no jumbie spoke to me no Sarawak spook not Spanish X not French X not Pourtagee X

& Don’t Know What theremin dragonflies above the Forbidden City (42).

The entire poem is a litany of ampersands that reflects the speaker’s desire to, through the language/poetics of becoming/unbecoming “supersyncretic,” cohere a “chaotic flight of signifiers” (Benitez-Rojo 12) jousting/wresting for the control of the centres of epistemological and ontological awareness. Even Guyana, the speaker’s birthplace and point of historical entry into a Caribbean “supersyncretic” subjectivity, becomes a disturbed/displaced coordinate in the line: “& Guyana izzan island in Java you know?” Posed as a question, as a questioning of ancestral history/memory—“you know?”— Guyana becomes just another strand in the compounded hybridity that is “supersyncretic” subjectivity. Therefore, “MUSEUM: Cinerama” depicts the possibilities for a particular kind of extinction, where even sentimental representations of the yearning for ancestral origin/belonging become obsolete and fail to effect, for the speaker, a Euclidian understanding of his own being.

The repeating ampersands in my poem are notational representations of expressive attempts to cohere the “irreversible change” that Benitez-Rojo says defines “the repeating island” (3). In a structural manoeuvre, I underline the unstoppable proliferations of the “repeating island” through the very reversibility of every conjunctive line of verse:

& consider these follow-up fashion stories blood upon your Osama bin Laden shoulder

& the way we listen to Barrington Levy in Montréal, right Billy?
 & not stroking a Persian not wanting SPECTRE SMERSH & Taliban don't rhyme
 & no Gershwin skyscraper eavesdrops on the Garvey I carry back pocket
 & from Medan to Maninjau, "you must try Padang food!"
 & Duluth above Fernando Mile End too far Feb. -44, the wind chill this evening
 & I don't give a damn about hockey.
 & In Banda Aceh I rhyme Bahasa Guyanese
 & sila buka bibiru kasut have some cashews before you leave
 & "OK, Old Village?" (42)

The cumulative effect of these linked lines of verse is to suggest transcultural, transhistorical and transnational widenings of the "*ultima Thule*" of the Caribbean, the spilling over of all its generative and regenerative cultural hybridities.¹³ The poem discloses an imagination of vertiginous significations ("Osama bin Laden," "Barrington Levy," a James Bond villain, Marcus Garvey, Montreal, hockey, Islam in Banda Aceh, Islam in Guyana, and the "Old Village" of India) into a psychic archipelago formed from the memories generated by the "repeating island." Therefore, in these moments, where the speaker externalizes in poetic language his own psychic archipelago, he actualizes an awareness of himself as a "supersyncretic" subject who embodies a host of diasporas. As the cultural and historical machines of the "repeating island" continue to operate through his consciousness, the speaker not only finds himself in constant encounter with his own difference but also "a step toward

¹³ Benitez-Rojo contends that a rereading of the Caribbean entails revisiting the "sources from which the widely various elements that contributed to the formation of its culture flowed." However, as soon as I establish or identify any of the signifiers that "make up the supersyncretic manifestation" of the Caribbean, "there comes a moment of erratic displacement of its signifiers toward other spatio-temporal points, be they in Europe, Africa, Asia, or America, or," as the case may be in many of my poems, "in all these continents at once" (12).

nothingness” (Benitez-Rojo 3), toward the “extinction” of the linearity (the teleological *modus operandi*) of all narratives of absolutist and essentialist cultural, ethnic and racial origins. The speaker, speaking through the poetics of “supersyncretic” subjectivity, becomes one of Severo Sarduy’s “hypertelic creatures” (119).

Sarduy uses the term “hypertelic creatures” to describe “certain ciliate” animals that “retreat too far across the sand, flee too far inland” and, consequentially, “die in exile, trying to return to the increasingly distant water, to travel in reverse the path that an irresistible impulse, inscribed since birth, forced them to follow by imbuing them with its energy” (119). “Hypertelic creatures,” as a result of this “genetic knowledge that runs through them,” “pay for their excess with their lives” (119). In my own transposition of Sarduy’s formulation, it is the stories told by parents and grandparents, orally disseminated into the imagination of the poetic speaker, which exhibit an “irresistible impulse” “to travel in reverse.” For example, if I return to “BOYHOOD THINKS: Omnibus” through the trajectories of hypertelic “supersyncretism,” it is possible to identify in a rereading of some of the poem’s images that what is dying in exile or stepping “into nothingness” in the speaker’s consciousness is the cognitive awareness of the “genetic knowledge” of India, of the tenability and sustainability of all linear (and imagined) narrativizations of pre-hyphenated *Indianness*. In the lines, “Indians in Guyana *really* are Indias” (24) and “berth death dearth birth like in Ray Harryhausen/a thousand arms/hands everywhere/Sinbad, Sunday, 3pm/at Plaza” (24), the Indian subcontinent becomes little more than a retreating sign in the speaker’s imagination. I determine India’s referentiality by lampooning Columbus’s cartographic and semantic mistakes *in* ‘discovery’ (through the historical irony of the South Asian presence in Guyana, the *real* “Indias”) and by popular-cultural cinematic histories of Orientalist artifice and invention (in this instance *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*).

Nevertheless, in other poems, there is still a sense of what Fred Wah describes as “the tools of place, genetic inscription, home, love, message, and hunger” (55)—Sarduy’s “genetic knowledge,” perhaps? —which clings “like dirt” to the speaker’s “roots” (55). For example, in “BOYHOOD THINKS: Jihaji Bhai,” these “tools,” acting as homing beacons that join the speaker to a nostalgia of/for India, prevent him from wresting the agency to construct and orchestrate histories and identities that lie beyond those of preceding generations.¹⁴ The following fragments recall the passage of one of the ships (the “Hesperus”) that transported Asian indenture labour—the “coolies”—to the Caribbean and the route by which this ship arrives in the Americas (India to “Mauritius” to “Demerara,” Guyana):

coolies on the Hesperus

leaving Mauritius

for Demerara. (34)

While the exteriorization of these fragments on the page visually notates the ancestral passages of IndoCaribbeans, the spatial economies between each fragment (the absent *topos*, the forgotten narratives) is a philosophical declaration of the emergence of a h/History as sketch, as bare bones, facts without contexts, without fleshy whole narratives. The effect is to suggest a fragmentation of certain master texts, texts of ancestral, cultural and ethnic origins that rely on the retroactive imaginations of hybrid poets for their survival in “supersyncretic” memory. For example, “BOYHOOD THINKS: Jihaji Bhai” draws the reader’s attention to the meta-

¹⁴ I am speaking here of the “Queer Turn” in the poem that would also constitute the psychosexual drive of “The Greatest Films.” In another essay, I would argue the possibility of reading and rereading these poems as a contest between sets of voices, of who gets to mediate the spaces of the join, possess the notational sites of the hyphen. This contest would take place between the ancestral ghosts of parents and grandparents and the very Queerness of the poem’s speaker.

fictional use of the nouns, “*Latchmee*,” “*Katya*,” and “*Bub*” in an effort to suggest that their definitions and, indeed, their very Anglicization (as the case is with “*Latchmee*,” commonly spelled as “Lakshmi”) are not only contingent upon retreating (the spatial and temporal eclipsing of) traditions of orality but also on how well those who receive the stories of the past remember them in the present (35). The knotted “*Katya*” and the milky “*Bub*” are complete fictions. They are the maternal grandmother’s attempts to embroider histories of the family’s entry into the Caribbean, into *IndoCaribbeanness*. That I italicize “*Latchmee*,” “*Katya*,” and “*Bub*” assigns them the notational importance of locating moments of linguistic marronnage. Such states of being textually marooned—castaway in language as it were—lead to several questions. What would these italicized words mean in exile from their respective contexts? In such exilic conditions, would these contexts even be retrievable/recoverable? Outside the context of the grandmother’s stories—the poem itself—would “*Latchmee*,” “*Katya*,” and “*Bub*” retain their interpretive resonances? Indeed, the “nothingness” of the meanings of these words when read without a particular cultural/historical context—when read against the *fictive faraway* of Guyana and the even farther *fictive faraway* of India—underlines the veracity of the anxieties/fears of earlier generations of Caribbean people facing the possibilities of ancestral-cultural extinction, or of a removal/ alienation from real and imagined narratives of ancestral-cultural belonging.

In “The Greatest Films,” the other strategy at play in the creation of new words through which to express states of becoming a “supersyncretic” subject, is the hybrid poet’s ability to seize as opportunities for the linguistic reconstitution of his own identity what Benitez-Rojo calls the Caribbean “soup of signs” (3). This realization of the insistent interpretive agency of words brings with it the personal joy of a private Adamic moment where the poet renames himself and everything around him. For example, in “BOYHOOD THINKS: Outside Foreign,” the poetic speaker declares that he “learned a new word today

Rajastaniatombomb” (7). Throughout this poem, he is actively engaged in splicing disparate images together into lines of verse—such as “sketch Arawaks along the Rideau River” (8) and “there is no masjid on Arch Street” (8)—to produce new semantic epistemologies and ontologies from his own lived experiences of spatial and temporal displacement and dispersal. In the following lines from the poem, “WAR CRIMINALS: 4575 Henri Julien,” the speaker—in an act of “auto-Orientalism”—becomes more ambitious and grabs hold of the paradigms of certain colonial and postcolonial literary histories to re/imagine, re/narrativize and re/vivify his own points of entry into hyphenated identity. His re/negotiations of subjectivity occur against *and* through Orientalist binary systems of master and servant and their concomitant philosophies—in-the-service-of-Empire—of the anti-hyphen:

Crusoe used up Caliban not again paradime [*jeez and me*
here trying this tongue like Césaire’s like with all that sand? in the wee wee we
could scream the archipelago push bhai push squeeze your way out dash
yourope equals Aziz collar back stud to Fielding] (42).

In the imagistic mash-up that begins this stanza, “Crusoe” (*not* Prospero) meets “Caliban,” (*not* Man Friday). The splicing together of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* suggests the paradigmatic scenes of colonizer and colonized are no longer adequate explications of a dialectics of “supersyncreticism,” which is the consequence of the catastrophic collisions of colonial encounter. In other words, the speaker wishes to transcend particular master narratives of settler and native in order to assert and claim a complex of syncretic subjectivity that results from such paradigmatic re-stagings of the convergence of disparate Others. If I reread the “used up”—in “Crusoe used up Caliban”—as an indicator of antiquated binaries of master and servant, settler and native, and human being and monster, then, the “auto-Orientalism” of what lies in the parenthetical, italicized portion of the poem

begins to make sense as an emptying out of the signifying resonances of the Orientalist applications of literary depictions of self and other. The speaker begins such an imaginative contestation by first “*trying*” his “*tongue like Césaire’s*” tongue¹⁵, the postcolonial response to the “used up” “not again” paradigm. He proceeds to wrest from the polyrhythms of “the wee wee we/could scream,” which is a remixing of the refrain, “Au bout du petit matin” (34), from Aimé Césaire’s *Cabier d’un Retour au Pays Natal*, the opportunity to exceed the boundaries and centres of imposed prescriptions for colonial and postcolonial identity. In the poem, “*the archipelago*” “*scream(s)*” to the speaker—presumably through Sarduy’s “genetic knowledge” that “runs”/ *dashes* “through hypertelic creatures” (119) or Wah’s “tools of place, genetic inscription, home, love, message, and hunger” (55) or Benitez-Rojo’s “ethnological machines” “in the subsoils of all continents” (12)—to “*push bbai push squeeze your way out dash.*” Both meanings of (the) “dash” are working here in that the speaker exceeds the colonialist hyphen —“*way out dash*”—transcending the paradigmatic Orientalist hyphen that produces “Crusoe used up Caliban.” But, at the same time, he runs —*dashes*—toward a hyphen that notates an intensification of compounded subjectivities and multiple postcolonialities, toward a hyphen that inevitably widens into a *dash*. Such attempts at débordement mark the appearance of the *supersyncretic* hyphen, where what I could call a *poetics of irreversible miscegenation*, resides.

Troubled Hyphens

¹⁵ The effect of “trying” the “tongue” recalls M. NourbeSe Philip’s poem, “She Tries Her Tongue; Her Silence Softly Breaks,” where the *transplanted* speaker, haunted by “the me and mine of parents/the we and us of brother and sister/the tribe of belongings small and separate” (58), must “seek search and uproot/the forget and remember of root words” (60) in order to initiate “the harsh husk of a future-present” (62), an awareness of becoming something/someone else beyond histories of catastrophe and trauma.

In an effort to theorize more stridently the work the *supersyncretic* hyphen performs in “The Greatest Films,” Fred Wah’s specific and exact articulation of the “scene of the *hyphen*,” which depicts the “site and sign of the hyphen” (73-74), is particularly useful. In his itemizations of all of the possible meanings of the “site” of the hyphen, Wah imagines the *supersyncretic* hyphen as:

any poetics of opposition (feminist, sexual, racial) and that is the poetics of the “trans-,” methods of translation, transference, transition, transposition, or poetics that speaks of the awareness and use of means of occupying a site that is continually magnetized. (90)

The oppositional “trans-” of the *supersyncretic* hyphen undermines all invasive attempts to reinforce the master narratives of colonizer and colonized. It offers an imaginative response to the potential violence of the hyphen’s magnetism—to pull hybrid subjects back-and-forth, in effect, to pull them apart in perpetually conflicting nomenclatures of essentialist affiliation and identification.

What matters for me inside the space of the *supersyncretic* hyphen is the hybrid poet’s re-inhabitation and re-performance of all movements from absent *topos* to present *topos*. For example, in the poem, “WAR CRIMINALS: Mecca to Madinah,” the speaker re-inhabits and re-performs through song-like nonsense the semiological authority of ‘Guyana’ as a signifier of absolute belonging, as fixed homeland. He does so in a moment of Queer Islam where, as a pilgrim performing Umrah, he experiences the remoteness of a religious affiliation, the traces of which still lie in Guyana but, *supersyncretically*, grows in Benitez-Rojo’s “subsoils” of “all continents.” He engages such multivalency through a scene of the split, of the splitting of ‘Guyana’:

Scatter!

yana hey yanoho gu ya na guy ana guya na g u y a n a heyyanaho guy (45).

In these lines, there is a splintering of the totality of ‘Guyana,’ as an authorial sign of belonging and, therefore, as a magnetizing agent in the speaker’s sense of cultural hybridity. Once ‘Guyana,’ and the pressure of the lure or pull of irretrievable *Guyaneseness*, is de-magnetized—torn apart as in “gu ya na guy ana guya na g u y a n a”—then the speaker successfully wrests the agency to re/navigate and re/negotiate his own relationship to the absent *topos* of ‘Guyana.’ At play, then, in the speaker’s nonsense language—in his strategic gibberish—is a linguistic demagnetization—an emptying out of the magnetic power of the significations of the “master narratives of duality, multiculturalism, and apartheid” (Wah 74) from the notational space of the hyphen. The *tabula rasa* effect of such a manoeuvre restores to the hyphen “a blank space” into which—and onto which—the hybrid poet inscribes the infinite, boundless and Baroque combinatory gestures of *supersyncreticism*.

Troubling the hyphen through this “blank space” is to “preserve and perpetuate” the function of “the passage position” and “to problematize” (and lift) hybridity above and beyond the “static” (91-92). Through such dialogical functions, the *supersyncretic* hyphen becomes a site of play—of performance—a linguistic, semantic and semiotic stage where hybrid writers perform and re-perform the narratives of their own in-between-and-nowhere identities. For example, in “MOM & BOB: Matinees,” the performative “trans-” junctures of the *supersyncretic* hyphen reveal themselves to the poetic speaker as *a poetics of irreversible miscegenation* where—through the mise-en-scène of Guyanese Mom and Canadian Bob’s first romantic encounter—the speaker deciphers the registers of *IndoCaribbeanness* through and against its encounters with Bob’s *Canadianness*:

Pink man turkey neck & Mom never brings home doggie bags.

that’s Demico chicken in a basket, take away twinkle eyes, Mom don’t forget

no negro Indian whiteman in the veins. or how Funk Wagnalls
 does Caucasian cha cha cha. So: Mom brings Bob home in the dark. (1)

In these lines, the speaker lampoons the signifiers of Bob's *whiteness* and their coordinates in Orientalist narratives to suggest a rereading of Mom's *IndoCaribbeanness*. His *auto-Orientalist* gaze refocuses the lens of memory on a revivification of the postcolonial "contact zone" of Guyana as it is re-performed by Mom and Bob in their courtship—their act of miscegenation—and finds its point of entry into the "contact zone" through the erotics of cross-cultural and cross-racial encounter: "take away twinkle eyes, Mom don't forget," "Mom brings Bob home in the dark" (1).

In "MOM & BOB: Matinees," the speaker reminds Mom of the orientalist definitions of racial homogeneity as: "no negro Indian whiteman in the veins" and "how Funk Wagnalls"—the dictionary—"does Caucasian cha cha cha." Through repetitions of the prepositional phrase—"in a basket," "in the veins," "in the dark"—the poem captures a series of entries into some other knowledge, some other being, some other sensibility. The poem approaches its explorations of the miscegenation of the imagination not through the invasion of Mom by Bob but, rather, the other way around. It is Mom who invades Bob: she brings him home "in a basket," brings him home "in the veins," brings him "home in the dark." Thus, Mom explores Bob, settles Bob and, as a consequence of such possession, of such sexual and psychic penetration, hears "the Assiniboine" in Manitoba speak (1). In MOM & BOB: Matinees," then, the seductive task of deciphering Bob is as significant as any effort to decipher Mom. The speaker problematizes Bob's *whiteness* in such a way that one might very well ask the question: what kind of "whiteman" is Bob? In the storybook language of childhood, Bob is a "(p)ink man" with a "turkey neck." In the language of an encyclopaedia, Bob comes from "somewhere near Brandon," Manitoba, which is "73, 732 sq. m. in W.

Canada.” In the language of “Funk Wagnalls,” Bob is “not Magyar. Aryan Anglo-Saxon. Not Breton race-stocks.” Finally, in the language of Victorian literature, of particular narratives Edward Said claims are *contrapuntally*¹⁶ in correspondence with the narrative possibilities of imperialism, Uncle Sultan, in an effort to dissuade Bob from any romantic interest in Mom, tells Bob he is the wrong kind of “whiteman” for Mom: “my sister will never any whiteman capital Winnipeg touch. she fancy Mr. Rochester country/where the animals have faces so many damn right!” (3). In Uncle Sultan’s mind, the “whiteman” Mom fancies is (British) Guyana’s colonial master, the Englishman from “Mr. Rochester country,” “where the animals have faces so many damn right!” My homage to Margaret Atwood’s titular poem, “The Animals in That Country,” from her 1968 poetry collection, suggests that Mom desires a “whiteman” from a “country” so rich in its own self-perpetuating national myths that even “the animals in that country” are “thickened with legend” (49). Unlike Atwood’s England—signified by the “fox”—or her Spain—signified by the “bull”—Bob comes from a history of settler imperialism to a place devoid of myth and where the animals “have the faces/ of no-one” (49).

In another instance of the *poetics of irreversible miscegenation*, the poetic speaker in “MUSEUM: Schlock” employs the “saturated messages” (Benitez-Rojo 2) of his own Caribbean “supersyncretic” subjectivity in the creation of a self-mythologizing poetics of becoming Canadian:

ever “approach Pavonis Mons by balloon”

¹⁶ In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said uses the term “contrapuntal reading” as a strategy to read the aesthetic influence of European Imperialism on the narrative economies of the Victorian novel. His point is that, in Victorian literature, Imperialism makes certain passing references to “massive appropriations”—in Africa, Asia, India, and the Caribbean—possible. The faraway colony in its economic and imaginative importance to the perpetuation of Empire becomes a character or a plot twist or an organizing metaphor that propels the story forward (66).

send more

pictures

earthquakes great winds fires famine

you think Chagall the only peacock in all those mountains

make me dusty this elaborate passport lie

we only slowly grew west I keep postcards that say East Indian

typical coolie village upper Canada chingu the world

spins around you (57).

In the poetic mash-up of “typical coolie village upper Canada chingu the world,” the mechanized “ethnological” proliferations of the “repeating island” attach itself to Canada. While the phrase—and variations on the phrase—“Guyana izzan island” (9, 12, 38, 41, 52) repeats itself throughout “The Greatest Films,” so too does “Canada izzan an island” and its variations (6, 14, 22, 37, 43, 47). In my poetry manuscript, Canada emerges as a “contact zone” where a “supersyncretism” of compounded and imported (through immigration) “relations among colonizers and colonized” (Pratt 6) resides. In this “contact zone,” Guyana reads Canada and Canada reads Guyana through a *poetics of irreversible*—simultaneous—*miscegenation*. For example, consider the following lines from the poem, “BOYHOOD THINKS: Fazlah Decoupage”:

mind flames fires up the archipelago stops at St. Lucia, no aunties there.

awake Ottawa into plantation dream, press into broken morning bread, tell me in
Guyanese.

Khatoon grandma’s clockwork orchid blooms above sweaty suitcases before Canada,

Bob's 3-prong country.

Tell me (19)

In these lines, “Ottawa” wakes up into the “dream” of presumably a Caribbean plantation while Guyana operates through “Khatoon grandma’s clockwork orchid,” which “blooms above sweaty suitcases before Canada.” Mashed together in these lines is the scene of a reciprocal possession, a cross-cultural haunting, where both Canada and Guyana “dream” one another and “tell” one another through the poetics of an “archipelago,” the Caribbean “cultural meta-archipelago” that tumbles its way into “Bob’s 3-prong country.”

In “BOYHOOD THINKS: Fazlah Decoupage,” there is a collision of *fictive faraways*, of jumbled memories (“tell me in”/“tell me”) of a knotting together of multiple identities. Therefore, it is possible to locate the stories of the *supersyncretic* hyphen in a multiplicity of locations, including but not exclusive to:

a property marker, a boundary post, a borderland, a bastard, a railroad, a last spike, a stain, a cypher, a rope, a knot, a chain (link), a foreign word, a warning sign, a head tax, a bridge, a no-man’s land, a nomadic, floating magic carpet, now you see it now you don’t (Wah 73).

Wah’s *supersyncretic* hyphen, therefore, has the capacity to produce a transversal poetics whereby writers who engage in acts of rereading their own textuality free themselves from what Édouard Glissant, another poet and theorist of postcolonial contact and possession, terms the “linear, hierarchical vision of a single History,” a clearing of sorts of “multiple converging paths” (66). The “multiple converging paths” of a transversal poetics allows hybrid writers “to pass through without being appropriated” (Wah 90) because it offers expressive and creative routes/roots out of the universalizing sameness/centrisms of colonizing narratives of “a single

History.” Thus, Wah’s “now you see it now you don’t” could easily read: “now you see *me* now you don’t.”

Passage Positions

While I seek to travel *into* the hyphen rather than merely stopping “at” the hyphen, the effect of my journey into the orthography of hybrid identities such as Guyanese-Canadian and Indo-Guyanese also depends on what Wah calls the “levitational” “dynamics” of the hyphen’s *trans* poetics. As I already state above, Wah’s hyphen, performing the work of poetic transversality, identifies itself through the self-reflexive mechanisms of a “blank space” that promulgates the “passage position” and troubles/lifts hybridity above and beyond the “static” threat of Orientalist appropriation. Therefore, a transversal poetics of the hyphen does more than just pressure the spectral memories of what Homi K. Bhabha paints as “the tension between two cultures” (Cited in Wah, 74). While the *trans* poetics of “The Greatest Films” serve to propagate memories of “the passage position” (from Guyana to Canada, India to Guyana, India to Guyana to Canada), it also performs an act of “auto-Orientalism” in that it empties out the rhetorical veracity of Orientalist representations of the “passage position” and replaces them with a *poetics of irreversible miscegenation* where subjectivity is reconstituted through complex syncretic sensibilities generated by the spatio-temporal and geo-political dispersals of Benitez-Rojo’s “repeating island.” For me, in the poem, “WAR CRIMINALS: End Credits,” the page—the exhaustive economy of the spatial possibilities of the page—sketches the psychological effects of these dispersals and the representational histories of the “passage position,” including a genealogical history of its conjunctive representations in Orientalist and non-Orientalist imaginations:

Franken
fish

-ended

the fags
Bob Fosse moves

Song
&
Cancer dance

friends in faded brown cords
nut huggers on the 55 St. Laurent
“I wanna see all my friends at once/ I wanna go bang”/back
couldn’t wait to wake Fernando up
wouldn’t you like to be Guyana you?
be Guyana be be Guyana

rough
thumb
monster (59).

In this excerpt, the “passage position” (Canada to Guyana/Guyana to Canada) loses its narrative linearity in a shifting of attitudes and moods back and forth across the page. What the jostles of these fragments effect—transversally from right-margin text to centre text to left-margin text—is my own absorption into the *supersyncretic* hyphen. I become aware that I too occupy its “site and sign,” not as the “mixed blood” that Wah claims, but as a “supersyncretic” subject that signifies upon—and through—paradigms of reassembled, reconstituted, monstrous and mashed-up identity—“the Franken/fish” and the “rough/thumb/monster”—as I collide with them at the walls of the right-margin. “The Greatest Films,” therefore, becomes exemplary of how I imagine strategies in my creative and scholarly work of redefining the notational presence of the hyphen as “a soup of signs” even when this presence can only be explicated through the spectral.¹⁷ Rather than as a conjunction, as some crude attachment to

¹⁷ For example, I am thinking of how, in USAmerica, although there is no hyphen in “African American,” the space between the “African” and the “American” might still conjure up a phantom hyphen, an unwritten, unsaid but understood historical conjunction which retroactively binds the person to what Dionne Brand has called in *Land to Light On* (1997) “the romance of origins” (35). In Brand’s earlier poetry collection, *No Language is Neutral* (1990), this

a hostland through Wah's "master narratives of duality, multiculturalism, and apartheid," I wish to regard the "repeating island" inside "the hyphen" as a "certain way" of mapping a continuum of becoming rather than the stasis of truncated becoming.

"romance" is the "something" that "drives" the "verse" of the poetic speaker "into the future" (42) beyond what Judith Butler, in her *Transposition/Queering of Freud*, might consider the "unresolved grief" of the "loved and lost" homeland (Butler, 133).

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