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There Must Be a Reason People Come Here

Abstract

The poems in this collection are meant to be read as a preparation of ground and ask to be connected to a larger thought beyond the discrete experience of the poem itself. That thought is that no artistic expression exists outside of the historical conditions in which it was made, and those conditions must be broadcast in concert with the poem.

I cite that these poems are the result of existential degradation developed during the production of subjectivity under modern, hegemonic structures of Neoliberal Capitalism. They were cultivated from "bits of sensitivity" drawn from an unexceptional past regulated by systems of scarcity, in full view of a horizon of environmental destruction and vast inequalities burning down the present to control the future. They reside in the contradictions that today we each enjoy many privileges but receive fewer needs. As such the poems circulate a subjectless subjectivity as expressions that project "an agency without an agent" (Brian Massumi). The poems should be read with the actuality of these deficits in mind.

For that is where the site of these poems began their working-through: in the contradictions of what it means to be negatively capable today.

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THERE MUST BE A REASON
PEOPLE COME HERE

A Dissertation

Presented to
the Faculty of Arts and Humanities
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Brian Foley

June 2019

Advisor: W. Scott Howard

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ABSTRACT

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FORWARD

The poems in this collection are meant to be read as a preparation of ground and ask to be connected to a larger thought beyond the discrete experience of the poem itself. That thought is that no artistic expression exists outside of the historical conditions to which it was made, and those conditions must be broadcast in concert with the poem.

I cite that these poems are the result of existential degradation developed during the production of subjectivity under modern, hegemonic structures of Neoliberal Capitalism. The texts were cultivated from working-through bits of sensitivity drawn from an unexceptional past that has been regulated by systems of scarcity and in full view of a horizon of environmental destruction and vast inequalities burning down the present to control the future. They reside in the contradictions that today we enjoy many privileges but receive fewer needs. As such the poems circulate a subjectless subjectivity, expressions that project “an agency without an agent” (Brian Massumi), the smoke of an ink emitting exits but no black box. The poems should be read with the actuality of these deficits in mind.

As Catherine Malabou has articulated:

“What should we do so that consciousness of the brain does not purely and simply coincide with the spirit of capitalism?”

As an answer to this question, the poems in this collection broadcast the indirect effects of lived conditions in lyrical expressions of time to arouse a dialectic in which one can address what is increasingly understood to be a generational dilemma.

For the millennial generation, the situation of scarcity has been incrementally thrust upon us; we’ve never known anything different and have been conditioned to take on with a point of view from the jaws of what eats us. We have endured a life of projected abundance, but instead labor in austerities as instruments, amending expectations at the drilling pressures and their attendant introjections, through the end of history and into capitalist realism, where an alternative to late capitalism struggles to even be expressed.

That is where the site of these poems began their working-through: in the contradictions of what it means to be negatively capable today.

YELLOW BRICK ROAD

I hear the people
who walked here.
I hear it and then you
hear it too.
On the road,
the yellow leaves
coming to an end
never drop, stretching
out their change, some-
thing bright to mark
their bodies from
the black grass.
Here is what we know.
This is the music
they would listen to.
They were addicts.
Here is what we know.
We're not crazy.
Our instruments
are impaired.
Far from civilization,
we're not where
we're supposed to be.
So here we are.
And this meeting
is officially
about the possibility
of turning back.

FLOWERS WITH THEIR HEADS DOWN

As much as I'm not flinching, abundance
isn't working right. Up after night coming
out, I decipher the days' unspeakableness
that can only be heard in fertilizing what's out of the question –
that missing the exit bears witness to limitations.
What stands out's caught more in the ground's
mathematical gaze, a debt that holds a dandelion back
from total lift.

At the driveway's edge is an edge infinitely moved
away with a time: some languid, unevolved thing
cannibalized by repetition's again & again
getting on with the blades of grass shot up against us
is feedback born daily for what I'm about to see:
there is something in man causing soil to empty,
a limit I'd tremble through if I knew what I stand next to.

FREE ASSOCIATION

No matter
 how many times
I listen to what
 for money
 my brother does
I won't remember

My brother's chin
 is broken
off but he is
 my brother

It's not my problem
 I don't want to be good
 at anything but hope

I don't contempt
 the moon & its promise
 of eviction,
a flower for its curse

It's my problem
 I lower
 my voice
occasionally
 to make a living

FIRST AS TRAGEDY THEN AS ART

1.

I'm up front
placing my order
into a window

light saps
while I sit
to be around
and think up
seasons as grapes
soured out of tune

it's not wonder,
the wonder at what is
impossibly accurate
that bothers

I want it to be
parody to take me
and mutilate my congress
using multicolor

to be tears if you love it

2.

to see if, from the
memory,
one flinches or not.

what's the best
way to knock

when there's
nothing tech-
nological to do.

the point
is no longer there,
but to add to

whatever kind
of light this is -

this thus
this thusness -

lends a hand
from which no one
writes home

MYTHANTHROPE

A little more deeply now the mysteries are jammed too clear
& it's like a window, the ones not every child wants.

Faith the bricks won't fall out takes now more than ever.

When a refusal happens in your neighborhood,
the tilt in the wind comes swift. It howls

& you hear yourself, violently aware
of what unspeakable must be

which you know at least to hold onto,
warmed by the precision of what bleeds,

instead of dreams

where a ruthless kite
creates a cold wind from within.

A THICK DESCRIPTION

You know by
going. migration,
pushing it, you did.
Now, at greatest
possible distance
from what now is -
a turning
out the light
for a long time
after. about
these things that
don't reach matter.
for what if there is
no more room.
what if I don't
have a scent
in I say. do you
think it's about
that singleness?
it isn't ours.
for anyone arrived
at this point
anything's better
than the grammar
here, made to grip.
it is radical what
you can ask after
words for mercy.
though there may
be other questions.

they are there.
they touch you
so you exist.
we can say within.
that each ego leads.
I leave off you
and the concept of you
you trouble to believe
in as much as I do.
maybe next time
I will be the you
who says no.
but even said,
we can't say anything
about it that proves
we're not yet
on our own.

ABSTINENCE

It's spring & sex isn't thinking about you.
In the supermarket it is morning, mid-May.
It is always morning, mid-May. The invalid jelly-light
not featuring the days-lived description has
its back to the dawn, permanent, always & and unbegun.

They say strange flowers are begging all over the city,
little things with colorless hope. That one might step
into their spinning propellers & be deseaminated,
yanked from a fieldscape of swimming tin
to recycle long hours sitting in a traffic of insides
that snap off a rib for nothing, into no other.

I've had to claw my way through an age where no symbols cling
with a glow-in-the-dark flavor geometry.
It's spring & sex isn't thinking about you.
Everything that happens can be fit into this story or else
we are children for a very long time.

BROKEN NUMBERS

The woman in the car next
is singing the same song as me

& the man in the car
next is singing the same song

an old want-not
we pack the world with

it puts away nights
and won't take money

for an answer
there has to be a hitch to stand up to

to quiet the vinegar
so long ago divorced

we hardly notice its once blue appeal
its lot of cheap space giving us tone

in my radio the roads turn
to reach around in the old way

a hydrant opens, sweeps the side-
walks, but nothing is lost

friends, I want to take care of you

ABUNDANCE

every atom in your body came from a star exploded
that now
won't talk to you

I think of it now
and then
I hate my job

Look
it's said

there is always a door
& you're it Once
you confess you're here
ever body stops
 listening

What you have to admit to the ocean is
you're not even rain

or a body
stopped
at the job
of stars

that now
won't talk to you

a star that was
kind enough to explode

YOU MUST NOT WANT TO SEE EVERYTHING

Hope is a chemical, not a scream ignited in the eye that can't be heard sober. To the sad: we sell smoke to reconcile the angles wrecked in a chest, rescued from something we would see, the alarm where our living is coming forward. It's hard to know what to ask for.

In some cases, we are expressed in flames. And there is no personal face. And there is no muscle interested in making the one building the fire left ours. Holding in thirty odd years behind my eye, does it admit a stink, like torture made in faraway places? Don't we become unreadable when we cease to remember melting surrounds us? Something in me wants to know. If we believe a sun's simpling acid mediating the weak gravity of joy could evaporate years of spit smeared deep in a face: it is one less light I want to understand.

The more we know what's in us, the more difficult to remain calm. We sleep at night because we have to.

THE BATHERS

Intensely, the sky!

The view

as rubbed on my fingers.

The light is not on it.

Spring lakes, visit!

Italics are outside!

A yell heard
over social waters,
an androgynous yellow

to commune you welcome
when made aloof by the whole
of the oarlock'd earth.

How hurried I redress in egg from a failure.

Why be great?

The soul is disgusting.

Do not imitate it!

NEW TRADITIONAL

Held to the last waters the raft drifts wrong,
the wheel caves
thinking tonight
was to inspire its service.

If it wasn't for that tick
I'd be the type
that needs to be told
how to refer to themselves.
Even broken-off from the wall,
the wall's elements polish the ratio
to warp the material world back to

all you need to know. Regardless of where,
you are dating. There are no more tailors.
It comes to you from within or it's not.

ECOLOGY

is it ever over
really
we were
weren't we
real err
as in really
just here
weren't you
here just
didn't we
just complain
how exhausted
about
wonder
how much
we really
weather
our copy
and paste
of the just
rewound
present
reeled in
blocks
of skin tuned
to time
hopelessly
to appetize
something bigger
to eat us

FIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF DESTINY

1.

To solve
a problem
so incrementally
it's never hard
or painful
or stops

2.

At what age did you first feel displaced in you?

“there was a vast plane where I grew up.
it kept expanding & expanding
so that I had to look at the ground to not
get sick. I was getting close to the sense I too was a you
being filled up. that I’d soon burst”

3. "Cruel Optimism"

Today I missed
the benefits of medicine,

an absence of suspense
in the way

cooking an egg hasn't changed
and cannot end.

let me be with my life
before the chip bends the limb.
I've none to call this actuality off.

that a generation produced hormones
as relentless obsolescence,

now what's a dials' tone
but a restless series of flinches

that don't tell me
is there a place you shouldn't leave?

4.

We're not doctors
but we agree, but yeah, a song
dilates the burn in the way
each darkness is a collection of sides.

by ear I mean
I can't sleep without it,
& though I haven't been able to prove it
if there are rules, it is not music.

5. "Grund"

Awake in a length I once ate at the spark
I'm stuck now having to explain –

then the neighborhood went dark

& for a moment i was excited
not to see what comes next

ACCELERATE TO LATER

to be with
without work

the offline
in the insect
seems so big
& lowering

the sky
to just a fence

you sneeze
and fall
into a species

never to be picked
except at
by birds

INTEGRITY

Dead are
our sentences
mutuality if
our organisms'
be ignored.

I feel
my nature trying
to get me invisible
with those productions
morning glorifies
into a mystic quiet.

O say,
I open a newspaper
& it takes me
to the nearest nervous
house of bells.

Soon there will be
a past, it's
blood locked
in someone else's epic.
I wear its uniform.

I smuggle
each day free
from nothing
but its doctors.

[VHS]

The sufficiency of each being is contested by every other. The curse of the losing format is that it misses each

deadline to be obliterated with the form. The last form breaks free when it finds its condition in the curse and

disappears into its language. This is teleology. It says there is no more need for examples. The cases we've looked at

are enough. For how can we say it's really you speaking. How can you be sure it's you and not the weight of a dead line pressing.

Tell me something only the noise in your vocabulary would know. I see creatures with the gardened skin of snakes,

but not demons. I see demons with the eyes of soap bubbles, but not soap. The curse of the losing format is the sail can be forgiven,

but not the boat.

SIXTEEN MOMENTS OF SILENCE

for David Morris

I have never been a place, which overwhelms me.
Even if I can't radiate in this country, tonight wears
something bright. From back and forth, from bed to table,
my insides rhyme with the streets with no power to die.
A town can pull down the corners of a mouth, but there's song
at the ankles, it asks for directions, carrying the people
that lead me away from where I know to go. We can think
every detail on earth to be a spine disturbed by coils or
of a moon-light sufficient to overflow hearts missing the balance
of what heaven. Who you are is not a where, not the house
felled into the sea by storm, not the waves of no control, no.
Anything can be brought out of water if you fall in love with
your breath by holding it. I haven't known what will happen
for very long, but it is wonderful, this life, even if it's not mine.

MELT FLICKER

Once you exhaust
reflections' mediocre dream,

in protest of your own
custody, to be

without patience
highlights patience's

decapitations.
It's said that dirt

makes a person -
like earth,

the noise colors plainly
so many ways to get warm,

equally floating up
my attention.

That more than a fact
has happened

I sense
without sentence

as a spine running
through my hands

like a rosary
in your head

AN OCCUPIED COUNTRY

There is no sun here
just habits of light.
It is why and not why
I find the defeated lilacs
thrown-away fragrance
I trust in more, and more
the insistence of brightness
maggots up the days tight grip.

It is hard to be reasonable
between the heat's abundance
and this occupied country
 its soldiers
proud to be drunk. Ask the match
how it feels when forced to be
light. We are made to listen to
the doctor who describes
burning as a flavor of life.

WARPLAY

Deep green haunts source the way I see.
If I enter them again I will drop quickly
into my manner and take up the wood
in my gun. Only there do I slope out of growth,
growing youth back armed, knowing where
the flag is tagged, to which camp, what tree.

We'd never finish or admit we were shot.
How great we imagined the grief would be
from the rings of Heaven lived dying on the ground,
so played eternally, touching the place over our hearts
only when it was time to go home.

MY PLAIN SIGHT

Who cares
on the grass
inside us

we can't ever see
the sun only
its projection

a wet face
with the energy
of a handle

so few of us
are good
at being naked

& named
for no such thing
as if to be

is what we're about
in plain sight
I've had a lesson

I've had walls
leave a room

HOMEWRECK

As clouds out-number people,
all afternoon a feeling -
nowhere are people
being right. Lately
it seems late and less dry,
my brain stains the paint
of the insides. In this certain self-
adjusted buoyancy, a wish to dis-
agree is willing to stand
in the rain longer than anyone.

I seem to distaste
concealing, and bake hate
as ordinary to excuse it,
cussed because I can't expect
what's flammable to flame
from within. why wouldn't
I animate urge ingredients
with general wreckage?
I've enough ordinary wax.
little derogatory bits.
it gets so you can feel
these things totally
alive inside of a crime
uncommitted, just
like the dusk forgot
how to spell me, now
just a collapse
I doubt into.
what I've abandoned
by building vocabulary

is out-baited in
the beautiful moments
that attack my referral.
I want to family
with the way you phrase
your words, how you
take apart a life
to preview what works
well with others to so.
only in an unprovoked
flinch do I solvent
a center, easy as advice
as usual. Who do I know at
the end of a green light?
alone, it is easier to go
right then left or wait
for red to calm down.
Just getting antique
you're made free
to then visit some
wilderness & see
the unimagined animals
out of touch with me.
a lightning you'd like to get over
laying the wheeling night,
nothing in the chest
seems interesting to move.
I woke this morning
never clearer,
unlocked because
I didn't bother to look
up and feel. Any second
a birth will appear
and I won't forget to

remember the present.
the idea being
you too like holding onto
things, pretending a friend.
I guess you could say let
the static do its nothing.
deleting a worry from the earth
scraped off the cliché of sky
is wasted right now
in studying witness.
unimportant what minor
keys jiggle the handle,
flushed for rewinding
a life span in the right direction.
as if peeling an eye at what
I'm abandoning by being
browsed down is
blood to be immortal by now.
to behave built,
building back what
ever is left of particular
shatters, churching
everything to get at height.
no other reason porters
a plunge into laughing
past today. a comma
can't tourniquet
the sky toward some crowd
or belief. The bag it comes in
hits the dream bar,
ending just shy
of sum up. Such an
organ -isms with fear
with the hard feelings

that its brain will run out.
but opening that grip
I plea with is
abducted light. that
such a hulk should
hold me up for hours,
a little digital dayshine
everywhere, always with
a difference in it
I'm willing to attach to
now as was then.
more collaborative days
are ahead of us or isn't
it thrifty to think. so.
some engine will find you
then nature is calling.
I don't know her real
name, but attempt it,
to wrap a noodle around
a spoon and never do.
some terrible form is such weight
versus shape, you can't make it
as a room where the furniture
won't move. it must be
predictable as the moon
fucked in the air museum,
as sure as your beware
of the dark and dogs.
I'll just stand here and love
my oven, its lotto
snoring in its soul.
It needs not a septic
or a glitter to sue.
it stares back used,

happy already
then hungry an hour later,
evinced with pine or appetite
& liable to skillet dew.
to take the back seat
as means of heart surgery,
I keep hoping someone
will be home to know me,
someone to know me
from home.
after objects, I'm showered out.
whatever it is they do
to put in shadows
I invade a way to pretend
a mend out of it.

FRIENDS & FAMILY

However we
hold each other
under the attractive
weight & prior
extinctions, still
with us, but not turning
us still, we hold with
an inner calm that is
a closed, dying system.
the sky there
controls the stomach
and there is no
laughing melody.

Waiting to comprehend
hunger again, you reap
a thought to an object,
and because pain is
 inexhaustible –
 temples,
 temples everywhere.

Suddenly to enter,
you'll have to answer
for everything on that day.
That we are people,
we could have loved.

WINE DARK TREE

Once upon a
time is a bone
I've dreamed of

being intercepted
by the shade of this tree
all my

life distorts the acts
of watching
You

work through
webs & starve
yr spider to death.

The air weighs
a billion
pounds the lungs must itch
all of it through

its catalog – gods
without men without
women without children

2.

Life distorts
the acts
of watching

That nothing arrives
above it
among the shade of

this
day too will fail
to make history

Old Mary
full of grease

let useless be-
come Ulysses!

TONE

I was told
young
to watch
your tone,
my tone was
extreme,
which the view was,
was not
amicably received.
it had ambitions
of a vice
president waiting
to unseat,
would lock eyes
for breakfast,
starving down
the desire
in you, a speech
few can read.
I went on
catching up to it,
then finally recalcitrant
as stopped water
hounds
pause to lap from.
I went on
to soothe among
struggling lips,
sprucing up
as slobber

on a wild fang,
domesticated
only when
someone's watching,
telling you
to watch it.

REFUSE

I spoke up
come by wind &
lectured the orchards:
what's needed is
no longer,
not so much.

they nodded,
called off new
salience, turned
out messy bloom's
disorder & tore up
its own woods it is. I hid
between
a resonance
of grief and departures,
on
the night sky's
cored-spine width
& so stripped, lived:
one golden-apple enough
to keep an eye
left on.

THE CLEAN

I miss smoking & childhood & today it's impossible
not to concentrate on what love doesn't clean up,

which is the plot but really its each other's single choice,
so plural at times it prevents change.

By a bay I am lonelied by the horror of its form
operating fulfillment by what a frame allows,

then having to guess how much space to leave free
for the night where I am a stair cased in someone else's building.

Can I really be out of it out there in beauty, occupied
by gymnastics of anodyne, bashed in by a common

interest, riding the void with punk? No matter how
dig I deep I can't resist the gravity, the fourteen second

daydream dealt two thousand times a day screening
through my wishes for an undocumented tradition.

We have made it possible for one another
to do terrible things trying to hold off a switch

from imagination to complete a map. To abide by
no more than dotted lines, ducking the unexplored

is something I've never asked for. Pretty soon all the streets
will have gone out in the different ways I am using my minutes.

I know this; if your brain is full, starting a skill make
everything slower. Drinking a pungent sunrise no longer gives applause

or pause to be full of half-learned things. It's a graceless grocery,
every lasting bite the bulk of second hands that fool you into being full.

Even birds need the right amount of gravity to swallow
to be brought down, even when how little of the world has changed

PLUGS

There is a traffic
light hanging
 in Mass
no one has ever been through
that has never turned red
on itself

Sometimes I see
the streetlight's caramel
like sadness
to the identities
hidden under them.
Then the night won't rise.
No stars to turn from -
bright, tideless, housefire
& just a voice burns
from an obsolete stem

VIOLIN

love is pulling her hair
out your mouth
forever or love is
leaving it there to
loathe on for

 you
who left this strung
 I've confused
belonging
with whom I belong to

what length goes left
in my chest
brambles into violins
that broadcast

a former moon
 blown into a ring
circling round the thing
that destroyed it

 Oh the hope of
a hair that we should someday meet
the tails of things

you will touch your temple
& feel a spot of cold air
then go looking for the one that left
a window open somewhere

ARCANE NAVEL

We prefer
the incomprehensible
to be wild to itself:
a pretext, or anything else
we think of as too big to be of our own device
to be a premise
we must then forward a divine with.

We set from it, apart,
until there's just
the two of us, saying you
the same way, used
for beauty or abuse, as in –
I'm all you've got.

But we never narrow it
down just right, as you
comes coded too close,
holding space as it is
with all it knows
about the unlikable dark
you can't get with,

so we occupy
our other here's selves
to divine where we aren't
as if it were here
that we weren't.

FIELD OF ZEROS

Green religion
 has its fanatics
 honk
a viral insurgency

but winter's dunes
 are consigned to
 free materials

no one wants
 in snow
to be thought of

from THE MAKING OF A MYTHANTHROPE

So this is the making of a Mythanthrope
after signs never meet nor agree.
A bad moon's a hormone A heart's a strata is sawdust afraid to speak
in full achievement & deaf is also a tune.

This is not a story:

eating at the speed of a feeling
with a background of brakes screeching at all-night.
You see day passes out attached clouds
one hand to another a shake that won't let go.

What interests now that you're finished with love,
when you look at your hands you haven't held the news in years.
You like the flowers but not the man sawing his arm off,
they are the same thing,
the slow senate of spirit craving itself.
Its weakness gets so near to the animal you've run out of
playing off the body
letting the brain tangle when it takes so long
so long we are born alone in the middle of a life
a broken chair of life.

This is not a story:

I know who Proust is he invented that cookie.

Where I assumed people spoke in my dreams, none have ever made
a sound. It's a disease, having to tell until bare, to believe the body's loudest voice is an
explicit headlessness. But danger comes in danger's absence

& oh, I was also harmless once.

That summer somewhere nobody filled, I was gone in the calm
on a long walk back to the house to clean out
loose nerves like tendrils from a pumpkin.

Summer breaks your neck with a bright tangle, a white cabbage sky, another part of me
unpaid with shape. I can't openly grind roses.
I don't glow with the road, don't memorize the pudgy birds.
In everyone's yard is nature's thrusting narcissism
& days like days
like the boring quality of mercy.

Summer, if we are your poor we are offbeat demented semen
desiring to be alone.
This is not a story:

to lay in your head conceptual with earth
until you learn its humor is
throwing spring in your face
with an organism's blunt lust
to be sure that my body won't forget.

For what have I dulled
leaving motion for love's rest?

It was here you were

common with me, conjugated as a fact
dissolving towards assurance,
legibly imagining yourself as polite or usual
like acres of common grass
comfortable with people.

Hadn't the point been to corroborate
our angles, to make of it a go?
These summer nights weren't
written but they wanted to come.

My desire is such a small space
organized around shadows.
They sing a kind of calm
like the air of a palace emptied.

Yet it would do lovers better
not to play in there -
though the nobles have gone
they communicate their rooms
with decorations of fear.

I can't forgive them.
Even as I remain indoors
researching what I mean
 their schemes include me
by association, as much
my fault as this amoral peach or this
drab book losing its edge, unleading me

I'd get better opportunity
just dropping it, trading up
by showing it no hope. But each
day the mail comes I swallow
its arrival like a serum and age back a year.

There isn't order in my evening.
I hate the dangling thing. I begin
to draw a figure outside the loop.
I draw until all meaning is gone.

This isn't a story. I am writing out what I can't find.
As a ladder dreams to hold any rung whatsoever,

Ask me at my death who it is
that I love. I would like to know.

SPECTRES OF MARKS

Decisions are now

made far from here,

the boundary once

again has been moved.

we woke inside a

land without ghosts.

every room empty

& all the books alone.

A magnified absence

of finality in no

discrimination to perceive.

In dark sense

we say what it is

we say is true. O!

the boundary has been

moved. we only have

each other to be.

THE FACT

Though you forget
you are breathing
lungs soothe the edge

the farther into
whether you go.

though it's just
a skill
just to be here,

you crave
a poem to share.

think of it:
the day breaks.
think of it

THERE MUST BE A REASON PEOPLE COME HERE

Even though the climb is infinite,
 cliffed with indifference,
the cleaning stars lost to compacts of branches above,
and a thick mist settles the places behind you,
you abandon them. the habit of memory won't merit here.
How you've defined yourself with supply no longer makes do.

 To be alive here seems against nature
 but is how we measure ourselves,
despite the path being beaten goes barely announced
to your eyes trying to frame the size
of whatever your fear is.
As your steps coincide with some cruel chronic ambition,
fraught not of desire so much as a sense of what is not rewarded
in being alone, to degrade here would be a possible life,
if not for the humiliation of who or what may find you –

you never know who's going to bury your body,
who will weep on your dirt, if you'll know the name of that bird
 that disassembles your blood.
 it doesn't matter.

That few make it to the top
 and those who do may find the door is locked.
There must be a reason people come here.
There must be a reason people come.

ALL THE WORLD A POTENTIAL BATHROOM

impotent
morning moon
severs suits into
sunshine chills
& the ripped
up right in front of
you a potential
bathroom

disorder
pimps what the heart
puts out I narc
on the garden
with weeds
with nobody but

daylight
& bats at
dawn I thought birds

JOINS

Do I go down?
The pond's thrush
thickens toward me.

Where they are
down you bet is dull.
That nobody finds.

Persuaded, they're why-
less, swimming in the little
while that they live,

the sun-dock, the drab
grass, near to an end
and no less unloved.

At best familiar
things collapse into
average palaces.

What hour's left?
I abuse myself with
ponds.

GOVERNMENTS

If you come to impossible under the pine tree
moving into you, out-of-order, as if there really is a world
we speak of, what is the order holding onto
that these structures permit, so that they may not drop
into abundance's straight ideal. Stick that there &
there's forms! But to be a windweed withered in a hive of leaves
pockets a proof of ambiances internal activity.
Yet none can be wrenched out of a gravitational field's clearance.
Turning it over, we turn into its servants.

Can the ground still help if it doesn't intend to?
If the ground weren't there, would we still fall?

MARKETS

Inside anotherless morning,
the depraved skies' cages
going stomp, with a sprig of myself
striking out on blank clouds,
renouncing hobble, steering daythink,
all these years I now know I am
I sell for a moment to moment a moment
innumerable of new worth
and nothing getting to sleep.
If there's a clock that has me,
speak wildly from the lips
I just stood from.

FLINT

Money is not
your money.

It combines
& combines its
likeness a
giant sunlight
for an overbearing
crowded fire.

As far as
show can't tell
I'm concerned
anything grows
& much less
stays. Unlike

the river I
can't drink
but connect with
what color my
eyes are

the money
that washed it
away no more
remembered
than the light it
had occupied.

FRONTIER

Let me give
The name of
The location

Of the world
In the autumn-
Logged brain

What conspires
In a clot
Of moonlight

Its cloth
Unreleased

I recognize
Across a removal
As the blueprint

Of the angle
We're inspired
To choose from

Tonight:

Leaves,
Sticks & beer

Cans
As bright
As knives

THERE ARE TIMES, AND THIS IS ONE OF THEM

You're out there
sanitized with clarity
 Do I hustle
anything in this skulk
except for what rules?
Should I not sing
we live in a place
not ourselves,
no quiet or compass
to run us down?

If I were to talk myself
into myself, if I were
at a loss being in loss,
it should be said
I remember having held
the contours of a word
unseen but felt

we break up a word to want
at one ment

it is not the world
to be in one place breaking.
the world has separated

while you slept,
you blame its darkness
on anyone but yourself

SUNFLOWER

for Andy Milligan

I said this
is it like it is:
a black strip
abducting tenor
from the body:
like stepping away
over a face
we end
up talking with:

help me,
I cry nothing
but loops: they
just aren't good
enough: or why
i like believing:

there's music
coming from
a last house:
where people each
are chewed up:
verbal flowers:
a syntax
in the fleshpot:

is flaming as
comprehension:

footage
pushing back the air
between the legs

ASSISTED LIVING

I've a world's loose
royalty,
nostalgia steaming
 in sex's place

like flowers in the microwave
are cremated quietly
& hymn
an atom bomb
shadow that bursts in
a busy grief

why catch light when it comes
willingly
it's the move towards loss
that interests

the new suss
trying to unsettle
from this chair
sitting inside me

that we slowly apprehend
rather than suddenly discover
should not subtract from the wonder

it's the process of getting
 getting hungry

REP

I was caused
starting to get cold

plunged for the sake of being a shape
in the permanent realm of mutation

that everyday lands
like a hornet
on your lip.

Then to find your reason
is a we to convert souls
of impossible men
into vehicles
for impossible women

I loaned
thinking it the only noise
I'll ever be

I warmed in the feeling of that moment
that there was someone else
who knew the color of my spine
better than me

TOTEM:

“The animals in Totemism cease to be solely or principally creatures which are feared, admired, or envied; their perceptible reality permits the embodiment of ideas and relations conceived by speculative thought on the basis of empirical observation. We can understand, too, that natural species are chosen not because they are ‘good to eat’ but because they are ‘good to think’” –

Claude Levi-Strauss

“And intoxicated by madness I screamed furiously: “Make life beautiful!

Make life beautiful!”

- Baudelaire, “The Bad Glazier”

“First of all: mourning: we will be speaking of nothing else.”

- Jacques Derrida

Beginning is: unlike: being lost:
corresponding: every person:
made riddle: to the point: of rain:

to assign it: so ends: cornered
in the eye: letting would be: out to pasture:
like a fireplace: out of work:

Listen: is
ambivalent:

mud: trapped in:
constant: hot water:
and never: the place: you need:
to hear: right now:

where is: the ethic:
in the origin: engaged:
to noise:

come here:
says: the human
arm: holding: me:
on purpose:

either: you
dress: for: the
music: or: change:
your name:

I as a member:
bring into confusion:
the fixation of images:

sensitive bodies: a turf:
giving away: all but:

that which makes
things appear clearer:

a device: within
an object: to influence: weather:
covering the head:

there is clearly
visible space:
between two things:

the ears: a part:
the eyes: a poverty
that cannot be exaggerated:
as an inside:

A skin: for tomorrow:
acquires material:
dismantling: prior: chandeliers:

a rally: beyond: the sea: made
with: photography:

every single night:
a quest: to define: the next: sobering: thing:

but: it is noise: that brooms: when nothing:
tattoos:

pendulum waves:
uncoupling: the most beautiful: train:

After the close
of life: time: and
more: time to:
subside:

into the station:
of the face:
I write:

P.S. the loco
motives: here: shine:
all of time:

What: a bunch of rockets:
don't know:

the landscape: is empty:
looped: through:
a language: we dream:

loosening:
I sense: a depth: roots: late at night: to music:

the root: of being: held
accountable:

To drive together:
I get pretend: to happen:
carried away: backwards:
to ring bells:

everything that can
be seen: different without being:
something else:

a bring to be done:
a wind so: young: from the point
of a compass from which
it blows:

I am for a reason:
one who counts: to increase:
away from the inside of a place:

a person
who lives near another:
surface of language: held in

the head: without reference:
to be imitated: again and: against:
an urgent need for something: on all sides:

To this day:
come: wood-stacked:
and doubled over: from:
the slug: and heaven
screws:

I say: gratitude:
for the detour: I say:
gratitude:

for lights:
dark-hunting: to
amaze: for: grease:
set to gather: a chance:
to slip:

come:
old breath:
bored: of sighs:
lure back: the you:
swung away: upon
sway: I say:

gratitude: to
rumble: a friend: say:
gratitude: to wood: ready:
for the ways: to be
not here:

Things:
not framed:
packed: in
pass

ing:
will be:
shorthanded:
similar:

only: to
mind:
as I mind:

made up:
as all: width:
and no and:

As is my right:
my voice: changes: by the ear:

a room: of rooms: for rooms:

upheld: in
the whole condition: to blame:
what it costs: to claim:

needing: only:
my within: polished: occasionally:

I have not: made up: a room:
for you:

as I will: never:
own: my own: house:

absolute:
as the dispute:
bucking:
between heart:
and hand:

I die: before: I
summit: the power of:
your face:

in or to this place:
difficult

to use:
yet: able to form:
in the mind:

magnified:
as animals: in
aether:

fountaining:
aloud: from history:
in their thousand: million: sheathing
leaves:

I read: the end:
as it began:

to where:
I walked: the clothes: off

my body:
clearly:

a class: in
apologizing: a life

which: sucked:
so bright:

everything: looked:
licked by blue:

lonesome: tree:

it's strange:
being you:

The pull of soul
for states: spherical: lamp shade:
or fish bowl: adapted to design:
a fabric for: the senses:

the mind: excludes:
something that is built:
as semblance: under obligation:
to substitute: escape:

as opposed to here: which circulates:
the juice of anything: an influence:
correcting defect in vision:
until: by filling: we:
pay attention:

The filled up:
middle: of species: ceasing:
to vanish: I could: theme:
into reason: for
a disease:

the sound of:
my own: maim: is expelled:
against the: same: baste:
but its

the shape:
you walk into: in which you
collaborate:
possible:

WHY I GIVE CHASE

You look me
 in the lands
& for the first time
it's like I'm food.

 Can you tell me
where you were
just now
 taken? I want
 to go there.

 If one doesn't have
custody,
the thought of keeping
 still comes to pass.
Yet our bodies can't hold us.

To this day staying
awake wasn't an
option. It has been ugly
 so it could be.

AWAITING DESCRIPTION AND EMBRACE

If I've become unnecessary
I've not been told - so to sleep!
I won't go
for brief is this reward my own

If I am
dispersed by daylight within
reach of what
my theme has been

passing through
a human center before me
unnoticed to no one I am
like a soul
like a soul
closely pressed to the palm
it came from

baffled by its skill
to stay forever
awake

ON THE DULL NECESSITY OF MOATS

Maybe because
I don't see anyone
walking home
it seems
the night's cold's
a good offer
that extends
casually cheer
to things that don't
mean too much.
Just as a next day
gives no choice
without you knowing it,
a pill-like sure
pulls up a spring
put aside,
explains your color
without describing it.
so maybe because
I don't see anyone
home
I am walking
now in the hand

of someone gone
through the pluralized
anger of impossible,
once full of certainty,
they now know
is impossible to chew.

I like the idea of it.
but more I like
the idea
of the idea,
that everybody
knows
something good
is with them and still
this is a land
where nothing is solved.

REASON OF STATE: TIME AND FAILURE AS LYRICAL RESISTANCE TO LATE CAPITAL

CALENDARS OF MERCY

In the immediate aftermath following the French Revolution, the policies of the new-to-power Jacobins sought not to reform the state they had overthrown, but to re-write themselves out of it completely. In considering the vast inequalities of feudalism that enabled the ancient régime to fall, the new Republic instituted remade forms and methods of appraisal to set the political clock back to a zero-sum. These changes included a new legal system, a new system of weights and measurements, and a new way to organize citizens' time. In regard to the latter, the creation of a secular French Republican calendar replaced the traditional Gregorian time-frame that had been obeyed for centuries. Each of the 360 days in the new year was renamed for a seed, tree, flower,

fruit, animal, or tool easily recognizable to the people. Likewise, holidays were made-over to commemorate key points of the revolutionary struggle (the arrest of Robespierre, etc.). These inclusions of agrarian accord and memorialized political strife were meant “to substitute for visions of ignorance the realities of reason” (Andrews). In opposition to the primacy of the Gregorian calendar that’d kept time over the feudal system, for thirteen years the People’s calendar remained in place. It wasn’t until 1806, the year after Napoléon came to power, when kept-time returned once more to be told by those in power; from above.

Why the Jacobins felt the need to invent their own systems of evaluation explains the nature of ‘reason’ used to justify those years. According to the committee tasked with rewriting the calendar, they asserted: “We could no longer count the years during which kings oppressed us as an era during which we had lived,” explaining that “the establishment of the Republic has necessarily led to the reform of the vernacular era” (“The Calendar”). This writing-over was not only a refutation of the years of exploitation and servitude as they had been previously known. In re-writing the received system of valuation, in other words, of what could be known ‘in Time,’ a commitment to new systems was forged to reflect a shift from consideration of Time’s quantity, with all its attendant judgements and premises, to instead legitimate the quality of this new narrative’s beginning.

Centuries later, the existence of this calendar remained as a totem for Walter Benjamin. In his prophetic final essay, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, written in 1940, he remarked:

The day on which the calendar started functioned as a historical time-lapse camera. And it is fundamentally the same day which, in the shape of holidays and memorials, always returns. The calendar does not therefore count time like clocks. [The calendars] are monuments of a historical awareness, of which there has not seemed to be the slightest trace for a hundred years. Yet in the July Revolution an incident took place which did justice to this consciousness. (Benjamin and Redmond).

This ‘consciousness’ of which Benjamin refers continues the Jacobin heritage by describing time as radically different from the orthodox position of lineage and progress that most accept without quarrel today; that “history is not a continuum evolving towards progress, but a dialectic that evolves through violence and suppression” (Sebald and Wagle). In establishing this position, Benjamin differentiates between two opposing approaches to understanding the past: ‘historicism’ and ‘historical materialism.’ For the former, time is linear, uniform, cumulative. As such, it is narrative. In contrast, the historical materialist “records the constellation in which his own epoch comes into contact with that of an earlier one.” The job of the historical materialist is not to reproduce but “to explode the continuum of history” (Benjamin and Redmond). This explosion is necessitated because the historicist, filling the void with homogenous empty time, inevitably empathizes with the victor of history who fills that time with narration. In contrast, for the historical materialist, “cultural heritage is part and parcel of a lineage which he cannot contemplate without horror. It owes its existence not only to the toil of the great geniuses who created it, but also to the nameless drudgery of its contemporaries” (Marqusee). As such, Benjamin concludes, “There has never been a document of civilization which is not simultaneously one of barbarism” (Benjamin and Redmond).

By the guide of this light, the Jacobin calendar gains reason-for-state for Benjamin as a heterogenous document rewriting the values of 'civilisation' as it had come to be known. But instead of an eternal past depicting linear framework, Benjamin's 'historical materialism' constitutes a perception of history that demands the need for a ruptural experience of particular moments which politically stand out, suggesting a particularly expressive relationship to temporal experience. It is in this ideation of Time as read through rupture that Benjamin sought a medium for peoples to be able to relate to their past in which the present is connected to all lost causes and struggles of those who've become estranged from their histories against the continuous temporality held in the humanist ideal of cultural heritage. He called the potentiality of such a medium the "Tradition of the Oppressed". And what the tradition of the oppressed teaches us is that, "the state of emergency in which we live is not the exception, but the rule" (Benjamin and Redmond).

NEOLIBERAL AGENCY

Today this "State of Emergency" continues to permeate into every aspect of modern life's essence, but often in ways that are not easily articulated or perceived. Despite mystification, what is undeniable is that since the Neoliberal Turn of the 1980s, American government and society, and those who would do business with it, has been organized around an ensemble of aggressive economic ideas that advocate for the imperialism of the free market over all existing forms. To establish the essentialism of the market, since the late 1970's, an ideology of deregulation, privatization, and austerity slowly but surely were hammered into American consciousness, with bromides that

individual wealth is attained through relentless competition and by supping at the puddles dispensed from above. Manufactured consent, planned obsolescence, and globalization are imbedded in practice to promote economic growth and technocratic exceptionalism at the sacrifice of democratic deliberation, social inclusion, and economic justice. Equity, welfare programs, and collective action have all been burned down in the process; meanwhile, the prestige and power of finance capital continues to salivate at the expense of everyone else. And where a greater distribution of resources is made available in free economies, unequal distribution, wage stagnation, and mental illness squeeze those that are ever-more alienated from society that grows more and more precarious and exploitative, despite the eternally returning promise of ‘progress.’ What citizens today are left with are lifetimes of empty promises and anxious minds unable to rectify the contradictions and stagnations of modern existence, despite being surrounded by the abundance of the richest nation in human history.

Bourdieu describes Neoliberalism “as a utopia of unlimited exploitation ... that conduct(s) itself as a scientific description of reality. Therefore, neoliberal theory is ideology in the proper sense, the worldview of the ruling class. It is essentially faith masquerading as knowledge” (Stark). Because of Neoliberalism’s permeation of reality as a principled, faith-based ideology, and not a locatable policy that is textual defined, its contradictions are not easily challenged. The outcome of these contradictions that arise without a dialectical analysis is that the external effects become ambient and permeable, mystifying its interests around an individuals’ recognition of, what Marcuse calls, inner freedom:

The loss of this dimension, in which the power of negative thinking—the critical power of Reason—is at home, is the ideological counterpart to the very material process in which advanced industrial society silences and reconciles the opposition. The impact of progress turns Reason into submission to the facts of life, and to the dynamic capability of producing more and bigger facts of the same sort of life. The efficiency of the system blunts the individuals' recognition that it contains no facts which do not communicate the repressive power of the whole. If the individuals find themselves in the things which shape their life, they do so, not by giving, but by accepting the law of things—not the law of physics but the law of their society. (Marcuse)

As a result, today it remains difficult to locate media and expressions that develop as a subjectivity the Tradition-of-the-Oppressed amongst the many, abundant narratives that legitimate the lineage of Capital. To point, the accumulation of the latter's grand narratives proved so embedded in the fabric of society that, by the end of the 20th century, there dwelled an unconscious acceptance of an 'End of History'; or, as Frederic Jameson famously remarked, it became, "easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of Capitalism." Today, the dominance of Capital's narratives has embedded themselves and consolidated into a monoculture equipped with a dominant ontology; what Mark Fisher has called, 'Capitalist Realism': "the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but that it is now impossible to imagine a coherent alternative to it." (Fisher 2) This current state in which we find ourselves derives "in part from the way capitalism consumes and subsumes all previous history, (an) effect of its 'system of equivalence' which can assign all cultural objects, whether they are religious iconography, pornography, or Das Kapital, a monetary value" (Fisher 4). In light of dramatic world events such as 9/11 and the market crash of 2008, Fishers' diagnosis seems undeniable - we are overrun. And where such catastrophic

failures would historically be seen as significant ruptures of opportunity to seize power away from Capital and connect it to a Tradition-of-the-Oppressed, disappointingly, in both instances, Capital's dominant narratives dismissed movements to utilize public contempt against its most abject qualities with conquering narratives of sustained resilience and naturalization of progress.

For anyone alive long enough, this outcome should not be entirely surprising. In America, it seems we are living through the 1930's once more. As Benjamin notes:

‘The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are “still” possible in the twentieth century is not philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge - unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable’ (Benjamin and Redmond).

In a sense, while many leftists who interpret Capitalism's fatal flaw to be concealed but assumedly available somewhere inside its substantial form, harboring expectations that it will provide its keyhole for its destructors is not unlike Meister Eckhardt's dilemma: “I ask God to rid me of God.” For it is of course a futile line of thinking that appeals to the source of oppression to give up its power over the oppressed. Despite this plaintive absurdity, Americans roundly witness this logic in practice performed on their behalf in Democracy today, from liberal Democrats, in enduring gestures of bi-partisan appeal, performative decorum, and incremental reforms. By appealing to power with political “realism,” and managerial technocracy, in spite of the unthinkable existence of the current presidency under whose power in which we find ourselves, these dramatizations of change and difference meant to exert influence upon

the Real are roundly contradicted by the actuality of the status quo of everyday people in the underclass.

For as long as there has been Critical Theory, there has been despair that the forces we confront are too strong; that we live in a present never thought possible is a particular expression of this feeling, an expression we've only begun to effectively process. With the galvanization of Trump, a pathologically corrupt and purely self-interested aristocrat, we have sacrificed our sovereignty to be administered by assaults of daily contradictions from above. The ratification of the ideology that produces these conditions are not unlike or unlinked from those endured by the third estate before The French Revolution. However, the fact of these contradictions is destined to remain concealed inasmuch as we have lost our fluency in reading, analyzing, and performing an analysis to undermine the sinister objective of the system from which each actor develops their confidence. What is clear is that with the accession of Trump the exposure of Republicans' generalized antipathy towards all peoples not themselves, and Democrats contemptible fealty to liberalism, "progress" can no longer be a claim that "America" holds to be an absolute. The myth of American Exceptionalism must no longer exist as simply an assertion recycled through channels of academics and sovereign outliers. It can no longer be justified as a "cultural lag" as it was in the 1930's. The extortion perpetuated by its lie against the American people must be lived to be exposed every minute of every day for all to access and account for, until even its ashes are burned beyond recognition. As rising generations face horizons that promise to cancel themselves via climate annihilation, part of our duty today, and with the time we have left, is to develop

alternatives to the political dead-ends of despair and isolation, both in theory and in practice. To do this, we begin in a very American way - with the sovereignty of the self.

Catherine Malabou has engaged in battle with Capitalism's discursive entrapments by applying Marx as a way to digest new neurological research about the human brain's plastic capabilities: "You are your brain, but do not yet know it." In her seminal work of Marxist, neuronal ideology, *What Should We Do With Our Brain?*, Malabou articulates what few today have given sufficient expression: that despite exciting advances in understanding in neuroscience, the predominant narratives of rigidity and determination of the brain as a dumb mechanism hard-wired to the "unrelenting imperatives of natural selection" (Slaby) violently persists among scholars and scientists alike. She writes:

What should we do with our brain? is not a question reserved for philosophers, for scientists, or for politicians—it is a question for everyone. It should allow us to understand why, given that the brain is plastic, free, we are still always and everywhere "in chains"; why, given that the activity of the central nervous system, as it is revealed today in the light of scientific discovery, presents reflection with what is doubtless a completely new conception of transformation, we nonetheless have the feeling that nothing is transformed; and why, given that it is clear that there can no longer be any philosophical, political, or scientific approach to history that does not pass through a close analysis of the neuronal phenomenon, we nonetheless have the feeling that we lack a future, and we ask ourselves, *What good is having a brain, indeed, what should we do with it?*

For Malabou, the guiding question for the present becomes, "What should we do so that consciousness of the brain does not purely and simply coincide with the spirit of capitalism?" (Malabou) This question defines more than a cultivated relationship between autonomous individuals and the act of wealth accumulation; it is a question of existential

survival. In her articulation, Malabou defines that what lies at the root of modern subjectivity is the result of a sinister incorporation, an introjection of Capital's unilateral interests intertwined with our own neurological selves, so that sovereign autonomy is overtaken for Capitalism's ambient interest. This problem is, of course, familiar; it is the conceit of Marx, and later theorists like Marcuse, whose focus on worker subjectivity was a primary concern. What differentiates today's prognosis from previous eras' is Neoliberalism's particularly unrelenting form of dominance by penetrating into previously held areas of armistice. Through division and privatization of sectors of the public sphere (education and health care), what was once determined to be non-equitable and a "safe zone" for the welfare state to subsist on as a social good has today been cannibalized by markets. As a result, citizens are forced into a debased participation for survival. Worse, in this relationship, exploitation extends after benefits of service as a lifelong debt, extorting individuals to be locked into the conditions of the system. Few are ever able to rise above it, and as such, debt in modern life becomes a form of gravity. Similarly, as poverty has been proven to degrade an individual's capability to cultivate a reservoir of imagination to provide escape, it suits no wonder that, in the vacuum created by individuals' inability to cultivate their own narratives, Capital's interests will conspire to fill any gap whatsoever not already concomitant with the rationalizations that complete its interests.

Today, if we are to conceive of a difference within our lives, and thus our literature, it is necessary to ask: how can the experience and Tradition-of-the-Oppressed be generated and told without relying on narratives that are so easily corrupted and

assimilated by Capital? What is the medium of this transmittability that Benjamin sought as an indirect flame, and how can we rethink the perception of heritage so that it is not ingested by Capital's official historiography of those who have been and are in power? How does one escape repeating what one wants instead to re-write? One answer to this question resides in the medium where Benjamin often found himself engaged with critically: the form of lyric poetry.

POETIC KNOWLEDGE AS POLITICAL SLANT

If political poetry holds any tradition in contemporary America, then it is because the modalities in which those traditions operate are held to be just as fruitful. Yet oftentimes it is a fruitfulness has more with catharsis than political transformation. In a general sense, for political poetry that is recognizable as a genre, the conventions that most often define it utilize rhetorical devices of direct-action politics; they are often didactic, assertive, moralistic and predicated upon the value of defiance alone as the means to gain ground over that which would destroy the poem's speaker. For our purposes, I will refer to this as the first method of political poetry. As a result, the volume that is intensified in the performance of the first method's modalities are deemed a necessity as a political strategy; we concede the loss of nuance, elusiveness, imagination, fugitivity, craftsmanship and other stratagems for the primacy of an immediate address. More often than not, however, it is where poetry has allowed itself to be made a blunt object of use. This presents a dilemma: by focusing on strategies that seemingly prioritize the battle-like engagement to overtake space, these modalities of the first method, in their linearity and directness, in their simplicity and bluntness, often neglect the lyric poem's

idiosyncratic virtue as a form and how it can be appropriated as political tool; that is, to practice and assert a temporal logic different in nature than determined by the course of Capital, and thus a different engagement with space, in which the conflicts can be addressed.

This differentiation should not be understood as a valuation to enact a split with modes of activism meant to relieve the oppressed. However, we must recognize what is needed for the long term is praxis, not disconnected responses to events. Despite the directness associated with political poetry of the first method, the confidence from which the speaker performs a vision cannot change the fact that something continues to go missing in the reaction they perform from below to address an event perpetuated from above. The confidence from which the speaker speaks that too often assumes a position of authority as if a totality has already been achieved in the cathartic event of this expression. While this catharsis relieves pressures from an event, it does little to assuage the constant feelings of atomization of contemporary life. Thus, by rhetorically engaging in a mechanization of action/reaction as a transaction of time in the first method, as a temporal logic, the poet cannot break from teleological path in which power dominates through its modes of nominal historicism. In this transaction, a relation to authentic history, that is - the Tradition-of-the-Oppressed - is evacuated for the primacy of a fixed point through the desire of a singular result. This is why representations of Benjamin's Tradition-of-the-oppressed remain elusive as a recognizable, historical coalition – they have not effectively directed themselves toward the people, the polis, the world. Authentic representations of the tradition, what I call the second method of political poetry, are destined to be dialectical and processional, a becoming contingent on “a

mixture of fixed points at which possibilities are either realized or rejected but never disappear completely,” (Thompson “The Frankfurt School, Part 5”) to form their own temporal logic. Seen another way, “a mixture of fixed points at which possibilities are either realized or rejected but never disappear completely”, or what Adorno would similarly dub a “micrology,” would thus serve well as the starting point for understanding the unacknowledged legislation, the metaphysics, of the lyric poem as a worthy form for political expression.

By examining its tendencies as a technology, one begins to conspire with how lyric poetry may serve as a technics toward a second method of political poetry, and for drawing out Traditions-of-the-Oppressed. Historically speaking, lyric poetry as a form often has an atomized nature. But over time it has become difficult to approximate its value as it has mutated to serve as a container for multitudes. It seems it is everywhere and nowhere. As Stephanie Burt notes,

What can the word “lyric” these days mean? A poem with one speaker; a poem in which the poet speaks to herself; “short, intense and exquisite redactions of impassioned speech” (a notion with “recognizable beginnings in the early Renaissance”) (Roland Greene); a poem involving apostrophe, “a turning aside from whatever is taken to be the real or normal addressee” (Jonathan Culler) (69); ancient Greek poems accompanied by lyre; “a genre of song,” “by definition musical” (Robert von Hallberg); poems that can be sung; poems that resemble song; “the voicing of one moment’s state of feeling” (Mark Booth); “any fairly short, non-narrative poem presenting a single speaker who expresses a state of mind or a process of thought and feeling” (M. H. Abrams); work that is “personal, subjective, short, meditative, emotive, private, musical” (Dean Rader); “a special kind of personal utterance” whose subcategories include “hymn, laud, ode and nocturne” (Gabrielle Starr); verse, or poetic language, “made abstract,” so that it does not represent a socially specifiable individual but instead makes available emotions and a psychological position, “an utterance for us to utter as ours,” much as sheet music can be played by any sufficiently skilled musician (Helen

Vendler) (88); a poem that descends from, or resembles, other poems often called lyric. (Burt, What is this thing call Lyric?)

As we see that the term “lyric” in this context has collapsed in upon itself to allow for “the history of the practices it may denote,” it is in the rubble of Vendler’s modern interpretation of lyric as “sheet music,” a singular utterance objectified as a means to be distributed, shared, and repeated as a signification that stands for the many, that we begin to recognize a modernization in the developing understanding of the sociality in the lyric that in turn reveals a technical potentiality in the form.

While Vendler’s metaphor is useful for our purposes in understanding the technics of the lyric poem, it is not complete. To push us forward, we turn to poet/critic Allen Grossman’s philosophical explication of “poetic knowledge.” There is much to consider with Grossman’s theory, but for our purposes, we will focus on is relational countenance, as when Grossman writes that the lyric poem contains “the process of creation of human presence through acknowledgement” and that in each poem is the sense of the great goal of all lyric poems: “Lyric is the genre of the ‘other mind, the way that we come to imagine other people’s inward lives (as against their actions or their social being or their physical bodies). To read a lyric poem is not to follow directions but to have an experience, almost like meeting a person...” (Burt). In Burt’s reading of this imperative of lyric making, the poet would do better to rhetorically “show”, and not “tell”. This is obviously a reduction of Grossman’s premise; but if we consider what both Grossman and Vendler indirectly assume to be the lyric poem’s underlying structural principle, which we might define as an explicitly relational, or an extension of sociality,

we then are able to grasp a conception of the lyric poem as an idiosyncratic expression of inward time emitted from an externalized body as it has lived in history for a socialized purpose. This is something that, at present, the direct-action modalities of political poetry have failed to utilize. By relying on moralism and defiance and rhetorical position that closes the poem to the audience, the first method of political poetry neglects an address toward the people for the address of the Capitol's event. By engaging in modalities that entrench within the same temporal logic as the oppressor, they engage in the same handed-down grammar from systems of power. While a temporary relief, this problematizes the endurance for praxis. As Steven Pile writes in *Geographies of Resistance*, "the map of resistance is not simply the underside of the map of domination" (Pile). At best, utilizing these rules of grammar and temporal logics keeps political solutions to manageable solutions. As even recent history has shown, outrage, while valid, is the short-term solution of discretion. In speaking towards events and not injustices, failures, and degradations that populate in the quotidian timeframe, it cannot effectively challenge the systemic hegemony of Neoliberal Capitalist discourse, or "question the position of the 'now', the present from which we claim to have a right view over successive periods of our history" (Lyotard).

If one is to effectively challenge the chronic narratives of Capital by poetic means, the Tradition-of-the-Oppressed demands first we connect it to a larger thought, a systemic form of thought, one that extends beyond discrete events. If "poetic knowledge" is applied as a premise for both construction and assessment of the poem, then room is made for the poem to be read alongside its historical conditions. These directives issuing

from this premise likewise issue a call to regard the lyric poem as a diachronic textual mobilization towards indirect experience as a temporal logic to be a value opposed to traditional time, a value in-and-of-itself. To put another way, it is a poetry that seeks:

not so much to marshal forces but to *dramatize* society's forces as they are marshaled; to reveal, not through subject matter but through a manner of approach, the affective ramifications of living-in-the-world—ramifications almost always truncated, foreclosed upon, by the didactic turn of the first type of overtly political poetry. The voice of protest is the voice of utopia, that is, of no place, and knowingly so. It must shut out a certain array of tonalities in the name of seeking its goal. It is Idealistic, but at what cost? This second sort of political poetry might be considered a registry of that cost. To put it another way, it is a tallying of our human indemnities. (Watson)

By aesthetically engaging these indemnities through expressions of indirect time, in a mixed, unfinished, and abstracted way, the attendant temporal logic that allows for the rationalization permitting dominant claims to progress and linearity are invalidated and ultimately revealed to be false. An event might open up an avenue toward political consciousness; however, it is in the what falls through the cracks in society, the un-profound margins and adjustment of everyday life, that political commitment through poetry is attended to as a praxis. And only through this praxis of centrifugal operations do we, at this level, open an opportunity to re-writing history. At present, I contend this is the most viable position a poet-citizen can structurally represent as an authentic discourse of resistance. Through a conscious aestheticization of failure as lived-in-time do we re-write ourselves to relieve the pressures of symptoms that are untenable.

Lyn Hejinian once wrote, “A non-sequitur is a song of experience” (Fischer, “A Non-sequitur is a Song of Experience”). This statement touches upon a truth felt by many who understand themselves through a relation to art; that our temporal logic is different,

diverse, and varied, and that historical time is more authentically experienced in a dialectical engagement, as processes rather than motionless categories. This experience is why direct action does not challenge or improve upon the direction of “progress” experienced under Capital. Thus, through experiencing the lyric poem’s failure to comply to traditional temporal logic and electing to utilize this negative capability to fail better in a timeframe we choose, the lyric poem can be understood as a heuristic form that can transgress hegemony’s logic from our lives, allowing opportunity for the logic of other traditions to emerge as our politics, and we, evolve.

Should a poem prepare the ground or scorch it entirely? If enticed to answer, the question begs a difference that is essentially a political one; a choice between cynicism and optimism. Sensibly we say there is room for both, often enacted within the same sentiment, the same sentence, the same moment in time. Their virtues should be understood in relation, not in direct competition with each other. What is clear however is that, if we are operating from Grossman’s premise, the poetic act of making is understood as a good faith, optimistic act. In direct opposition to capitalism’s *raison d’être* (competition), historicism (progress) and premise (humans are innately greedy, this greed cannot be overcome, and this is the best system we have to mediate that greed), the lyric poem validates relations between others as a primary value outside of Capitalism’s cynical discourse.

Capitalism is most dangerous in its decontextualized state. If one can’t compare, say, wage gaps through the lens of history, we are unmoored and made to suffer by speculation, let alone poor compensation. Lyric poetry on the other hand is most

dangerous when utilized towards the narratives of progress inasmuch as it performs, understand, and anticipates the experience of time to be wholly different from that of linearity, progress, and narrative. It is this difference in temporal logic that can be utilized for a societal use as a medium to connect with the Tradition-of-the-Oppressed by filling the margins and gaps with poetic notation, instead of chronicling an event-based discourse.

Likewise, if in establishing this relation we then select for our container language that has been otherwised from the structural premise of the narrative, that is to say language that is ‘surprising,’ it is through this method that a much-needed dialectic with the future reveals itself. By appropriating the potentiality of action through the articulation of the vulgar, raw and disordered syntax and language, the lyric poem assumes a figuration of a possible future or perception from which it speaks and is likewise acknowledged. Validating this dialectic as relation, we engender and establish a shared purpose for lyric poetry; a purpose of optimism that holds over the oppression endured through libidinal time, as if from the future, to give us hope.

FAILURE IN MODERNITY AS A WORKING-THROUGH

We too often forget Time, it’s said, to be of our own making. This lack of control we feel over time is an intended symptom of Capitalism and as such an argument for the temporal logic, the “reason” for, the Jacobin calendar. As critic David Baker writes, “time is not an element of nature. It does not exist in and of itself, as a material substance, like a sycamore does or a muon. It is an immaterial measurement of the relationships of material substances” (Baker, ‘Lyric Poetry and the Problem of Time’). Baker’s assertion

is more than just flavoring for the familiar argument of time as a construct. If we regard time as how we describe the speed at which we travel from one point to the next from any relative position in space, the contradictions experienced within time as it's lived today, but not regarded by the dominating narratives, reveal our sense of time to be unstable. If we are to create a dialectic with the traditions we need to change the ways in which we conceptualize the ways we live, we must once more engage with how we conceive of time in the forms in which we find ourselves. In thinking about our bodies in time we must once again think metaphysically.

Returning to Hejinian's statement that "a non-sequitur is a song of experience," while this poetic assertion derives from the context of the New Sentence and Hejinian's poetic project in general, it would be useful to also consider it not only as it applies to craft and form, but thematically and conceptually, i.e. metaphysically, as well. As a non-sequitur is always defined by a relation to the lack of continuity of what proceeds it, so do we as citizens today under narratives of Neoliberal oppression experience a non-sequitural form of being, a failure of encounter in relating to what came before even as narratives of progress persist without stumble. As we've established that the inherent poetic knowledge and political capabilities of the lyric poem are utilized best when actively disengaging from what Slavoj Žižek has called "apocalyptic time," which is 'the time of the end of time', the time of emergency, 'the state of exception' when the end is nigh and we can only prepare for' (Žižek, 94), how we choose to engage in this form of negatively capable thinking must never be mistaken for neurosis, or worse, vain purposelessness, even as we may revel in our aestheticized frustrations.

To lack an answer is not to lack a meaning. This is something the poem knows quite well but is often translated by the status quo translates as a lack of use; that the poem holds a knowledge only numinous to the poet, but hard to consistently take as an article of faith. Perhaps if we examine Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the premiere representation of metaphysical procrastination, we might better understand how the projection of falsehood of purposelessness has come to be and why it's haunts lyric poetry as a discourse.

In Act I, Scene V, as Hamlet encounters the ghost of his father, the ghost-king swears Hamlet to avenge him and that until then, "time is out of joint." For Derrida, the appearance of the specter, a present non-presence that is ontologically unstable, is what disrupts the play's representation of temporal logic. This rupture as presence, a contradiction which Derrida affectionately puns as a 'hauntology,' greatly affects and influences the disjuncture of Hamlet's being and work of mourning. As such, we experience through-out the play the metaphysical thoughts of the depressed, meandering prince, unable to rhyme with the progress charged upon him as another contradiction. Unable to legitimate his time as legible as a time frame, Hamlet becomes the *suis generis* representation in modernity for contradictions of temporal logic and how they act as a failure upon the body in time.

T.S. Elliot understood this failure as a failure of representation, as a lack of objective-correlative that adumbrates poetic capturing of transferable emotion. Eliot writes that because Hamlet "is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in excess to the facts as they appear" this leads to "bafflement at the absence of

objective equivalent to his feelings” and as such “is a prolongation of the bafflement of his creator in the face of the artistic problem” (Elliot, ‘Hamlet’) This is, according to Elliot, why Hamlet as a production was a failure in its time: it attempted to describe feelings instead of provoking them. This is a traditional line of reasoning, substantially augmented by a Catholic fear of histrionics, that privileges materialism over metaphysics. Yet it is the metaphysical dilemmas Hamlet as a play prioritizes and engages with that modernize the play. As Derrida wrote: “The time out of joint ... does not announce only the subject or the content, but the stakes of the discourse... Disorganization, disarticulation: these are both the thematic stakes and the form ... the dis-junction at the heart of the “is” that is so poorly defined, and with so much difficulty by the third person singular present indicative of the verb to be” (Derrida, ed. Haverkamp).

Is it not entirely possible that the problem of fractured temporal logic versus the substantiation of an objective-correlative as it relates to emotional work as experienced within narratives of progress is exactly what Shakespeare wanted us to attempt to see; what so many philosophers and poets, particularly in modernity, have mined in a dialectic, but have still not come to terms with; that, what looks like on the surface to meander towards purposelessness is in fact an authentic depiction of the inability to articulate the experience of having one’s being indefinitely deferred?

We must ask then, what is it in the “poorly defined heart” of Hamlet that makes it as heard as it is in modernity? I contend it is something akin to justice, a metaphysical concept. Just as William Blake announced at the beginning of his poem “The French Revolution” with “The Dead brood over Europe”; and Marx, fifty years later, in the

Communist Manifesto that “A spectre is haunting Europe”; I too announce, through an intersection of the two, that “A Prince of Denmark hangs over our articulations of justice.” This is because justice for Hamlet is something more than the completion of an oath of vengeance. Hamlet’s justice is evasive, ineffable, miasmic even; its corruption as a concept is signified at the outset in the spectre that brings about the “out of joint”. Thus, justice as a metaphysical concept is not lashed to the ideological arguments of history, not plucked from the rigidity of systems of “knowledge” as described by Kant or Nietzsche. Instead it emerges from a sense as it is lived inside a body in time. The justice Hamlet seeks is a proprioceptive, somatic justice. His actions are a production of failure that cannot be assuaged by the head that conceptualizes itself alone. Hamlet fails because, as a solitary aristocrat thrown into a contradictory form of being by a ghost, he suffers from a proprioception and the lack of the premise of poetic knowledge, an affective acknowledgement of the other, to close the non-sequatorial space around him. His attempts to rectify his alienation enacted through contests with Ophelia, Horatio, and his Mother (namely love, friendship, and family) fail because each character resides in an unacknowledged meter of injustice that has made them inhospitable to rhyming with Hamlet’s contradictions. All the while it is Hamlet’s endurance and persistence that inform the audience of his true worth.

Despite the external failures to capture as many hearts and minds as *Richard III*, Hamlet as a work proves to be a modern expression ahead of its time, as Hamlet’s failure to telegraph a linearity in Shakespeare’s abreaction game lays the affective basis to become a real-world model for a related discipline in which we in the western world have

chosen to come to terms: the practice of subconscious articulation. This methodology is known as Freud's discipline of psychoanalysis; and we can see the prince's affective modality as a model for its most prescient expression, what is known as "working-through." Working through can only be performed in a persistence of one's own activity as a body in time.

Again, I assert that to lack an answer is not to lack a meaning. This is what "working-through" accords. The term, translated from the German, *durcharbeiten*, loosely infers a patient's elaboration where intensities of surface and depth in a person co-exist in unknown quantities. Despite these familiar topologies, working-through is a dynamic process of interpretation and resistance, or rather uncovering resistance via interpretation, performed through analytic work. Once the resistance is pointed out by the analyst, it may intensify; this is regarded as a sign of success. After the analyst names the resistance the patient takes time to become acquainted with their resistance. "Because of the resistance to accepting the unconscious, interpretations, whether correct or partially incorrect, consciously accepted or rejected, will inevitably require amplifying and extending to other aspects of the client's life" ('The Technique of Child Psychoanalysis: Discussion with Anna Freud'). This means that, essentially, a working-through assumes an integrated influence upon all things internal. For Freud, a working-through is a "process of emancipation deconstructing the rhetoric of the unconscious...the preorganized set of signifiers constituting the neurotic or psychotic device which commands a life as destiny" (Lyotard). Thus, in contextualizing the aims of Freud's "working-through" of modernity, we see what Hamlet unknowingly aspired to

accomplish in working-through his temporal logic. Yet without acknowledgment and validation of this methodology, Hamlet's acts are illegible and easily misrepresented as a failure of agency, where nothing could be farther from the truth.

In his short text, "Re-writing Modernity" Lyotard sees "working-through" as a concept worth utilizing in post-modernity for revolutionary purposes. Just as the Jacobins envisioned their calendar as a heuristic, working-through is a methodological way to resist becoming friendly to narratives of Capital that require our constant capitulation. Arguing that because Freud later abandons the ideal of a cure for the interminable, Lyotard writes, "Contrary to remembering, working-through would be defined as a work without end and therefore without will; without end in the sense which it is not guided by the concept of an end." Re-writing then, as Lyotard conceptualizes it, is not revisiting for a result where an act of naming would claim sovereignty through articulation alone. This is because "re-writing doesn't result in a definition of the past. On the contrary, it presupposes that the past is acting by giving the mind the elements with which the scene will be built" (Lyotard). This is essentially a constructive process, a means of going on without succumbing to the desire for narrative closure, what Keats called "negative capability." This model of "working through" seems to me a useful way of thinking about the lyric poem's relationship to time and craft. By rejecting arrival, and thus transcendence, the poet works upon a poem as an open thread. Likewise, by "denying itself the solace of Kairos, of an ending that would explain, illuminate or redeem Lost Time", the poem, "is dedicated, instead, simply to Chronos, to putting 'one damn thing

after another” (Uhlmann, 416). Thus, in the constancy of this labor, the lyric poem begins to elaborate its own forms of time.

However, re-writing for Lyotard is not completed by a working-through alone. It requires in the “double gesture” of “free association.” This consists of the analyst “paying the same amount of attention to all the elements of the sentences uttered by a patient, no matter how petty or trifling...the rule is: no prejudices, but suspicion of judgements, responsiveness, and equal attention to all occurrences as they occur.” The patient likewise to let speech “go” in “disorder, unselected, unrepressed.”

Taking these concepts of re-writing modernity into account, Lyotard sets up principles of craft that can be used by the poet to bring about the lyric poem’s ability to connect with Traditions-of-the-Oppressed. If we, again, begin from a premise that we create out of our historical conditions, we can avoid traditional narratives of capital by articulating elements released from a body-in-time in “bits released by sensitivity” that we record, observe, and sit with. Likewise, in working-through our time out of joint we act upon what is otherwise illegible and unaccountable. Without this methodology, we remain integrated in Hamlet’s shadow, flailing for agency. But in working-through, we find ourselves open and akin to what musician Brian Eno called “John Cage’s realization: that ‘composing’ could consist of creating occasions for the act of listening”

(@dark_shark) It is in these acts of listening to what has been suppressed in fractured time that our literature then becomes the site, as Susan Blood writes, where:

The temporal experience of modernity resists definition. Because it can no longer be contained in older, more traditional narrative forms and because it actively produces new systems for categorizing time that exclude any way of taking account of how it transforms lived experience,

the temporality of modernity challenges us to look away from lived life and toward literature in order to describe its mechanisms and to record its effect. (Blood)

IN PRAISE OF QUEER TIME

If Hamlet as a template for failure as a discourse in modernity remains inextricable from the high halls in which it is often discussed, we may opt instead for the prescient, “low” articulations best exemplified in Jack Halberstam’s “Low Theory” in his book, *The Queer Art of Failure*. In engaging with the postmodern logic as it regards “high” and “low” forms of culture and discourse, Halberstam claims failure as a powerful value in modernity, in that “failures by-ways are all the spaces in between the superhighways of capital.” Halberstam writes:

From the perspective of feminism, failure has often been a better bet than success. Where feminine success is always measured by male standards, and gender failure often means being relieved of the pressure to measure up to patriarchal ideas, not succeeding at womanhood can offer unexpected pleasures.

Thus, in presenting “forgetting, unknowing, losing, lacking, bumbling, stumbling,” as “hopeful developments,” Halberstam utilizes failure, as it is seen from the eye of Capital, as a subaltern knowledge that we then, “might read failure...as a refusal of mastery, a critique of the intuitive connections within capitalism between success and profit, and a counterhegemonic discourse of losing” (Halberstam)

To assist in accentuating this “discourse of losing,” in another text, Halberstam explores in a similar, anti-capitalist vein the concept of “queer time” and “queer space.” He writes:

Queer time is a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois

reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance. “Queer space” refers to the place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage and it also describes the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics.

In this instance, Halberstam contextualizes “queer” to include “nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time” and that “queer time” as a temporal logic “suggest(s) new ways of understanding the nonnormative behaviors that have clear but not essential relations to gay and lesbian subjects” (Judith Halberstam, ‘Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies’). By allowing for different kinds of communities to be expressed under this definition, Halberstam recognizes various subaltern communities to share a common experience of estrangement in time. As contemporary poetry communities more often than not intersect and overlap with queer-identifying persons, this alliance should be not unfamiliar to any poet today. This does not however mean that heteronormative-identifying poets should begin contextualizing themselves in a counterfeit way. Instead, by allowing an alliance between communities that experience “queer time” from alike margins, Halberstam organizes an authentic position and discourse from which poets and others can effectively respond to capital’s narratives and practice modalities of failure to conjure Traditions-of-the-Oppressed.

THE POETIC SITUATION

Today’s poets operate within a particular duality that is both a privilege and a burden. Generally speaking, as the poet has no codified role in society, the history of poetic ground and its future relevancy rests almost exclusively in the hands of poets

themselves. The weight of this sovereignty is felt when we encounter the criticism in the mainstream that contemporary poetry is esoteric to the point of making itself not 'available' to the public. Weight aside, the value that poetry once held a historical place in societal discourse is more than just an emotional reaction to delegitimization. What criticisms like these demand is that poetry reveal itself to be once again of use; that, as a Superstructure with historical influence, a call has been issued that poetry's influence be made available once more to the Base. Frustrating as this criticism is to the poet (who, more than ever, does not enter into a poetic practice to gain access to a majority opinion), the recursiveness of this appeal in our contemporary era speaks to something made numinous by historical drift; something that lives inside of poetry's ability to be more than just a theater to exercise pleasure and process pain. Such a collection of affects without understanding of their root minstrelizes the ineffectualness of the political theater we live with daily. If the poet does have a responsibility, it seems to be one the poet is no longer intimate with, or worse, no longer wants to be articulate politically.

This rejection of responsibility is arguably justified, as poets today are already responsible for more than their fair share and without the promise of compensation. Today, poetry lives on as a culture that is accessible but remains, overall, a tacitly clandestine system. There are many reasons for this, competition being the most prominent. Whatever the case the responsibility of poetry's organization remains chiefly with the poets themselves. Today, poets themselves own and operate their own most of the modes of production of poetic work, but with little finance for distribution and circulation. Poets themselves organize readings that draw from an audience of mainly

other poets. Poets themselves keep poetry alive in the minds of the Academy, which remains one of the few institutions that is willing to compensate poetic work. Poets themselves operate creative writing programs in which other poets seeking establishment and discursiveness receive mentorship. As a result, poetry operates almost exclusively in the form of a closed gift economy. By nurturing the imperative of artistic freedom over markets and compensation, over any modern labor theory of value; by choosing to form intimate networks that serve as a kind of potlatch ceremony where the poetic object in question is (more or less) given away, poetic production and circulation establishes itself as a subculture that has forfeited public influence to avoid Capital's hounding interests. On a good day, and at its at most self-content, this forfeiture regards itself as a kind of utopia.

The drawback in this thinking is that Poetry as its practiced today can be extracted and isolated from Capital's dominant narrative. And while society may choose to disregard the legitimacy of a traditional labor theory of value, poets cannot avoid the creeping symptoms of Capital on the maker of the poem; for one, that poetic praxis today often defines its sovereignty by the limitations imposed by Capital's progress reveals poetry to be, at least conceptually, inextricable from the historical conditions in which it is made; two: by accepting and perpetuating decontextualized, New Critical practices of reading the poem as the limits of its own consideration, the poet does real-world harm to themselves, community, and poetry at large. As Lyotard once wrote, "if the historical knowledge of an object or a thing requires its isolation in a place apart from the network of the interests of the historian, this setting apart is surely doomed to lead to a putting

down” (Lyotard). At its most innocent, these practices when applied rely on poetry as a trans-historical, soft discourse that plays in the symbols of society. At its worst, these practices reify the act of poetic making in mystification, and as such, erect a division between the poet and receiver. It is inside the machinations of this mystification that the poetic has gained its character and courage for far too long. Why have we not asked beyond cultural materialism, what is the consequence of this mystification and what would the poet and receiver gain by attempting to contextualize the poem in a statement of historical conditions? What would happen if we regarded the poet, not as a cup that dips into a mystical stream of privileged perception, but as a worker who labors under conditions to produce products of material and cultural value via a working-through?

These questions must be explored if poetry wants to remain relevant yet separate from the narratives of Capital. Poetry has existed for thousands of years in every cultural field and margin; it thrived centuries before liberalism took its first steps. Yet today we are living in an age where it is barely read or acknowledged. As I’ve attempted to show, poetry’s idiosyncratic value as an expression of time separate from Capital’s narrative are unmatched as an agency of resistance. Either way, we must regard that, like every other citizen, poets pay with their life and livelihood for the state of today’s society, whether they regard the existence of conditions as an influence upon their work or not. This is our fact. Therefore, it is time to take up the responsibility.

CONCLUSION

The discretionary nature of the lyric poem too often has bent in service of atomization. Yet, even if meant as means of escape, a poem’s “expression is always

fundamentally of relation, not a subject” (Massumi). The explicit desire to move beyond the conditions of an unmanageable world is natural, but we must also admit the concept of ‘escape’ is irreducible to itself alone. As Ursula Le Guin famously stated, “The direction of escape is towards freedom, so what is ‘escapism’ an accusation of?” (Minto) If ‘escape’ establishes a relationship with a set of conditions in which the subject in question has already been previously incarcerated, then an ‘escape’ is ever only that which is in relation to our previous state-of-being. It is a historical relationship; one that cannot be nailed to a purely narcissistic impulse.

Historical conditions and their enunciations can seem superfluous in regard to poetry for those who believe good art apolitically rises above a politics of the present. While a description for some, it is also described a capitulation, a relinquishing of agency to entrust our time on earth to be protected by Capital’s narratives as they are practiced in and outside of the poem. For the cultural materialist, we must keep in front of us that what is at stake commands much more, if only a commitment to a unionization of purpose. As Zizek diagnosed in 2009:

What unites us is that, in contrast to the classical image of the proletariat who have ‘nothing to lose but their chains,’ we are in danger of losing everything: the threat is that we all will be reduced to abstract subjects devoid of all substantial content, dispossessed of our symbolic substance, our genetic base heavily manipulated, vegetating in an unlivable environment. This triple threat to our entire being renders us all proletarians, reduced to ‘subjectless subjectivity,’ as Marx put it in *Grunrisse*. The ethico-political challenge is to recognize ourselves in this figure – in a way, we are all excluded, from nature as well as from our symbolic substance. Today, we are all potentially a homo sacer, and the only way to stop that from become a reality is to act preventatively. (Zizek)

If poets are to recognize themselves, they must recognize that the production of their subjectivity does not exist in a vacuum, and neither should the poem. For the lyric poem is unique container of time that resists narratives of progress. As Badiou writes in *The Age of The Poets*, “the polemic of the poem is aimed against everything that would pretend to make sense of these effects, against any presupposition of a sense or meaning of History that the song would have the task of celebrating.” To the contrary, the poem-thought demands of its subject that it proceeds from turmoil as its base, from “the innocence of being properly lost in the century” (Badiou). Only through this recognition of turmoil and rejection of traditional historicism can we locate our articulations and containers in which we can elucidate a difference in being-in-the-world. Only through recognizing what a poem can be for, do we understand our responsibility.

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