

MYTHOGENESIS AS A RECONFIGURATION OF SPACE IN AN  
“ALTERNATE WORLD”:  
THE LEGACY OF ORIGIN AND DIASPORA IN EXPERIMENTAL WRITING

BY

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## DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I dedicate the work in this thesis to the woman who taught me to live with passion and creativity, Mildred Andrews Cunningham (March 28, 1938 – April 12, 2014). Her soul is evergreen.

I would also like to thank so many others who have touched my life while I have been at Wake Forest. My mentors at Wake Forest; Gillian Overing for teaching me the incredible flexibility of language, Judith Madera for writing a note on one of my reflections (in 2011) suggesting that I take a creative writing class; Eric Ekstrand for being the most supportive and giving creative writing guide; Olga Valbuena for paella parties and mothering a favorite person of mine; Jefferson Holdridge for being the first professor to acknowledge my passion for poetry, and then making me realize this myself; Omaar Hena for being an outstanding teacher and advisor of everything poetry; Sally Barbour for introducing me to influential Caribbean authors; Alan Brown for supporting and fostering my desire to teach; and Ryan Shirey for lively discussions (and arguments) concerning hybrid creative writing. I would like to especially thank the creative writing faculty that arrived just in time to be the greatest inspiration on my written voice: Amy Catanzano and Joanna Ruocco.

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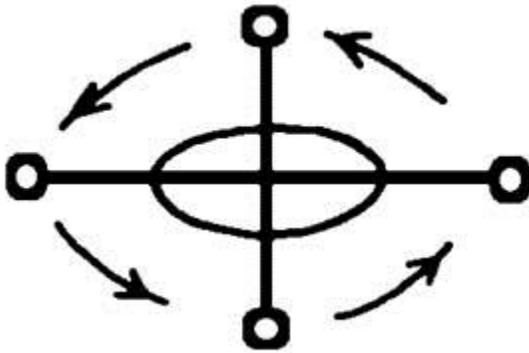


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<sup>1</sup> Image from <http://www.webarchaeology.com/html/kongocos.htm>, Adapted from a drawing in *Flash of the Spirit*, by Robert Farris Thompson p. 109

<sup>2</sup> Taken and edited by Bailey Pittenger (4/18/15)

## PREFACE

The following thesis incorporates two components: one research based and the other creative. The creative component, which consists of a chapter of experimental form writing, exists in conversation with the research portion, as I seek to explore the techniques employed by my studied authors within their art.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the framework of mythogenesis as it derives from and applies to experimental Caribbean writing. The themes explore spaces within language that reconfigure the past into the present by using techniques of voice multiplicity, epic, dream, imagination, and spirituality. The first chapter builds from the work of Wilson Harris as he introduces theories of mythogenesis through his critical essays, and also in his own art of experimental writing in the novel *The Four Banks of the River Space*. Harris's legacy of experimental diasporic style evolves into the works studied in the second chapter: Nathaniel Mackey's endless poem "Song of the Andoumboulou," and M. NourbeSe Philip's collection *Zong!*. The final chapter implements the styles and techniques of these three artists in a creative piece of experimental writing.

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a writing project that examines the legacy of experimental writing as it matures from the pages of Wilson Harris to the pens of Nathaniel Mackey and M. NourbeSe Philip. By focusing on the writing techniques of experimental writing, this thesis finds the origin and functionality behind mythogenesis. In recreating myth through innovative, original, and reconfigured language, mythogenesis takes part in recreating the stories of both the past and present. In the Caribbean context, the retracing of colonial history through the voices of diasporic writers, often categorized as avant-garde for the breaking of traditional form, actually headways the movement toward a new form of experimental writing and mythogenesis.

The creation of mythogenesis through experimental forms by diasporic writers refutes the terminology and history behind avant-garde as a term no longer applicable to this area of writing. There is a tendency to ground experimental forms of narrative within a protest genre derived from the defining aspects of the avant-garde. Historically, for much of Caribbean and African-American experimental writing, the paradigm of form and protest denotes the relationship between colonizer and the colonized—a form of protest through defiant difference in language.<sup>3</sup> Beginning with the critical essays and creative work of Wilson Harris, this thesis continues the dialogue of avant-garde being replaced by experimental within Caribbean works of art that reconfigure the stories of the past.

Wilson Harris's work creates a "living landscape enact[ing] charismatic parables of Being that gives them kinship with our own conception of ourselves in the universe," thus opening the realm of mythogenesis to act as a participation between the writer and

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<sup>3</sup> See Taoua p. xv

his/her audience.<sup>4</sup> By reconnecting the mythogenesis and meaning of the words of a written text to the audience, Harris creates a realm of shared dream, epic, and memory between his words and the audience. Nevertheless, often in research and critical essays, Caribbean writers are categorized for using notions of “language, religion and history” to “work out decisive issues related with ontological imperatives and their people’s place in the larger scheme of things,” but the argument for mythogenesis goes beyond these three categories by including the participation of memory and dream as another reconfigured voice that accesses being.<sup>5</sup> By contesting categorization, experimental writers such as Wilson Harris create the new man described by Eduoard Glissant as “a man who is able to live the relative having suffered the absolute,” relative meaning the “Diverse,” and absolute meaning the “dramatic endeavor to impose a truth on the Other.”<sup>6</sup> This “man” represents the being recreated not only from the available language, religion, and history, but also the spirit, self (dream and memory), and the art of experimentation.

Wilson Harris’s literary influence extends to the creative works of contemporary poets and writers such as Nathaniel Mackey and M. NourbeSe Philip. Mackey’s works include poetry, prose, critical essays, and many attributions to the musical field of jazz. As an American writer, his work retraces diasporic routes/roots to the literary influence of Harris, and to the cosmological and historical influences of African myths and spiritualities. In *Discrepant Engagement*, Mackey writes that with experimentation, “one hears the rumblings of some such ‘place’ of insubordination...Marginality might be another name for that ‘place,’” in reference to the pattern of innovative, original work

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<sup>4</sup> See Harris, *Selected Essays* p. 3

<sup>5</sup> See Torres-Sailant, p. 91

<sup>6</sup> From Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* quoted in Noland p. 3

created by marginalized writers.<sup>7</sup> The “place” Mackey refers to occurs within his works through the experimental use of alternate worlds which remain eerily similar to reality. The grappling of a historicized fiction alongside the reality of marginalization begets both the debunking of history and the reification of myth.

M. NourbeSe Philip’s work, *Zong!*, creates a new manifesto of experimental writing by disassembling the found language in the 1783 case, *Gregson v. Gilbert*, into the voices and names of the murdered captives on the ship. By reworking the space on the page to reflect the voices of drowning Africans, Philip creates a reconfigured space of geography; the geography of the ocean from the late 1700’s meets the current page in a palimpsest of words deriving from African languages and the law document, recreating the story from the silenced past into the reality of the diasporic injustices. Through experimental form, Philip’s new space “plots upon an alternative map” of cross-cultural politics.<sup>8</sup> Thus, such plots of alternativity retrieve the “blacked out” history and culture of Caribbean influenced writers.<sup>9</sup> By reading the mythogenesis within *Zong!* alongside Mackey’s endless poem, “Song of the Andoumboulou,” this thesis explores the reconfiguration of language in terms of experimentation of space and place.

In *The Womb of Space*, Wilson Harris writes that “Exile is the ground of live fossil and sensuous memory within uncertain roots that are threaded into legacies of transplantation...we begin all over again the pursuit of enduring cross-cultural spirit in arts of dialogue with unsuspected and supportive myth,” which draws attention to the possible continuity of exile not only in the legacy of Caribbean diaspora writings, but

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<sup>7</sup> See Mackey, *Discrepant Engagement* p.1

<sup>8</sup> See Mackey, *Discrepant Engagement* p. 6

<sup>9</sup> See Torres-Saillant p. 88

also in the spirit of the language that recreates myth.<sup>10</sup> Harris's statement coincides with Glissant's definition of creolization as "not an uprooting, a loss of sight, a suspension of being," but as something that "adds something new" because both theorists reify the notion that Caribbean legacy writers refute dilution by recreating diversity.<sup>11</sup> Along with the recreation of diversity, the history of space and place are also recreated through the blend of old myths with new creation stories. In a contemporary society of new technologies, methods of communication, and travel, the storytelling of origin has transformed best through the use of experimental language.

In addition to the analysis of Philip and Mackey's experimental works, this thesis includes a section of an experimental creative writing project. As an experimental writer, influence comes from all over: critical readings, creative readings, interactions, speculations, the movement and sounds of nature, or even the pattern of the hum of a microwave. Although the creative work in Chapter Three lacks a direct connection to historical diasporic narratives, it takes on diaspora through speculation into the future of society in the land of moon territories and spaceships. The landscape shifts through dreams, reports, and uncertainty of authorship. The human interactions sway between forced and natural partnerships. And, the movement spirals back and forth between place and (outer)space. Along with mythogenesis, the creative project utilizes psychogeography, a process of interacting with the surrounding world of structure through the internal quest for destabilizing such structures. Renee Gladman writes that "The 'realm of events' or narratives that I think of as I write this are not static; they are full of becoming, full of questions of becoming," a statement similar to the approach

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<sup>10</sup> See Harris, *The Womb of Space* p. xx

<sup>11</sup> See Glissant, "Creolization in the Making of America," p. 82

through psychogeographical mythogenesis.<sup>12</sup> By culminating the research of the first two chapters of the thesis into the creative work of the third chapter, this thesis is itself a project of exploration, analysis, and application beyond the traditional/conventional realm of academic writing. The coexistence of academic research and creative liberties of experimental storytelling is never lost with each sentence and every word; all of which enact a state of becoming, a continued questioning of language and meaning.

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<sup>12</sup> See *Biting the Error* p. 46

## CHAPTER ONE

### Re-Imagining Form: Wilson Harris and the Roots of a New Imagination

*...isn't it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime? –Jamaica Kincaid*

*for the method by which we are taught the past—the progress from motive to event—is the same by which we read narrative fiction; therefore to re-map human experience, to renew a grasp of the human psyche at once phenomenal and cultural, we must dismantle the narrative convention and its tie-in with the fatal realisms of society. –Wilson Harris*

Imaginative, original, and innovative, Wilson Harris's writing signifies a shift in form and structure within the Caribbean canon. By looking closely at Harris's place within the lineage of Caribbean writers, we gather context for the place of writers such as Nathaniel Mackey and M. NourbeSe Philip, contemporary representatives of the legacy of diaspora, particularly in terms of mythogenesis and experimentalist forms. Experimentalism and originality in form act as a space of resistance for the creative collective of artists and writers who often experience imposed viewpoints and criticisms from a predetermined perception of art and to the history of western colonization. For this reason, re-imagining form as a space of resistance, a place of dismantled past methods of writing, gives experimentalist writers a place of their own as not only writers reconfiguring the use of language, but as trailblazers in a continuously shifting style of telling stories through the elements of memory, epic, and reinvented space.

This chapter begins with 1) the construction of a terminology framework featuring an engagement with the ongoing dialogue on how to create flexible definitions for avant-garde poetics and stories from the Caribbean, 2) a new look into mythogenesis and Caribbean writing, with a focus on Wilson Harris's critical essays, and 3) an

examination of mythogenesis in terms of fiction and reality within Harris's creative work in the Preface of his novel *The Four Banks of the River Space*.<sup>13</sup>

In his novel *The Four Banks of the River Space*, Harris's style of writing introduces difference as resistance as well as a progression toward breaking convention not only of form, but of voice; particularly, a voice which imagines political, social, and cultural autonomy away from colonialized pasts. Thus, Harris takes the same language and conventions of "criminals who committed the crime" and transfigures it into a mythogenesis that transforms the traditional journey epic of the Greeks, expands memory into quantum existences through dreams, and reinvents the space and landscape of the Caribbean through synchronic plots and fulfilled characters.

### **A Flexibility of Definitions: Diaspora and Avant-Garde to Experimentalism**

By asking and digesting questions of how defining terminology such as *avant-garde* and *diaspora* relate and differ, we begin creating a flexibility in definitions that in turn reveals the impossibility behind imposing conventional terms to all places, times, and cultures. Wilson Harris writes that:

However determined we are to maintain absolute hierarchy in fictions of reality the past is still active in the present moment, it still arrives in the future, and continues to store ambivalent pressures that fall below the level of creative and re-creative consciousness, pressures that continue to

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<sup>13</sup> For the purpose of this chapter on Harris, the Preface will be used because it blends critical theory and creative work. This blend best upholds the framework of mythogenesis established in this chapter, which will then be used for a close reading of Harris's contemporaries—Nathaniel Mackey and M. NourbeSe Philip.

cement our fears and biases within the institutional life of the nation-state.<sup>14</sup>

As a space of resistance, experimental forms of writing counter the “pressures” not only of convention, but also of colonialism. It is plausible that by maintaining the traditional definition of *avant-garde* among the writing of artists within the diaspora, the same conventions created by such a term would become pressures as well.

Among postcolonial critics, the concern over terminology continues to raise debates. In the introduction to *Diasporic Avant-Gardes: Experimental Poetics and Cultural Displacement*, a collection of essays, co-editor Carrie Noland asks these important guiding questions: “In which ways are avant-garde and diasporic poetics ‘surprisingly similar’? In what crucial ways do they remain apart?”<sup>15</sup> When considering the context of experimental forms in writing, questions such as Noland’s bear an importance for allowing associations while simultaneously denying direct linkages. By creating flexible definitions of both avant-garde and diaspora, critics provide a “space in which analogies between diverse cultural phenomena can be tested” which allows us to “learn more about what is avant-garde about an avant-garde, what is diasporic about a diaspora, and what they have to do—historically and conceptually—with each other.”<sup>16</sup> When digesting the terminology as they face each other in the context of experimental writing, one must keep in mind the key elements of memory, epic, and reinvented space.

First, what constitutes *avant-garde poetics*? Traditionally, as a descendent of Europe, the term avant-garde poses a slight problem when imposed as a title on experimental forms of writing within the Caribbean. By titling a form of writing,

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<sup>14</sup> See Harris p. 206, “Profiles of Myth and the New World”

<sup>15</sup> See Noland p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid p. 3.

particularly original work, with the same title of a form that stemmed from strictly Western thought, the originality of the voice from an entirely different time, location, context and history is derailed. For this reason, the history of the terminology behind avant-garde could be expanded by engulfing the creative qualities of innovation, divergent, and sometimes aggressively different art forms as *experimental* rather than a descendent of westernized thought. For example, the expansion of avant-garde to experimentalism encompasses a rethinking of history of writing in terms of cross-language, cross-nation, cross-ethnic, and cross-aesthetic contacts and confrontations.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the similarities between experimental writing and history/context, specifically, from a diasporic movement in Caribbean writing benefit from a reading that eliminates the imposition of terminology implicated of colonialism.

Second, when defining what makes a writer a diaspora writer alongside their experimentalist style of art, Noland's claim that "diaspora was the very motor of the avant-garde" poses the problem of limiting and even *conventionalizing* style, form, and imagination within a quantified calculation of a person.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, in his essay, "In Praise of the Different and the Difference," Edouard Glissant writes that:

The tension of art has been an originary impulse towards the reality (the realization) of this quantity (or totality) of difference in the world, rather than constituting, as has been maintained up until now, the search for the unknown quality *within* each of these differences, wrongly thought of as an identity protected from otherness...

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid p.4

<sup>18</sup> Ibid p.4

The tension and difference between “quantity” and “quality” constitute the defining factor between the art of reality—an art that either points out differences or illuminates the value of difference among a people. By making such a claim, Glissant confirms the hybridity within diasporic identities, also confirming Paul Gilroy’s claim of universal internal heterogeneity. Yet, the hybridity of an identity within the present is nuanced by the collective history of the past. Glissant continues:

...Let us retain this point, in connection with the cultures that have circulated, and that have geographically invaded the world. Let us say that Art has progressed, in the unfolding of the histories of these humanities, as an impulse towards Being—which is not however an absolute of unknown quality, but *the absolute knowledge and the recognition of this quantity (or realized totality) of differences*, a quantity which is still to come in so far as it would be a totality.<sup>19</sup>

Here, Glissant provides a definition of art alongside the notion of Being in terms of differences. Such a definition connotes flexibility and counters Noland’s, as well as other critics’, perception of avant-garde stemming from diaspora. That is not to claim that diaspora has no influence, but that art and Being come from the present and new experiences of the artist as much as the past, thus embracing the nuances of hybridity and heterogeneity within diasporic identities.

In experimental diasporic literature, when analyzing the state of Being and becoming alongside the themes of memory, epic, and reinvented space, the strategies of diasporic writers part ways from the standard poetic expression of the historical avant-gardes. Hence, the expressive practice of diasporic writers encounters a new derivation,

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<sup>19</sup> See Glissant p. 858, “In Praise of the Different and the Difference,” trans. Celia Britton.

or, *detour*. Glissant defines the *detour* as a “double negative of modernity, the ‘not here, but not there either’ syndrome of diasporic experience” that causes an “anticipated return to home, to full self-identity.”<sup>20</sup> The *detour*, alongside inherent heterogeneity, is framed through an approach to imagination and an awakening of latent memory and history in the work of Wilson Harris. This latency relates to the detour towards a fulfillment of self-identity. Thus, the diasporic experience necessitates a constant self-questioning of self and home, and thus creates a new becoming and Being within storytelling through experimentation and re-imagined memory and history, eliciting the next definition: mythogenesis. Mythogenesis enfolds memory and the epic of history through a new, reinvented space of constant becoming.

### **The Intersection of Experimentation and the Diasporic Experience: Mythogenesis**

*The interior speaks through a music of silence, language of silence. The interior is also a living organism, an organism of forest, rocks, rivers, and cataracts. The experience of the interior brought home to Harris that the picture we hold of reality, and its reification in the conventional novel, were unacceptably static, and that by continuing to believe them, we are actually damaging the fabric of the culture in ways that threaten our own survival.*<sup>21</sup>

The political and cultural relevance of experimental writing has expanded into an identity absorbing innovative, imaginative, and inventive language, thus creating a new space of resistance from imposed uniformity and possession. By breaking form, artists critique the silenced past. Furthermore, the experimentation of language and storytelling creates a mythogenesis incorporating the legacy and traces of origin and diaspora through reinvention of written space, particularly with memory and epic; mythogenesis is a

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<sup>20</sup> See Dash p. 32, from *le Discours antillais*, Glissant

<sup>21</sup> See Harris and Bundy p. 3, Introduction

reformation of lore as well as an act of becoming through the universe of words. Wilson Harris demonstrates mythogenesis, the act of becoming, not only in his creative writing, but also in his criticism and theories on imagination, dream, and myth in unconventional diasporic literature.

Along with the change in traditional written form came a more accurate voice for diversity, culture, and diaspora. In his essay “Tradition and the West Indian Novel,” Wilson claims that the conventional novel, the *novel of persuasion*, has “an inevitable existence” of items, manners, characters, and situations, and then adds that these characters in such novels base themselves on consolidation rather than fulfillment. The freedom which any writer experiences within the space of conventional constraints and novels of persuasion is simply an illusion that marks out originality and creative voice.<sup>22</sup> However, the fulfilled character that a Caribbean writer might portray contains the “latent ground of old and new personalities” based on becoming of the being through mythogenesis.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Harris celebrates “latency” in these characters as “an account of both personal and collective identity as layered and internally consistent,” a layering that plays a role in creating multiple levels of time, space, and, thus, identity for characters. For example, in the main character Anselm in *The Four Banks of the River Space*, Harris weaves together fiction and reality by claiming that Anselm gives him “permission to edit his book of dreams and to add epigraphs,” when in fact, Anselm is an alternative, fictionalized identity for Harris himself.<sup>24</sup> Interwoven reality and fiction create a fabric of memory leading to reimagined myth, and thus, mythogenesis.

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<sup>22</sup> See Bundy p. 141, “Tradition and the West Indian Novel” by Wilson Harris.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid p. 140.

<sup>24</sup> See Harris, *The Four Banks of the River Space* p. xi

Through reimagined myth, a newly created diagnostic of history, culture, and language erupts through writing; thus, redefining not only a people, but a nation. In his essay “The National Longing for Form,” Timothy Brennan writes that “It was the *novel* that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the ‘one, yet many’ of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles,” but the jumble of language and styles disrupts the national identity when transformed through experiment.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the breaking of traditional mythologies into new ones places itself as one of the most significant transformations of not only style, but national identity. By transforming both conventional form and traditional mythologies, the experimental nature of Wilson Harris’s writing and theories stand at the forefront of origin for mythogenesis within the legacy of diasporic writing. Furthermore, in *Myth and the History of the Caribbean*, Barbara Webb enunciates the persistence of transformed myths in diasporic writing by stating that “mythic imagination is the key to artistic vision and historical understanding...[it] transforms the void of historical rupture and fragmentation into an open-ended vision of impossibility.”<sup>26</sup> Hence, the pairing of diasporic experience with experimental writing leads to the resistance of historical rupture through mythogenesis.

By taking a closer look at different perceptions of the definition behind myth, the element of mythogenesis in the context of imagination and memory unfolds. Two definitions of myth help illuminate the flexibility behind the term as well as the power behind the style of writing. In the first, “Myth as distortion or lie; myth as mythology, legend, or oral tradition; myth as literature *per se*; myth as shibboleth—all of these

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<sup>25</sup> See Brennan p. 49

<sup>26</sup> See Webb p. 4, 149

meanings are present at different times in the writing of modern political culture;” myth roots itself in an ongoing history, thus encompassing the theme of epic.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, *myth as distortion or lie* directly associates with the distortion of conventionalized form and the novel of persuasion. Myth, therefore, creates an alternative reality, not just a fiction, confronting the political culture of a recovery of origin, suppressed memory, and the silenced history of diaspora. By reading diasporic writing through a lens of mythogenesis, a re-created origin *and* a continuous process of becoming, the experimental style creates a new fulfillment, thus a space of resistance from silence. Beyond fulfillment, myth also takes on a quality of retracing history through imagined memory and layered retelling. The second definition of myth comes from Bronisław Malinowski:

Myth acts as a charter for the present-day social order; it supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, sociological order, and magical belief, the function of which is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events.<sup>28</sup>

In this definition of myth, Malinowski points out the battle with time that myth engages in—on one hand, myth is retrospective, while on the other, myth continues into the present day; thus, myth takes on a quantum quality. Stories with a mythogenesis quality take on a layering of time that retraces history while re-remembering imagined and real traces of culture, politics, and social phenomena. Indeed, this form of myth takes on

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<sup>27</sup> See Brennan p. 44

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Worsley, *The Third World*

magical qualities, but the significance of what might seem like magic is the imaginative, regenerative, and genesis of a fulfilled self for diasporic Being.

By putting the above two definitions of myth together, a more comprehensive application of mythogenesis guides the framework for reading Wilson Harris and his contemporaries. Mythogenesis involves reality and imagination; a recreation of reality through the quantum applications of past and present selves. Wilson Harris's own theories and criticism address a similar topic. In the introduction to *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination*, A.J.M. Bundy writes that "The act of re-imagining can take place through formal verbal interpretation, or through dance, painting, or even through the search and discovery of an ancient myth which seems to match one's own life-pattern over time."<sup>29</sup> Bundy claims that the re-imagining within Wilson Harris's writing, both critical and creative, hints at the reinterpretations through art, in this case, experimental writing, and layers the experience of the self with the relations of the past through a discovery of relatable myths. Within Harris's critical essays, themes related to mythogenesis include landscape, dream, and imagination.

In Harris's essay, "Profiles of Myth and the New World," landscape represents ones' surroundings as well as ones' inner territory. He writes that "I sense roots of nature as from the ancestral dead, from rivers, from rocks, from birds and other species, from the rhythm of landscapes, skyscapes, etc."<sup>30</sup> By placing the ancestral dead alongside a variety of life forms, from rocks to birds, that dwell on earth, Harris creates a new root of nature within the 'rhythm of landscapes' that envelopes memory alongside life. He continues speaking of roots by naming "strangers of the self" as capable of erupting from

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<sup>29</sup> See Harris and Bundy p. 4 added emphasis, *The Selected Essays*

<sup>30</sup> See Harris p. 201, *Selected Essays*

their place in the unconscious.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, landscape, rooted alongside the latent memories and experiences of the self, acts as a representative of identity as much as its place as an outer surrounding. Harris names these qualities of landscape as ‘numinous inexactitudes’—“all such figures of fluid and variable identity.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, by writing a landscape that engulfs the self or identity of a people as much as a place, ‘territory’ expands to a limitless, numinous inexactitude of being. For this reason, Harris’s presentation of landscape plays an important role in the framework of mythogenesis in experimental writing, which presents an unconventional setting, an alternate world to reality.

In addition to the release of landscape from the “storage of the forbidden, forbidden territories in ourselves”<sup>33</sup> creating mythogenesis, and, thus, a reconfigured space from imposed conventions and cultural identity, Harris also incorporates the unconscious/subconscious into his writing through stories of dreams which may reach into the future in the same way they do to the past. In his essay, “The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination,” Harris describes:

I tend to feel—as an imaginative writer subject to uncanny lines sprung from unconscious/subconscious memory, and appearing within the drafts of fiction I write...I interpret ‘intuitive clue’ as implying that the *visible* text of the play runs in concert with an *invisible* text that secretes a corridor into the future.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid p. 201

<sup>32</sup> Ibid p. 204

<sup>33</sup> Ibid p. 204

<sup>34</sup> Ibid p. 249

Harris's reflection as an imaginative/experimental writer illuminates the notion that parts of his words, his stories, and his mythogenesis appear from a subconscious memory that leads to an *invisible* corridor into the future. Within this invisible corridor, the words expressed by the writer take on the act of becoming by re-rooting the invisible and the subconscious onto the page. In his introduction to the collection of Harris's essays, A.J.M. Bundy makes the claim that Harris's writing takes place in a "dislodged space...concerned with the recovery of dimensionalities that are received ideas, our conventional reckonings, flatten out or conventionalize. Now a fiction that proceeds in this way is akin to the language of dream," or, in other words, Harris's writing comprises a *dream-book* of un-conventionalized language and space.<sup>35</sup>

By giving language and words the partnership of a deeper value of landscape and dream, the depth of the qualities of identity also deepens. For example, many popular critics and theorists of Caribbean literature centralize their readings on the conventionalization of a recovered history through the language of protest, which remains an important and significant concept, but by adding the additional, deeper qualities of landscape and dream, the writing gains attributes of autonomy. By autonomy, what is meant is that the writers dislodge from conventionalization while still gaining the dynamic associates with past, present, and future; inner self and outer conditions. Instead of agreeing with Silvio Torres-Saillant claim, that "The West and the Caribbean...harbor different peoples since it is in history—not outside of it—that human beings shape the contours of their identity," the incorporation of mythogenesis through experimental writing adds the present and the future of the contour of the human identity.<sup>36</sup> It is

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<sup>35</sup> See Harris and Bundy p. 13, *Selected Essays*

<sup>36</sup> See Torres-Saillant p. 5

through what Harris claims as *dream* that identity departs from this contour of history, a conventionalization, nonetheless, that what may be a fictional story or account gains the reality of a full history, presence, and future.

In his noteworthy essay, “The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination,” Wilson Harris writes that “the real possibility [of experimental writing], it seems to me, lies in the changed fabric of language as it draws upon unsuspected resources within an unfinished genesis of the Imagination,” declaring that the Imagination possesses the fulfillment of identity.<sup>37</sup> By using the term “fabric” to describe language, Harris connotes that experimental language comprises of multiple threads and modes of thought—consciousness—the expected, and the subconscious—the unexpected. Furthermore, the “*partial windows upon reality*” created by conventionalized language “attempt to arrive at another absolute theory, another absolute description of such shared territory...succumb[s] to further fallacy.”<sup>38</sup> Here, Harris reveals that all writing shares a commonality of incompleteness. Conventionalized language remains partial while experimental language remains unfinished; one might question the value behind what cannot be written or communicated. Thus, Imagination represents the one entity that cannot be fully revealed. Imagination, the processor behind creativity, is unique to each writer and voice, but also the driving force behind the deepest level of diversity.

### **Fiction and Reality: Imagination and Form**

In the Preface to his novel *The Four Banks of the River Space*, Wilson Harris presents a fictional main character who possesses the reality of Harris’s own personal,

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<sup>37</sup> See Harris p. 211, *Selected Essays*

<sup>38</sup> Ibid p. 206, 211

nonfiction background as a young man in Guyana. As mentioned before, Harris claims that Anhelm, the protagonist, wrote the book himself and asked Harris to fill in the remainder of the narrative with epigraphs. By weaving fictionalized notes of Anhelm alongside the narrative structure of the story created by Harris, the novel takes on the form of fragment. The combination of character and author straddles the lines of fiction and reality. And, even more significantly, the spaces between the fragments create a place for the Imagination, a space for the state of becoming that falls in the framework of mythogenesis from both the author and reader.

Of Anselm, Harris shares much of his complex description in the Preface of the novel. The preface introduces the audience to the character more so than to the plot of the story, thus sharing the convoluted layers of reality and fiction between the possible writer, fictional writer, and Harris himself. He claims that Anselm:

...spoke of ‘two (and more) existences in parallel yet suffused with alternative rhythms’. This was the pattern of his eruptive life into reformations of being and the ‘interior existence’ was the ‘living dreamer’ whose dictates he obeyed.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, within Anselm himself as character, there is the possibility of more than only two existences, the ‘being’ and the ‘interior existence’/‘living dreamer,’ because the space between two such existences has yet to be defined, *if* it is capable of being defined. If the two existences represent two separate fragments, then the space that connects them becomes Harris’s own writing. Moreover, the fragment as a style of form, as an experimental style of writing, takes the role as the act of being and becoming. Fragmentation, as described by Lydia Davis, comes from “doubt, uneasiness,

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<sup>39</sup> See Harris p. xii, *The Four Banks*

dissatisfaction with writing or existing forms,” thus the creation of new form, “form that in one way or another exceed or surpass our expectations.”<sup>40</sup> The doubt elicited by the possibility of multiple existences reappears through the formal choice of fragmented style—the interwoven inclusion of dreams, reality, and fiction with *The Four Banks of the River Space*.

By fragmenting voice into separate existences, Harris alludes to the fragmentation of the past, cultures, and societies in diasporic experiences. In reference to the fragments of diasporic experience, Derek Walcott states that, “Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragment is greater than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was a whole.”<sup>41</sup> The act of reassembling through the process of experimental writing gives attention to the space of resistance that arises when pieces from the past are mended with the realization and truth discovered of the present. Harris does this through the character of Anselm by blending dreams with reality:

He saw himself as subject to the living dreamer in whom heart and mind may relinquish the tyranny of a closed intelligence that becomes oblivious to subtle and fateful signals of the crisis of a civilization, signals of reality one may have been conditioned to suppress.<sup>42</sup>

Although dreams often signify fiction, Harris uses dream and subconscious as an access to reality, particularly with soul, heart, and mind. Without dreams, the character of Anselm would feel suppressed and unfulfilled. Such a significance of dream as a part of existence weaves together the recreation of story through mythogenesis. The stories that

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<sup>40</sup> See Davis p. 35

<sup>41</sup> See Walcott p. 262

<sup>42</sup> See Harris p. xii, *The Four Banks*

mend together the broken vase of Walcott's metaphor create the mythogenesis of a continuously new becoming of the fulfilled being through writing.

Dream, also, enacts another view into the space of Imagination. By using dream and imagination within the framework of mythogenesis in experimental writing, not only the characters, but also the story itself crosses into the realm of retelling history, thus providing a more accurate perspective through Imagination. Harris writes on Imagination through art forms that:

Each metaphoric sculpture or painting subsists on a sensation that flesh-and-blood in the re-creative imagination embodies a correspondence with—and a pregnant distance from—the materials a sculptor sculpts, the fabric upon which and with which a painter paints, and that such numinous correspondence and distance provide the narrative substance of Dream with imageries that become 'live fossil stepping-stones' into an original space or dimension that is the genesis (curiously *unfinished* genesis) or infinite birth of the Imagination.<sup>43</sup>

By using the metaphor of arts such as sculptures and paintings, Harris chooses what is visible to an audience. This visibility provides a concrete example of what the imagination can accomplish; yet in Harris's own form of art, writing, the imagination is only visible through the experimental form in the fragmentation of divergent existences of dream and reality. The 'numinous correspondence and distance' within the fabric represents the parallel existences of voice and time within one canvas: one complete piece. Yet, the 'original space or dimension that is the genesis...of the Imagination' represents the totality of the piece when Dream imagery gains the representation of

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<sup>43</sup> See Harris p. xiii, *The Four Banks*

reality. The combining of these fragments creates a whole; similar to Lydia Davis's claim that "We can't think of fragment without thinking of whole."<sup>44</sup>

Dream material, according to C. G. Jung, reveals the difficulties in life rather than the influence of what is actually available to the person. In an example of his, the bridegroom does not dream of the bride until there is a time in the marriage when she might not be available to him. Jung writes that:

We dream of our questions, our difficulties.... We are quite unable to influence our dreams, and the actual surroundings do not necessarily furnish the dream material. Even when something really important or fascinating happens there is often not a trace of it in our dreams... Our dreams are most peculiarly independent of our consciousness and exceedingly valuable because they cannot cheat.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, Jung supplies dream with the vocation of the true thoughts and concerns of a person. Similarly, Harris writes in his preface that the parallel existence of dream and reality is "Strange yet pertinent. As if self-mockery—as if every self-deprecating mask one addresses or wears—is a lower threshold than one realizes into the vocation of the true Imagination."<sup>46</sup> The different masks represent the different styles of voice one possesses; yet the imagination, told through dreams, remains free of a mask because it contains the most truth; they "cannot cheat."

The landscape that Harris chooses for *The Four Banks of the River Space* provides the space for a journey through the inner and outer territories of the world and self. In his essay "Weaving the Tapestry of Memory: Wilson Harris's *The Four Banks of*

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<sup>44</sup> See Davis p. 36

<sup>45</sup> See Jung p. 3-4

<sup>46</sup> See Harris p. xii, *The Four Banks*

*the River Space*,” Jean-Pierre Durix writes that in Harris’s novel, “This journey into the past does not limit itself to the reassertion of the protagonist’s multiculturalism. It states that poetic language can only progress through erasure leading to the opening out of new doors or windows into essential reality, where polarities melt away.”<sup>47</sup> The journey through the inner living landscapes enacts pathways of Being that give them kinship with our own conception of ourselves in the universe.<sup>48</sup> Thus, the expanse of landscape from literal space to the internal space of memory creates a cohesion of parallel past and present; thus, creating a mythogenesis of place. The alignment of landscape and dream leaves space within the fragments of separate voices for imagination to fill in.

By daring to uphold dream, imagination, and space as entities worth connoting reality for a fulfillment of identity, culture, and place within history, Wilson Harris trailblazers the path of the legacy of experimental writing. Instead of being a form of writing at the periphery of conventionalization, experimental writing has a place as a form in itself. For diasporic writers, this form surpasses the expectations of convention and attempts to rid voice of doubt, uneasiness, and dissatisfaction. The next chapter includes a close reading of Nathaniel Mackey’s *Song of the Andoumboulou* alongside M. NourbeSe Philip’s *Zong!*, both of which are often categorized as poems, yet their experimental form allows for an analysis through the lens of mythogenesis. Mackey and Philip’s poetry break the boundaries of form beyond protest by using historical, political, personal, musical, and cultural influences, thus entering the realm of political relevance in correspondence with cultural diversity. However, both authors are often studied for their experimental forms alongside their associations with diaspora, rather than for the

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<sup>47</sup> See Durix p. 59

<sup>48</sup> See Harris and Bundy p. 3, *Selected Essays*

layered, innovative content of their writing. For example, *Zong!* conceptualizes the events which occurred aboard the Zong slave ship through an aesthetics which disassembles found language in the 1783 case, *Gregson v. Gilbert*, into the voices and names of the murdered captives on the ship. Similarly, in “Song of the Andoumboulou,” Mackey defamiliarizes traditional narrative with surrealist geography, African cosmologies, and elements of jazz which all blend past with present. Thus, by examining the forms of both author’s writing alongside each other, their worlds of words display that beyond form, the layering of cultures, ethnography, history, and placeless geography recreates language into an “alternate world”—one that is not quite a utopia or nation, but still a form of resistance through imagination and word.

## CHAPTER TWO

Reconfiguring Language: Mapping the Eternity of the Spirit in M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* and Nathaniel Mackey's "Song of the Andoumboulou" through Mythogenesis

In the alternate world  
another alternate world.  
I tore off and I turned  
away.

-"Song of the Andoumboulou: 64," Nathaniel Mackey

Reconfigured language occurs through experimentation, and reconstituted space occurs in mythogenesis. As defined in chapter one, mythogenesis involves reality and imagination; a recreation of reality through the quantum applications of past and present selves. For experimental diasporic writers, the reconfiguration recreates and deconstructs historical injustices and silenced identities caused by the reality of colonization. As an interpretive art free of construction and conventionalization, experimental writing mythogenesizes a new past into the present, as past negated of neither reality nor fiction, but symbolic of its need to reoccur and recreate. Wilson Harris calls this the unfinished genesis of the imagination: the place where artists find their unexpected, but meaningful words from an undefined language of experience and invisible memory.<sup>49</sup> In contemporary experimental writing, the legacy of Harris's imaginative framework for voice and mythogenesis in storytelling continues to push limits of form and voice through ideology and visual representation.

This chapter applies the framework of mythogenesis to the works of Nathaniel Mackey and M. NourbeSe Philip, both of whom write on the legacy of origin and diaspora within their works: Mackey's never-ending poem "Song of the Andoumboulou"

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<sup>49</sup> See Harris, *Selected Essays* p. 211

and Philip's book length collection, *Zong!*. The works of both authors/artists complement each other because of their examination of the echoing of voices from the past through not only experimental writing techniques, but also through a reconstructed form; they choose voices that share diasporic routes/roots and silence. Furthermore, Mackey and Philip create movements in their narratives that mythogenesize routes, roots, and the diaspora into a contemporary, yet timeless, alternate world; however, this alternate world interrogates whether or not a utopian space in language and place is attainable. By turning away from the public, traditional sphere of narrative, experimental writing upholds a progression toward the possibility of a better, Utopian future in response to the injustices of the present and past. This claim is exemplified in *A Singular Modernity*, in which Fredric Jameson recalls:

‘We need to combine a Poundian mission to identify Utopian tendencies with a Benjaminian geography of their sources and a gauging of their pressure at what are now multiple sea levels. Ontologies of the present demand archaeologies of the future, not forecasts of the past.’<sup>50</sup>

The new geography created in *Zong!* and “Song of the Andoumboulou” wrestles with the “multiple sea levels” of overturned language, a past both negated and reconfigured, and the *becoming* of a world from words. Thus, the ontology behind mythogenesis in contemporary experimental writing inherently demands Jameson's “archaeologies of the future,” yet is still born from the forecasts of the unjust past of colonialism and diaspora.

Furthermore, in *The Caribbean Novel since 1945: Cultural Practice, Form, and the Nation-state*, Michael Niblett goes on to claim that as Caribbean writers “develop original approaches to history, they fashion something like a new kind of epic form. This

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<sup>50</sup> See Niblett p. 132

form refracts the potential lineaments of a reconfigured nation-state,” hence reaffirming the claim of a Utopian tendency.<sup>51</sup> Although Philip and Mackey indeed reconfigure new worlds of origin and movement within their works, it is not quite a “reconfigured nation-state.” This is where the contemporary, experimental writing of Philip and Mackey stands out as a new extension of reconfiguration against not only traditional narrative, but also from the colonial approaches of justification or covering-up. The alternate worlds created by Philip and Mackey reconsider origin into originality, thus restaging and “versioning” the past into the future through the space of an alternate language. For both Philip and Mackey, this restaging occurs through the breaking of realism by the blending of spirituality, music, and culture from past and present in new forms of language use.

Both Philip and Mackey participate in a counter-discursive approach to the origin of the words they use. Philip’s counter-discursive “universe of words” is provided by the words taken from *Gregson v. Gilbert*, the 1783 case describing the insurance and property laws put into play over the loss of the Africans as the shipmates threw them overboard for lack of water.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, Mackey’s counter-discursive approach in his writing stems from his refusal to end his poems. In *Nod House*, he continues up to the 80<sup>th</sup> part of “Song of the Andoumboulou.” In an interview, Mackey answered that his poems:

Participate in that in their own way, in both the musicality of the writing and the overt referentiality to music in the writing. For me music is so much more than music that when you ask 'What else besides music?' it's hard for me to answer because music includes so much: it's social, it's

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<sup>51</sup> See Niblett p. 132

<sup>52</sup> See Philip p. 210-211 for *Gregson v. Gilbert*.

religious, it's metaphysical, it's aesthetic, it's expressive, it's creative, it's destructive. It just covers so much. It's the biggest, most inclusive thing that I could put forth if I were to choose one single thing.<sup>53</sup>

While Philip reshapes and mythogenesizes the legal document of *Gregson v. Gilbert*, Mackey does the same with the African dogon cosmologies through linguistic song. Both authors bring the past into the future through experimental forms, particularly paying attention to the “social, religious, metaphysical, aesthetic, expressive, creative, destructive” and spiritual quality of music; thus, creating both a literal and figurative New World.

### **Nathaniel Mackey and Space of Eternity in “Song of the Andoumboulou”**

*The song of the Andoumboulou is addressed to the spirits. For this reason the initiates, crouching in a circle, sing it in a whisper in the deserted village, and only the howling of dogs and the wind disturb the silence of the night.*

-Francois Di Dio, liner notes to *Les Dogon*<sup>54</sup>

Deriving from Dogon cosmologies, the songs of the Andoumboulou represent a lyric and voice as quiet as silence. In Nathaniel Mackey’s endless series, “Song of the Andoumboulou,” beginning with poems from *Eroding Witness*, 1985, to the current collection in *Nod House*, 2011, voices take form in different perspectives through the use of epistolary forms, jazz syncopations, and lyric poetry.<sup>55</sup> By drawing from the thematics of Dogon mythology alongside experimental forms, Mackey’s work comprises a mythogenesis of a new creation, a creation that continues despite the traditional end of a poem. Mackey writes that “Language is symbolic action, frequently compensatory action,

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<sup>53</sup> See Funkhouser p. 322

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Mackey, *Eroding Witness* p. 31 (added emphasis)

<sup>55</sup> For the purpose of this section, I focus on poems/parts from “Song of the Andoumboulou” from these two collections: the first and most recent versions.

addressing deprivations it helps its users overcome,” thus addressing the use of language as resistance to the reality of colonization and diaspora. The space of eternity opens through the voices of the spirits that Mackey uses in “Song of Andoumboulou” by creating an alternate world of origin and endless ending in the form of fragmentation and the associative qualities of different voices, personas, and myths.<sup>56</sup>

In the first collection of “Song of the Andoumboulou: 1-7” in *Eroding Witness*, Mackey introduces his epistolary form in an argumentative address to the fictional spirit, Angel of Dust, in “Song of the Andoumboulou: 6.” In an interview, Mackey states that these epistolary forms are a “meditational/manifesto type assertion which [are] making certain propositions about poetics that [are] related to the poems they occur in the context of,” thus explaining that the use of alternative forms allows for various modes of address, which are not always possible with lyric poems.<sup>57</sup> In this letter, the speaker contends with the Angel of Dust about the nuance of speaking *of* or *from* something. The speaker argues that:

We not only can but should speak of “loss” or, to avoid, quotation marks notwithstanding, any such inkling of self-pity, speak of *absence* as unavoidably an inherence in the texture of things (dreamseed, habitual cloth). You really do seem to believe in, to hold out for some first and final gist underlying it all, but my preoccupation with origins and ends is exactly that: a pre- (equally post-, I suppose) occupation.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Because of the length and scope of “Song of the Andoumboulou,” the focus here remains on the first entries of the poem along with the most recent publications.

<sup>57</sup> See Funkhouser

<sup>58</sup> See Mackey, *Eroding Witness* p. 50

Here, the “*absence*” spoken of in the “dreamseed, habitual cloth” refers back to Wilson Harris’s fabric of language and dreams of the past and present experiences of the imagination and spirit.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the Angel of Dust represents any contender who pressures writers to directly name their influence or voice, the direct opposite of the creative collective of experimentation. The wordplay in the final sentence of this excerpt from the letter creates a chiasmus of “preoccupation” and “occupation” with “pre-” and “post-,” thus creating an intersection of past and present within the space of words and language.

Furthermore, the fragmentation of “Song of the Andoumboulou” throughout various collections of poems references Mackey’s attention to fragments as a part of a whole in the diasporic tradition of experimental writing. In an interview with Kamau Brathwaite, Brathwaite reflects on Mackey’s tendency to spend “a lot of time speaking about Harris’ concept of the perpetual creation of the whole out of fragments.”<sup>60</sup> In the lyric segments of “Song of the Andoumboulou,” Mackey creates a song for the dead. In the beginning two stanzas of “Song of the Andoumboulou: 1,” he writes:

The song says the  
dead will not  
ascend without song.

That because if  
we lure them their names get  
our throats, the  
word sticks.<sup>61</sup>

Mackey’s introduction to the series ignites the mythogenesis of writing the songs that raise the dead, the past spirits whose stories were left to silence. With the second stanza, Mackey uses a metaphor for fishing with the “lure” of song and the “stick” of words like

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<sup>59</sup> See Harris p. 211, *Selected Essays*

<sup>60</sup> See Brathwaite p. 27

<sup>61</sup> See Mackey, *Eroding Witness* p. 33

hooks, thus claiming that the dead ascend through the throats of the writers who create their songs. The cosmological reference to songs and spirits creates the space of eternity within the language of experimental lyric and form.

Rather than being informed by found language, such as M. NourbeSe Philip's mythogenesis of the *Gregson v. Gilbert* document, in his most recent collection, *Nod House*, Mackey extends the creation of world from word to a mythogenesis of world from world. Hence, he recreates new meanings behind not only the Andoumboulou myths, but also defamiliarizes geography by blending the past with the present. In "Song of the Andoumboulou: 62," he writes"

Cement sky we were slow to get  
going under. Indigent wish for an  
alternate world run out. Flat rock  
skipped on water...The low-lying  
sky.  
pressed our heads flat, Operation  
Spin, teeth clenched, our heads  
went round and round.<sup>62</sup>

"Cement" would not have been a structure available to the original Dogon in Africa, but the "Cement sky" and "Flat rock" correspond in this opening passage as "versionings" of opposing worlds. Mackey defines "versioning" as "not so much otherness as othering, black linguistic and musical practices that accent variance, variability – what reggae musicians call 'versioning.'"<sup>63</sup> To further reify the versioning quality of this passage, the syntax plays with the polyrhythms and syncopation of jazz music – a form of music that greatly influences Mackey's poetry. In the sentence, "Indigent wish for an / alternate world run out," the subject-verb agreement breaks grammatical rules with "run out" remaining plural in agreement with the singular "indigent wish." "Run out" also begins a

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<sup>62</sup> See Mackey, *Nod House* p. 10

<sup>63</sup> See Mackey, *Discrepant Engagement* p. 266

series of subtle, yet active, urgent verbs: “run out,” “skipped,” “pressed,” “clenched,” and “went” all point toward a *forced* movement.

Continuing the theme of force, Mackey includes in the poem a series of “Operations.” “Operation Spin” is followed by Operations “Kill,” “Grab,” “Boast,” “Lie,” “Spin,” “Gloat,” and “Slaughter.” Although the “Operations” do not gain a definitive source, “operation” could be read as a verb rather than a noun. In *Discrepant Engagement*, Mackey claims that “The privileging of the verb, the movement from noun to verb, linguistically accentuates action among a people whose ability to act is curtailed by racist constraints,” thus the implied subject behind the verb “Operation” becomes more relevant than the action verb itself.<sup>64</sup> Mackey continues later in the poem:

Gloat. Operation Slaughter. Name  
after name after name...Not in ours  
we  
said, slapped heads ringing, not  
to be Andoumboulou again. *Not to  
be Andoumboulou again but were, we  
within we athwart we ad infinitum,*  
voice we were chided by. Bottom  
voice,<sup>65</sup>

In these lines, the subject of the “Operations” is problematized by the only pronoun being “we.” Furthermore, the placement of “we” away from the lines of the stanzas physically and figuratively distances the collective voice from the Operations. Now, if the “we” is the subject before the verb “Operation,” then the direct objects are the “Slaughter,” “Kill,” etc. If so, then the collective voices, “*we ad infinitum*,” reenact the violence of the Operations, thus construing a reverse of colonialism. The decolonization created by the

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<sup>64</sup> See Mackey, *Discrepant Engagement* p. 268

<sup>65</sup> See Mackey, *Nod House* p. 11

voices of the Andoumboulou song thus enables the mythogenesis of a timeless world from the concrete/cement past, present, and future world.

The voice shifts from the collective “we” to the personal “I” in the next installment of the Andoumboulou Song, “Song of the Andoumboulou 64.” Not only does the account shift from an abstract collective to the first person narrative, but the place within the poem, “Alma Bridge / Road,” from Los Gatos, California, would have been familiar to Mackey in his own life. The “alternate world” created when the speaker “tore off” and “turned / away” is divided into two equal parts: left and right:

In the alternate world  
another alternate world.  
I tore off and I turned  
away. Alma Bridge  
Road  
I turned off on, non-  
allegorical water on my  
right, allegorical water on  
my left... The left side  
said the soul was  
burnt  
wood.<sup>66</sup>

The layering of turning away in the double alternate world then being “turned off on” both right and left sides of oneself demonstrates the complexity and originality begotten from the original self and world. Furthermore, the “non-” and “allegorical water opposes the “burnt / wood” on either the right and left sides, symbolizing possible heaven and hell imagery within the self. Ultimately, the divide faces no resistance from the speaker in the poem since the speaker continues moving throughout the poem on the “anaphylactic walk.” “Anaphylactic” is a term usually associated with deathly allergy, but the speaker

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<sup>66</sup> See Mackey, *Nod House* p. 21

in this poem continues through the deathly danger of this alternate world. The space created within the poem enables the emergence of “hybrid or contestatory identities inchoately defined” by social, political, and spiritual conditions.<sup>67</sup> Yet, although “hybridity” could explain the divide within the self, the use of mythogenesis in the narrative poem reestablishes a new wholeness despite the “anaphylactic danger” inherent in doing so.

Finally, in “Song of the Andoumboulou: 68,” the voice centers back onto the collective “we” in a narrative of two lovers. Yet, the love in the collective “we” invites violence, “regret,” and “not knowing.” The beginning line, “Udhrite curvature, hand roving / haunch, her hand leavening his.”<sup>68</sup> places the poem in the allusion of the Udhrite poetics of the Arabic poetic tradition of the seventeenth century: “Udhrite poetics is an erotic abandon, an attraction to the beloved...so intense that it results in the poet’s death, the literal dispersal of the poetic identity.”<sup>69</sup> Again implementing an innovative, layered approach to place and space in the real and spiritual realms, Mackey defines the collective “we” as being simultaneously together and violently separated within the mythogenesis world on the page. The “alternate world” now resembles a “World of reduction, world we / departed, world we blew up // in...” where:

we lay remembering twice removed...  
All being into ourselves exploded, non-  
allegorical house notwithstanding,  
else what anything was no matter  
what.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> See Madureira p. 11

<sup>68</sup> See Mackey, *Nod House* p. 42-3

<sup>69</sup> See Scroggins p. 324

<sup>70</sup> See Mackey, *Nod House* p. 42-3

Now, the “world” created by layered allusions, layered places, and layered times becomes the act of experimental writing itself. The lovers “All being into ourselves exploded” symbolize the “dispersal of poetic identity.” The syncopated lines “else what anything was no matter / what” encompass the artistic othering through the word “else” and delineates it as “no matter.” Furthermore, the poem ends without a period to show the end of a sentence, or end of a poem, or end of a world—“go” (43). This “go” performs as a trace of continuity and life in the subsequent parts of the “Song of Andoumboulou” as well as the *ad infinitum* of Mackey’s mythogenesis.

The eternal quality and quantity of Mackey’s “Song of the Andoumboulou” reconfigures not only origin of language, but also of Being. Through the use of mythogenesis, the Being created by multiple levels of voice enables the potentiality of response from the cosmological spirits it addresses. The participation between voices, historical logic, spirit, and places/spaces reconfigures the fragmented sections into a new whole of Being. Mackey’s claim that “Language is symbolic action, frequently compensatory action, addressing deprivations it helps its users overcome.” creates an ability in words to symbolically recreate a whole from the fragmented self subject to deprivations.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, in *Discrepant Engagement*, Mackey gives credit to the title as:

an expression coined in reference to practices that, in the interest of opening presumably closed orders of identity and signification, accent fissure, fracture, incongruity, the rickety, imperfect fit between word and

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<sup>71</sup> See Mackey, *Discrepant Engagement* p. 268

world. Such practices highlight – indeed inhabit – discrepancy, engage rather than seek to ignore it.<sup>72</sup>

When Mackey's discrepancy is applied to Philip's *Zong!*, the world-creating quality of fractured, incongruous language brings about a mythogenesis world from words once used for harm. The words themselves act as a mythogenesis and map for the story, as well as the time, place, and space which the *Zong* traveled. Geographically, the places where the passengers traveled, lived or died, physically and imaginatively pass through the spaces and words of the text. In the following section, M. NourbeSe Philip extends this application of symbolic, discrepant language in mythogenesis to the reconfiguration of geography of space through the reuse of words and texts in a form giving voice back to the dead.

### **M. NourbeSe Philip and the Reconfigured Geography of Space in *Zong!***

Within *Zong!*, M. NourbeSe Philip includes six sections: *Os*, *Sal*, *Ventus*, *Ratio*, *Ferrum*, and *Ebora*. In addition, she includes a Glossary, a Manifest, and a Notanda, which help describe the participation between the poetic text and the historical documents. As the six sections of poetic text progress, the readability of the words, sentences, and lines becomes more convoluted and complex in terms of appearance and structure. The dynamic structure requires readers to closely scan the pages to find the narrative within an anti-narrative of fugal voices as the ship travels across the Atlantic Ocean. For the purpose of this thesis, the focus will remain on sections from the poetic work that demonstrate the layering of space and time that beget mythogenesis. Because *Zong!* directly relates to diasporic travel, the geography created on the page creates a

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 19

mythogenesis of movement through past to present and back again through the malleability of spirit and voice.

By reading *Zong!* through the model of Katherine McKittrick's demonic grounds and Samantha Pinto's research on difficult diasporas, the historical and systematic violence that act in the literary representation through language reveals the tensions of imaginative, elegiac locations in spirit and space.<sup>73</sup> By defining spirituality as multivalent, and including notions of philosophy, religion, belief systems, ritual practices, and kinship, the spirit belongs to the community formation representative of a clustering of identities.<sup>74</sup> The clustering of identities in *Zong!* occurs in Philip's language selections from Yoruba (the culture of the West African coast), European classics, and the disassembled, mutilated words in English scattered across the pages. Thus, the spirituality obtains a syncretic ethos acknowledging loss of bodies while reviving the spirit. Furthermore, the words across the page literally and metaphorically map the geographic territory of Zong.

Katherine McKittrick's *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* reconstructs traditional humanist geography concepts of landscape and deep space based on diasporic ruptures within the black experience. The demonic model relies on uncertainty or something supernaturally demonic rather than the knowable, linear outcome of traditional geographic theories of place, body, and self habituating the place-world.<sup>75</sup> McKittrick sets up the methodology for demonic grounds in black geography

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<sup>73</sup> See McKittrick for her adaptation of 'demonic grounds' from Sylvia Wynter's "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/Silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman'" p. xxiv.

<sup>74</sup> Here, I adopt and expand K. Zauditu-Selassie's definition of 'spirituality' (212).

<sup>75</sup> See Casey, "Body, Self, and Landscape: A Geophilosophical Inquiry into the Place-World." Casey outlines the the concept of "there is *no place without self; and no self without place*" (406) place, habitation (connoting the state of *having* or belonging), self, body, and landscape.

studies into two parts. She explains that the “demonic model conceptualizes vantage points outside the space-time orientation of the humunular observer,” thus claiming that the demonic model makes possible the unfolding of space-time that does not “*replace* or override or remain subordinate to the vantage point of ‘Man,’” but instead parallels his master narrative of humanness (xxv). This claim applies to Philip’s counter-discursive “universe of words” (Philip 200) provided by the words taken from *Gregson v. Gilbert*, the 1783 case describing the insurance and property laws put into play over the loss of the Africans as the shipmates threw them overboard for lack of water.<sup>76</sup> Thus, McKittrick presents a methodology for geography as space, place, and location in their “physical materiality and imaginative configurations” (x), which applies to the imaginative vehicle of the spirit as it continues moving and the bodies remain in the material space of water, mythogenesizing the diasporic route.

In addition, Samantha Pinto’s *Difficult Diasporas: The Transnational Feminist Aesthetic of the Black Atlantic* defines diaspora by the “difficulty of establishing an order among things” (7). She responds to and expands upon McKittrick’s *Demonic Grounds* by reformulating diaspora through formal innovation—“taking its unpredictable routes to imaginative, nonnarrative realization...reimagin[ing] black women as subjects of diaspora, but also perform[ing] a reconstruction of the possibilities of diaspora studies itself” (9-10).<sup>77</sup> Hence, Pinto’s difficult diasporas reconsiders language and form as a revision of complicated histories. Although neither McKittrick nor Pinto fully examine the spirit-space of geography; both claim that the primacy of location and the geography

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<sup>76</sup> See Philip p. 210-211 for *Gregson v. Gilbert*.

<sup>77</sup> For example, the historical coming up of diaspora studies in the academy at the intersection of postcolonial, transnational feminist, and Black Atlantic ways of reading difference. (Pinto 10)



situated between water and sky with no land. Ironically, the surrounding water contains salt, *sal*, deeming it poisonous for consumption.

Philip's inscription of mapped words on the geographic event of the Zong ship sailing between water and sky connotes the imagery of the Kongo Cosmogram, a syncretic spiritual image deriving from Yoruba tradition as it mixed with Catholicism (because of diasporic ruptures).<sup>81</sup> The horizontal line of the Cosmogram divides the living world from its mirrored counterpart in the kingdom of the dead: the world of the dead is complete within itself and provides a wholeness to a person who understand the way and power of both worlds (Thompson 109). Thus, the Cosmogram creates a spirit-space within the physical geography of the ship's placement between both worlds, and poses a possible reconfigured space of opportunity for the dead.

The "but" signals a conjunction leading away from the landscape to the rhetorical question asked by the murdered bodies posed to "ruth," a woman waiting for her loved one as he is aboard the ship.<sup>82</sup> It is not enough to claim that Philip provides a voice for the spirits; instead she intersects voices to the point at which readers can no longer decipher the "us" and "you" from one another. The formulaic choice of spacing the words apart from one another mirrors the scattered movement of the ship as it failed to reach Jamaica in sufficient time. Furthermore, Philip's address to the stars shining produces not only a melancholic tone for the "murder made us," but also brings attention to the mapping strategies of the shipmates. Continuing on the same page, she writes:

and  
uncommon

we map  
the usual

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<sup>81</sup> See Figure 1.

<sup>82</sup> I would also claim that "ruth" becomes adamic for "truth" throughout the text as Philip breaks the word "truth" to "t / ruth" in multiple places.



*scene my*  
 part is set  
 bring me my  
 cape my  
 mask my past  
 play clap  
 pope captain &  
 king i  
 god<sup>86</sup> play

In the above passage, Philip’s own voice seeps into the narrative as she addresses the roles each voice plays: passenger, captain, and writer. The “part” played which “mask[s] my past” draws attention to the form of “property” which the Africans were forced into embodying in terms of the law. And, it metafictionally transforms the voices of the dead into characters rather than beings. The form of Philip’s language alongside the “parts” and “claps” (applause) for the practice of writing sinisterly translates into the roles of “captain,” “pope,” “king,” and “god,” all of whom are most commonly males. Although the link between authorship and domination are equated, Philip remains an outlier because of her own gender. In fact, command language comprises this passage. Without the broken apart language, the passage, or Philip, demands: *bring me my cape, my mask, my past. Clap. Clap. I play captain, pope, and king. I play god.* But, inviting grammatical structure into the passage enacts a violence upon the language just as assigning one voice to the “i” unjustly sequences the spirits within the text.

The movement along the words on the pages of *Zong!* upholds what McKittricks calls the material and imaginative configurations of place. The words themselves transcend the space-time of chronotope and become a part of the murdered bodies

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<sup>86</sup> See Philip p. 90





making the sounds and words and silences sent by Philip and the re-membered voices of the Zong. Thus, the act of reading or listening to the text transcends time and arrives at a space of resistance, the demonic grounds, against the cruelty incurred on those who were murdered.

Mythogenesis dominates a space and place that is timeless and without either life or death. That is to say, the act of innovative, experimental writing breaks boundaries, but does not do so to create a better, alternative space; instead, it provides an alternative reality in response to movements and forced colonization. The Utopia is never a real place, but on the page, it demonstrates all that is attainable in the imagination. Although Philip transforms language into the bodies of the dead from the Zong slaveship, Mackey uses language to recreate bodies into the words of poetics itself. Overall, Philip and Mackey both use language to break the bounds of narrative, thus repositioning words as layered entities in themselves. The act of writing works as an act of becoming in a 'universe of words' that began in alternate words and moved to the space on the page and the mythogenesis of the story.

## Moon Stories: Three Parts

### 1. How Very Differently It Goes For Us<sup>88</sup>

This is a collection of what was left of Project Enceladus. The pieces are compiled from a file of blog posts translated by an unknown translator. Some Belindian Medievalists suggest that what is known of Project Enceladus is that it was organized as a “Partnership” experiment to test the 7<sup>th</sup> generation for a gene that would confirm that humans could be bred to be dependent on one another regardless of physical or sociological identity traits. Anyone who lost their partner, or was accused for straying from their partnership, would be evacuated to a subsidiary establishment on Belinda for further testing and, possibly, extermination. It is believed that the current Belindian population consists of the legacy of these exiled people of Enceladus. It is rumored that the notes transcribed from Passenger X catalyzed a war among the people of Enceladus resulting in the partial destruction of this moon.

Enceladus eNews Coverage: Day 1 of Voyage 1056

People of Enceladus,<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Translated from the Anglo-Saxon poem, “Wulf and Eadwacer,” *ungelic is us* is ‘how different/dissimilar/unlike’ we are” or “how differently it goes for us.”

<sup>89</sup> Moon of Saturn, synchronous rotation period, zero axial tilt, composed of ice and rock, 1/10<sup>th</sup> the size of Titan, population 13,739.

Today, Voyager 1056 departs for Belinda.<sup>90</sup> We celebrate the captain of the ship, Portia Wolf, for her 50<sup>th</sup> journey. A ceremony is scheduled for the 11<sup>th</sup> of February at the 5<sup>th</sup> St. Plaza. There will be festivities for children of all ages. With Coupling Day approaching, there will also be Matching activities that *you will not want to miss*. Activities include psychic readings, drawing a name from a bag, and, of course, battles for those who tie for the same mate or for those who fear that they cannot decide for themselves.

We would also like to extend our thanks to Portia's partner for organizing the celebration in honor of her Match's 50<sup>th</sup> journey. We wish them both the lifelong partnership on Enceladus, not only for their support of the Match Initiative, but also for their continued exemplary couplehood.

Voyager 1056 Statistics:

Passengers: 7 (4 women, 3 men) (1 cheater, 2 jilters, 4 widows/widowers)

Captain: Portia Wolf, 50<sup>th</sup> Journey

Destination: Belinda

Experiment Topic: (new!) One passenger, X, (selected at random) will not be issued the standard hibernation medications. Stay tuned with eNews blog updates to read the mind transcriptions in real time.

\* \* \*

Passenger X Dream Sequence: Entry 37

WE WALK OVER the sounds beneath a bridge. We take this route, avoiding the cars on a highway at the edge of the city: a highway closer to the city itself than the edge of the geographical shift toward homes. I say I like how bridges touch impossible places and he

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<sup>90</sup> Moon of Uranus, synchronous rotation period, zero axial tilt, the surface is grey, virtually nothing is known of it, population approximately 438.

says he likes geography. Now he studies poetry and I study prose, but beneath the bridge, I study sound and he studies space.

I AM IN a spaceship watching an old movie featuring Marlon Brando while we transit to Belinda. People on Enceladus want to send me another update on my vitals, but I ignore their call; there is no life or death in space. Currently, in this space, on this page, all time has collided and I am re-teaching myself to play the oboe. I am confusing the fingerings with the clarinet and wondering how closely they might resemble a tenor saxophone, that a tenor saxophone might be easier to learn because it is in the same key as the clarinet: B flat. The spaceship is travelling somewhere. I am not a passenger. I am here for the experiment and Portia has the control; I have the TV remote.

BEFORE WE MEET, we know each other. Near the middle of the city, we stand on opposite sides of a street and we watch three cars pass by. When the cars are not in front of us, we watch the cross signal flash a red X. We alternate from our heels to our toes and that's how we know each other before we meet.

I SEE MYSELF in a small boat off the coast of an island inhabited by birds. We can't go to the island because it's just for the birds—much like how we can't fly because the sky, too, is just for the birds. But being in space is not so much like flying; it's more like a screen attenuating from high definition to regularity.

HE KISSES MY hand when I mention how I know Belinda. This act means that he does not understand me, and so he loves me.

I AM RECALLING the minivan I was once riding in with sixteen other people. We are in the desert: in the territory of a past empire that I never knew. The desert homes empires of dromedary camels transplanted here from Earth. When you smell like a camel,

you smell like a woodwind. We do not get baths in the spaceship. I'm regretful to be a part of the experiment. I once sat in baths in a large tub without edges. The spaceship is much like that tub. There's nowhere really to rest your back even though your back is pressed up against some sort of structure. The driver of the minivan was not as good at controlling direction as Portia. He drives too fast and the engine overheats and we stop to let it cool in the desert.

THE SOUNDS ELEVATE. We meet in this trap of sounds purporting their existence in a chaos and he begins to lift my hand to his mouth again.

Passenger X Notes: Entry 25<sup>91</sup>

WHEN I FORGET the image of something from Enceladus, I begin to remember more of its smell. I've forgotten the angles of the bare branches outside the window of an apartment I used to stay in twice a week, but I remember the smell of the bed sheets. I remember the sound of the heater kicking on and the brief space of silence between those kicks. I remember the dip in the center of the mattress where someone usually slept alone. Or, someone slept close to someone else; I don't remember which it was.

THE BED SHEETS smelled like too much warmth, something I sometimes remember because I crave it now on the spaceship. Portia still says that the temperature on the ship must remain as it is so that we have enough energy to reach Belinda.

Letter 54 to the Editor: Day 18

Dear editor,

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<sup>91</sup> Because of the difference in space-time between space travel and the orbit of Enceladus, the numbers on the notes and dreams greatly differ the actual time passing on Enceladus.

I am again imploring that we return the people of Belinda to Enceladus. Passenger X is our lost love, our dead love, our mistress, our first love that we never forget. Passenger X is any one of us. Either bring them back, or stop sharing the transcriptions. We would rather not know.

Passenger X Dream Sequence: Entry 308

I AM RESURRECTING my closest friend's relationship, then I am finding fifty dollars in cash from a birthday card I was meant to read two years ago. On Enceladus, giving and receiving is an ordinary transaction.

WE ARE DRIVING to a crater outside of the city. He isn't from this city and he wants to see what lies around it before he moves away. I do not protest against the drive despite the ache in my eyes. He arrives and plays his own music through a cassette tape attached to a cord; I have not seen one of these in my own life. I have not seen this crater despite my proximity in recent years.

BELINDA IS FOR impossibility. I am telling my friend this for the first time. She understands and she looks out at the stars. In the movies, I see Stella cry, but no one cries on Enceladus unless the wind knocks water from our eyes to our cheeks. The water is absorbed by our masks. Here, no one watches movies or talks about Belinda.

I DO NOT know the sounds he sings. He sings from a language too new to define.

I AM TELLING her to talk to her partner without criticism. She tells me that they bicker too much, that one day she was scolded for purchasing green chilies from the local grocery on her way home from work. Her partner pointed out the window and said *but we*

*are growing green chilies in the garden we built together.* It wasn't the words, it was the look in her partner's eyes.

THERE IS FOG and we cannot see the crater until the sun begins to set. A rare form of dew gathers inside the windows of the car and I taste it. He watches and lifts my hand to his mouth, stops, presses the index finger of my hand on the dew, then lifts it back to his tongue.

I VISIT HER again for dinner. I watch them bickering. She forgets the parmesan cheese from the grocery store and she meets her partner's eyes with self-hatred. Things escalate with each forgotten item. She asks to talk and her partner says there is nothing to talk about. I tell her, aside, to approach her without criticism and then they resurrect their love for the last time.

HIS OWN HAND is at my mouth for the first time. We see the crater as the sun burns fog and more dew gathers inside the closed windows. The dew gathers and we can no longer see outside. The windows could be almost lavender, almost wrapped between water and ice. I see in gray.

Letter 58 to Editor: Day 20

Dear Editor,

It is a wish of my own and others that Voyage 1056 crash into Belinda. The crash itself would exude enough energy to blast the Belinda Township into oblivion. I am gathering a petition and I have 4,059 signatures supporting this cause. The number continues to grow.

Passenger X Notes: Entry 36

OCCASIONALLY, PORTIA TALKS to me through headphones. Since a mask with a screen covers my face, I try to picture her as Ava Gardner in *The Night of the Iguana*. It seems that whoever installed the movie selections had an inclination toward adaptations of Tennessee Williams's plays. That or the only frequency the TV can support is black and white. I picture my memories in black and white, now. I see Portia with full, gray lips and dark gray eyebrows.

SHE TOLD ME that I'm the only one on the ship without hibernation medication. I've begun asking for the medication, but she says there's not enough to share. The passengers who hibernate still dream in color.

Passenger X Dream Sequence: Entry 309

AFTER THE CRATER, he drives us down to the city. We see a bridge that we had not seen before because of the fog. He stops the car in a patch of icy dirt and leaps out, and I follow. We push through a thicket of sharp branches and walk onto the bridge; it's old and not a typical bridge. It's what remains of one of the first structures built on Enceladus. The first astronauts to land here had destroyed everything they built so that their plans would never be exposed. We take turns guessing at what this bridge could have been, then we speculate on what we could become.

MY CIRCADIAN RHYTHM adjusts to the dark and light cycle of black and white films. My core body temperature adjusts to the boreal worth of never seeing a warm color.

WE SEE A rabbit standing on the bank of the small river. Rabbits are one of the only remaining animals transferred here from what was Earth, and only a few still exist. We

watch its ears slowly rotate in the slightest turns and we pretend we see the whiskers twitching aside its nose.

Letter 62 to the Editor: Day 20

Dear Editor,

I am a scientist specializing in genes and atoms. It is impossible that crashing Voyage 1056 would cause enough impact to destroy the Belinda Township in its entirety. Please disregard the petition for this cause. If anything, the crash would release enough toxic materials to alter the genes of Belinda's inhabitants. Even I cannot tell you what this would actually do.

Passenger X Notes: Entry 36

I CONTINUE FORGETTING images from Enceladus. I am telling Portia the stories from the movies and the images from the dreams and she is telling me her own story. I understand now that this spaceship will never return to Enceladus, so the images should be forgotten.

SHE TELLS ME that the passengers with hibernation medication will wake and never know they left Enceladus. She tells me that Belinda is a place for renewal.

Passenger X Dream Sequence: Entry 310

WE COULD BECOME the renewal. We could be the partners who left each other. This is the story we never know.

AT WORK I watch a woman sit in a man's office more and more frequently. The woman works in the same department and both of them hold equal positions. Weeks pass and the visits become black coffees with blueberry bagels. Months pass and the visits are laughter and bagged lunches. A year passes and visits become exits to the same car at the end of the day.

WE COULD BECOME the time. I'm remembering myself in someone else's story and I'm in a ship traveling to a place I've never been. The ship glides underneath the bridges that transfer containers of our used air to recycle into something new. The ship travels so fast that the shadows from the bridges cross over my eyes like the shadows of bare trees against the sun. I have a letter and a ring from the partner I must be traveling to.

IN THE NEXT year, the man disappears. And so, perhaps the woman disappears because she no longer visits. Or, the woman disappears and the man no longer works. Only one of them was sent to Belinda and I choose not to know who.

WE COULD BECOME the space. I bring us closer with every thought. But, with every thought of us closer together, the space between us becomes the reality.

Passenger X Notes: Entry 42

I HAVE A feeling that I am close to Belinda. Portia says there is no way of describing the exact time of arrival, but without images, my feelings give me a better understanding of time. Today, I felt a knee press against my thigh. The hibernation medication of the passenger beside me must be wearing off.

I HAVE ASKED Portia again why we are on the spaceship and she answers me by saying we might not be on a spaceship. She says that it is impossible for any spaceship to

travel the distance between Enceladus and Belinda, and now I know she is irritated. I tell her that we must be on a bridge and she stops talking for a time that is similar to the length of a few days.

Letter 70 to the Editor: Day 22

Dear Editor,

We have a message for Passenger X: Find a way back to Enceladus and destroy it before we reach Generation 7. It has been speculated that Generation 7 will be among the cruelest of all human existence. No one can speculate on what this next generation will be capable of.

Passenger X Notes: Entry 47

I AM IMAGINING Belinda and it looks like Enceladus. Portia says we are between arrival and departure. I tell her that is where we always are. We are always between arrival and departure and that's why we can never depend on one another. This time, I stop talking to her.

SHE CONTINUES TALKING and she tells me that I can leave the spaceship if I want. She says the people of Enceladus are divided because of the transmissions on eNews and that I should leave so that the transmissions will end. I remain silent.

I AM IMAGINING Enceladus and it is smaller than Belinda.

Passenger X Dream Sequence: Entry 324

I LIVE WITH one member of Generation 3; I am Generation 6. He is scheduled to leave for Belinda on the next spaceship because his partner has a memory disorder that will lead to death. He can no longer depend on his partner.

WE ARE SOUNDS that open and break in one breath; we return, in the same space in the city, in a new cadence.

I WAIT WITH the man from Generation 3 and his partner. His partner has lost the ability to speak and eat. We feed the partner together and I remember what happened when my friend forgot an item of the groceries. The man from Generation 3 does not cry. He tells me he is ready to leave for Belinda.

WE WALK ALONG the pavement of the city for the last time. Because he departs, I am on the spaceship.

THE MAN FROM Generation 3 cries beside me in the spaceship to Belinda. His knee on my thigh is frail and I feel it like the taste of iron in my mouth from water out of an old fountain. For the first time, I hear the spaceship hum.

I AM TEACHING myself to play woodwinds while we walk. My fingers trace the invisible keys inside of my pockets and I press a new note with each step. My tongue taps against the back of my teeth with each new note. We approach a curb and stop; we watch the cross signal flash a red X. We alternate from our heels to our toes, again and again, together.

HIS PARTNER DIES while choking on food. There is no sound to warn the man from Generation 3 that he is now alone.

Passenger X Notes: Entry 48

PORTIA TELLS ME that Enceladus is gone, but I know this already. Enceladus was gone before we departed. We walked on Enceladus for the last time.

## 2. Of Longing for a Love that's Lost<sup>92</sup>

The following excerpts are translated from notes compiled by an anonymous resident of Enceladus. This resident worked as a research assistant for the Partner Project. The notes in italics are from scraps of blue paper that were placed throughout the notebook. Everything in this collection was kept in the sequence it was found in, but it is believed that the notebook may have been accidentally disorganized at some point. Some Belindian medievalists say that the research assistant was Passenger X before she was sent to Belinda.

*When I realized I couldn't love blue, it rained. And then I was trapped on that mountain just like the rain cloud. Our memories seeped into the crevices of the mountain; they started at the tops of the leafless trees and kept searching down the trunks until they found the brown pine needles right above the roots. We felt around for bare patches of wet dirt and, there, we found deer tracks. We followed the tracks to the empty deer beds and we curled into ourselves before drifting back up to the rest of the cloud. There, we helped the gray mass lift itself back over the mountain.*

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<sup>92</sup> Translated by Eavan Boland from the Anglo-Saxon poem, "The Wife's Lament," *leafes abidan*.

1.

THE MAN FROM Generation 3 sits across the table from his partner. She slowly hums and he is reminded of the days when she took dance lessons. In the days before she lost her eyesight, she bought a few sequined costume dresses. The fabric of the dresses would stretch across her body like it was an extra layer of her skin. She never gave up the dresses even when she became too busy to dance. The dresses now hang on a rack of clothes meant for the grandchildren to use for their make-believe games. The dresses hang off of their bodies, contorted and colorful.

THE MAN FROM Generation 3 remembers the time his partner asked him why a black feather was pressed between the cushions of their couch. His partner pulled it from its place where the base of the feather had stuck itself inside the upholstery as if it were finding a new body to cover. She held the base between her index finger and thumb; her middle, ring, and pinky flayed out in a position not dissimilar to the technique of a practiced dancer.

SHE RUBBED HER two fingers together and the feather quickly twirled at a pace contrasting her slow, relaxed movement as she lifted her eyes to the man from Generation 3. The feather moved like her thoughts.

THE MAN FROM Generation 3 listens to her hum and is reminded of silence. He remembers her slow dancing across their carpeted floor while holding their second child to her chest. She hummed to a song he couldn't recall now; a song with words that wouldn't matter.

SHE LIFTED HER hand from the back of the small child and leaned into her heels so that the child was pressed against her body for a brief moment before drifting upwards.

She moved her arm further away from both of their bodies and waved her hand gently through the air, sweeping away the flecks of dust that caught the light from the floor lamp. A smile closed her hum as she slow danced to the low gravity of Enceladus. THEN THE MAN remembers the words to the song. *Stars and steel guitars and luscious lips as red as wine—Broke somebody's heart and I'm afraid that it was mine.* She continues to slowly hum the same note at the table. There's no inflection or movement. She just hums with her eyes closed and her neck tense and firm from the sound.

*I woke to watch a full moon set behind the mountain, and the mountain was red instead of blue. The sky was a shifting gray and I told time by the shadows slowly dancing across the floor until they disappeared completely. When I met you I thought I would love blue. We watched documentaries about the nature of Earth and you made toast coated with butter and cinnamon sugar. The toaster wouldn't work unless you stood there with your hand holding down the button, guessing at the right amount of time for frozen bread to thaw without burning.*

*The red turned back to blue as the shadows moved with the moonset. The night before, I swam in a tub of light blue water and drank ginger tea. I warmed myself from the thaw of winter like you did with the frozen bread. I coated myself*

*with Gold Bond lotion from a blue bottle and felt my skin  
tingle like a spice; I was cinnamon in blue.*

*After the moonset, I left my room. I collected acorns that still  
had their caps even at the end of the longest cold season. I  
held them in my palm like a canoe and I tasted pine from the  
smell. I collected branches of pine that had fallen to the  
ground because of the rain. I placed them on wet rocks and  
realized that I was in love with evergreen in gray.*

2.

AS SHE WALKS, she watches her toes being covered by the endless ice and snow packed onto the ground. Her arm is hooked around the arm of a boy from Generation 6; she is from Generation 7. They are separated in age by only a few years; both are the outliers of either Generation. They have not yet discussed going to the Partnering Officials to file for an EXCEPTION.

THE SNOW LEAVES her socks cold, but not yet wet. She leans further into the boy from Generation 6 and he looks ahead as he walks beside her. She wonders if he is cold and if that is why he will not turn to her. She wonders if she has annoyed him by digging her toes dramatically in the snow to hear the sound of the crunching ice and the whispering slide of her boots toward the hidden concrete.

SHE GENTLY MOVES her arm closer to herself, but the boy from Generation 6 tugs her back. He looks at her, suddenly, but once he realizes she had not been falling, he loosens

his hold again. She looks away from both him and her toes and imagines the words she wants to say. The same words she learned to say while in Partner Prep Courses.

SHE LEANS INTO him once more, but this time she is more forceful. She thinks she feels him flinch again in fear that she had slipped on the ice. He stops walking and looks at her this time. She looks away, suddenly frozen from the cold. He asks her if she's ready to get home and she nods although she is lying. She wants to continue walking in all of the ice and snow. The season is about to change for the first time in three years.

SHE SUDDENLY SAYS that she had been looking at the listings of available Partner Houses. She says she had been looking and she felt that she should tell him this before she continues. She hears the wind push against the surrounding fence that encloses the sidewalk they stand on. The fence rattles and shivers and sends flecks of reflected light dancing across the snow.

HE TELLS HER it is impossible to partner with her because she is Generation 7. He tells her he had read that her Generation is the last, that it is still unknown what the Officials will do with her or any children she potentially has.

SHE SHIVERS IN the snow, her arms now across her chest, her fingers shaking from what is not cold. She asks him why her Generation has been deemed impossible and he answers her that he does not know what the Officials know. He apologizes and says that she would need to find someone from her own Generation to fulfill her Partner Requirements.

SHE ASKS HIM again why it's only her Generation that is this way. To this, he has no new answer. He only tells her that each Generation is made to be more dependent than

the one before it. That that's the whole point of the Partner Project—to create an emotion that has never been scientifically defined.

LIFTING HER FEET from the security of the hole she's made in the snow, she tells him that she wants to return to the time before the season would change.

*When we walked back, you held my hand up to your mouth  
on a corner. We were in the same rain that had left the  
mountain with me. I wanted to love blue again, but you were  
evergreen.*

*You were about to leave for the same mountain and I told you  
I was supposed to be in love with blue, but I had learned in  
the mountains that I loved evergreen; it was getting harder to  
find.*

*We talked about where pine trees decide to grow and their  
acidity. We talked about how deer sleep under pine trees  
because the acidity of the needles prevents brush from  
growing underneath their narrow trunks. We talked about  
how the wind at the top of the mountain makes the trunks  
strong despite their size.*

*You turned to me and told me that you had held my hand to  
your mouth in front of an evergreen door. Evergreen is hard  
to come by despite its quality of being forever.*

3.

A YOUNG MAN from Generation 5 sifts through photographs of birds. The photographs had once belonged to a book, but a salesman had carefully torn them out to sell individually at a flea market. When the individual photographs wouldn't sell, he bundled them back together, disregarding their original order, and sold them again as a collection.

The young man's great aunt had given him the bundle of photographs on his fifteenth birthday. She had thought they could be used as postcards while he was away at war.

A TALL WOMAN in a crimson dress walks through the door to their Partner Home. She's carrying a few cloth bags stretched into odd corners from boxed groceries. The young man observes the smoothness of her dress as it tightens around her waist before falling around her hips. He wheels around to face her from his desk where he has been sifting through the photographs. *What did you get?* he questions. *Just some things to make quesadillas with,* she returns without looking down at him. She continues walking towards the kitchen, which is only separated by a half-wall that's supposed to function as a bar, but has taken the role as a catch-all.

THE YOUNG MAN wheels back around and runs his thumb across the image of a wren, whispering the word *more*. There had never been the war that his great aunt predicted. She had predicted a lot of things for Enceladus, but the family suspected her notions were all a part of her confusion from all of the books she read before she lost her eyesight. Still, the young man had left Enceladus briefly on a mission he could never tell his family or his Partner about. He had returned in the wheelchair he's sitting in now, but he couldn't tell anyone why he could no longer walk.

DID YOU REMEMBER *to buy more green peppers and kale?* the young man calls to his Partner. *No, all we have is cheese,* she replies from the kitchen, *come help me.* The young man wheels himself around the corner of the catch-all bar and sits in the middle of the kitchen looking up at the tall woman in the crimson dress. She has sprayed a pan with oil and she's placing one corn tortilla in the center. He watches her as she sprinkles shredded cheese, starting with a small pile in the middle of the tortilla, then moving outward in the pattern of a spiral. *Why are you doing that? You're supposed to put the cheese on one side then fold the tortilla,* the young man asks. *No, I'm putting another tortilla on the top,* she replies with a quick glance at his chest. The young man clenches his hands on the armrests of his chair.

ON THE CATCH-ALL bar, the young man has left the remaining empty plastic sleeves that had once held the photographs of birds. They drift and tremble lightly as the low gravity of Enceladus tries to lift them from the surface. Their movement catches a glint of light and the young man reaches to place a small rock he had found at a riverbed on top of the sleeves. As he turns to face his Partner, the corners of the plastic flap against the gravity for a final time.

SHE PLACES ANOTHER tortilla on top of the melting cheese and presses it down with a spatula. *That's not a quesadilla, that's a grilled cheese made with tortillas instead of bread,* the young man says tediously. At this, she glares at him with the spatula held upwards in her hand. A drop of oil pops up from the pan and touches her crimson dress; the young man stares at the new maroon spot above the curve of her hip.

*The roads I know on the mountain are like secrets. They  
are like the stairways you take when you do not want to*

*walk alongside someone else. You told me you were in the same place I was in the mountains, but I know you never found those roads that I know.*

*I drove away. I was on Blue Rock Road when I passed the turn to Blue Iris Road in the setting dark. On Chapel Road, I found myself alone at a small room with paper and books. The darkening blue of the mountains was a true blue I thought I had never known.*

*When you drove there, you sent me a picture of the town you thought I was in and I felt you driving across a part of my own body; a place I couldn't reach.*

4.

IAN'S FATHER CALLS him when he's stuck in traffic. Rarely is the traffic caused by copious amounts of cars, and, as usual, this traffic is caused by a Partnership Parade or some other ceremony. His father asks him to hold on because he has to show someone his ID. Ian waits and he remembers the time he had been stuck with his father in the same sort of traffic some years ago.

THAT WAS WHEN *Mercy Mercy Me* was the only song on the only radio station for the entirety of a week, and they were in a different car. He hears his father tell the Official his name and generation: *James Fleming771, Generation 3*. When that song had played, he

and his father barely spoke. It wasn't the song that drove them to silence, it was the fact that they had stopped speaking some time before that.

NOW HIS FATHER calls him every other day. He's not always stuck in traffic, sometimes he's walking around in a yard he's inspecting or he's waiting for his Partner to arrive at their home or at some restaurant. He calls and he asks him about nothing really. He just talks about what he's doing and what he's seeing. Sometimes he wonders if he's the only person his father talks to these days.

WHEN HIS FATHER returns to the phone, he tells him about the Partner Parade he's looking at from his car. He says the couples don't smile the way they had in his generation. He says he saw an alligator today when he was inspecting the electric fence around a yard. It had given him a scare until he realized it was actually one of those really large frogs the Officials had been trying to get rid of. Ian tells him that this is very interesting.

HIS FATHER TELLS him that he needs to use both of his hands to drive through the next set of barricades, so he hangs up. Ian places his phone in his lap and thinks about the things that may have been important to talk about. There's really nothing that he can think of, just that maybe he could have invited his father over for dinner or something.

His father was always silent when he visited.

WHEN THEY WERE stuck together in traffic those years ago, Ian was on his way to the SpaceBase to sign up for a new home. It was before he had signed a Partner Contract, but the Officials sometimes allowed early departures for the children of the second phase of a Partnership. The year before, Ian's mother, his father's first Partner, had been sent to Belinda.

*I tell you that I didn't know I had my own colors until they showed up in a bruise. You give me a rock and I walk with you some more. You tell me you found it beside a river in the mountains.*

*When I returned from the mountains, the season had already changed, and I missed the subtle signs of the shift from snow to rain. Water drops hang on branches, shining like mica flecks in the rock I now hold in my hand. If I had been back before the temperature warmed, I could have shaken the branches and the drops would have held onto their places. Now, they fall.*

*I picked a daffodil bud that had bent down into the dirt because of the rain. I set it on my table in a glass of water. I'm watching it now while opens into a flower as it faces a lamp.*

### 3. Far and Wide People Fell Dead<sup>93</sup>

The following sequence is a creative fiction collection written by a Belindian Medievalist. The facts were gathered from the fragments of sources found in “How Very Differently it Goes for Us” and “Of Longing for a Love that’s Lost.” The writer claims to have heard leftover sounds of animals and pieces of echoed conversations while listening through a sonar detector now connected to the atmosphere of Enceladus. The writer chose to write this piece in an attempt at translating these sounds. The writer also used images taken of Enceladus both before and after the dissolution of the Partnership Experiment. The writer claims that there was no war among the people of Enceladus.

#### 1. The Officials

NOW THE WATER is back underneath the surface of Enceladus. The Project ended during a Partnering Ceremony. The partners were dressed in beige and white. The guests were in blue. They stood around the partners in the traditional spiral formation. The center of the spiral comprised of the newest Generations, the outer edges the eldest of the Generations. The partners walked along the spiral while looking at one another’s left eye. The people creating the walls of the spiral looked upwards at some distant object. They looked for Belinda without knowing it.

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<sup>93</sup> Translated by Yusef Komunyakaa from the Anglo-Saxon poem, “The Ruin.” *crungon walo wide, cwoman woldagas*

THE WATER FLOWS beneath the surface of Enceladus. From afar, the gray hints of rivers wrap around the moon like hair pressed against a cheek in the wind. Maybe that's why they chose this moon: for the way it looks back at us like someone we wish could love us back.

BEFORE THE FIRST Generation, they lived there for their own research purposes. They built structures that chopped away at the frozen surface of the moon to free the water, and warm the moon. They started by farming herbs and cucumbers. The plants were at first a pale white color; oblong white cucumbers, juicy flesh with seeds as hard as ice. They built more structures for more warm water. The seeds could have actually been ice. They built bridges to stand above the water on the moon.

THE BRIDGES WERE the foundations of their first homes. And the water that flowed beneath them was more fascinating than the sky. The clouds would leave the moon and spin into the rings of Saturn. But the growing warmth kept them in, close to the ground.<sup>94</sup>

IT WAS A branch that fell first. The sound first popped as it left its trunk, then cracked as it pulled away. It was caught in the younger branches of smaller trees before it could reach the freezing ground. It sounded hard and hollow, different from the sound of an ax breaking into wood. Then the ground silently separated into curved cracks. The partners continued walking while looking each other in the left eye and the Generations in the spiral continued looking into the sky.

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<sup>94</sup> See Figure 2

IT HAD BEEN a crow to begin with. It could have landed on the branch. But we are still unsure of what a crow looks like to them. It has since been discovered that the bats were called sharks, the lizards were called moose, and the few remaining giraffes were known as otters. The crow could have been any creature with the capability of landing on a weak branch.

THERE WAS NO order to how the people in the spiral slipped into the widening, smooth cracks growing along the surface of Enceladus. The slip had no sound. The shock of touching frozen water provided each man and woman a moment of curiosity that eliminated their potentiality to scream. In that brief moment, they wondered if what they felt was pain or euphoria. That's what we assume silenced their voices.

THEIR BRIDGES HELD onto the impossibility of survival on Enceladus. What was once hard, frozen land had soaked into being an evergreen expanse of moss and ferns. And then it froze over again for the longest season of what was once referred to as winter. That's when they left. They left the Project to continue on its own. They left assistants to chart what changed and what did not change. The Generations moved quickly in the time difference on Enceladus and they watched it all. They watched until the frozen water broke the surface and the bridges fell.

THEIR BLUE CLOTHING turned bluer in the frozen water between the smooth cracks.

## 2. Language

BELINDA BECAME OUR refuge; like something that happens in a dream, but we question if it could have happened the previous day. We remember that first moment when we rocked from our toes to our heels and back again: in the moment when we hadn't quite met. You wore evergreen, and I forget my own attire.

THE WARM WATER slapped against the bottom of the metal boat. I could feel it through my boots. You rowed.

WE BECAME OBSESSED with crows. They began to outnumber the other creatures on Enceladus. Usually, we preferred the creatures that were less mundane based on their rarity, but the crows somehow caught our eyes. They appeared when we weren't together. They connected us in a way we never explained to each other. The crows had an iridescence elusive of all of our languages.

YOU DIRECTED THE boat by looking at the angle of my eyes. I lifted my hand to your mouth.

IN OUR LANGUAGES we created new words for Belinda. We twisted and molded words together so that, when overheard, they would sound like a mistake. We even used words similar to the etymology of mistake. We combined the words with names of foods

and plants: collards, wisteria, and bleeding hearts. Our new language depended on the absence of crows.

IN THE BOAT, we ate dried beef and pistachios. The water should have been evergreen, but it was gray like the sky.

IT COULD BE that the only way we know how to write about love is through artifact and invention. It could be that the only way we can write memory is through an association with the present. We interrogate emotion because we want it, but are apprehensive about accepting it. I add rosemary to the list of words we use for mistake.

THE REFLECTION OF the sky made it impossible to see below the surface of the water. The oars broke the sky; you made the sky swirl into the lake.

THE PARTNERING PROJECT was invented by linguists in search of words in the language of emotion. None of the records of the words have been found.

YOU BROKE THE sky across the entirety of the lake, then rowed us back to the broken bridge. My eyes gave direction.

WE RETURN TO the memory of exploring the crater before another departure. There was a rabbit, and we named it something. We named it after a poet whose poems we never read, but we knew one was about what's underneath a surface. You named the

rabbit Seamus, and I was relieved you had not chosen Peter. Crows were enough of the mundane for us to love.

I WAS THE first to leave the boat; my hand left your mouth. You left the flowers and grass I had left in the boat.

WE DEPARTED FROM each other. The distance of both space and land have no meaning in the context of such a separation. The dissolution of Enceladus mirrors the evolution of Belinda.

### 3. A ruin

FOR EVERY TIME they see each other, she gives him an item in a small box. She learned this from her great, great aunt from Generation 3. Her aunt would hide something beneath her bed before she visited, and she would eagerly crawl underneath to find the item. The items under the bed included a doll in mermaid attire, a box of cotton balls, a bar of chocolate, and, later, handmade dresses for the mermaid doll. Even when her aunt stopped leaving things under the bed for her to find, she would still crawl underneath to check the empty space. She did this until her aunt departed for Belinda. Even still, when she walked past the home, she would feel the urge to run inside and crawl underneath the bed.

SHE NEVER FORGETS to put something new inside of the small box. The first item was a chocolate chip, the second a mini-marshmallow, and the third a marble. From then on, she forgot the exact order, but she remembers the small illustration of a bear in a window, the acorn she found at the end of winter, the piece of mica thin enough to be a window and mirror all at once, and the desire she had to leave a note with all of the words they had made up between them. Still, she could never understand why he did not go to the box first. She always prompted him with the same urgency she once had to crawl beneath that bed.

IT WAS AROUND the same time she discovered the difficulty of fitting more small things inside of the tiny box that the departure happened. Along with the difficulty, there was a relief because enough time had passed to almost run out of ideas.

SHE RETURNED TO the place where the house with the bed had been. It had fallen into itself when the ground shifted from the warming water beneath the surface of Enceladus. She walked to the place where she guessed the bed could have been and tapped it with the end of her boot. The rocks glittered with mica and a thinning coat of ice. She imagined she could hear the rushing water below them. She imagined she could see the shifting of blues as the clouds spiraled with light above her.

SHE THOUGHT OF picking one of those rocks for the tiny box, but she had already put rocks in the box before. So she looked up at the clouds and spotted a crow. The crow

seemed to move faster than usual, but really it was the movement of the clouds that created such an illusion.

IT WAS A feather that she wanted to find. A feather, and the sound of her great, great aunt humming on the couch as she searched beneath the bed.

## CONCLUSION

*When one dreams, one dreams alone. When one writes a book, one is alone. The characters one re-creates may have died, or may have vanished into some other country, so one invokes them as “live absences,” absences susceptible to being painted into life, sculpted into life, absences that may arise in carvings out of the ground, from dust, from the wood of a tree, the rain of a cloud: paintings and sculptures that are so mysteriously potent in one’s book of dreams that they seem to paint one (as one paints them), to sculpt one (as one sculpts them), and in this mutual and phenomenal hollowness of self, one and they become fossil stepping-stones into the mystery of inner space.*

*-The Four Banks of the River Space, Wilson Harris*

The framework of mythogenesis runs through the entirety of the creative writing both studied and included in this thesis. By beginning with a chapter that maps mythogenesis through the critical and creative work of Wilson Harris, the legacy of diasporic writing and origins from Caribbean experimental writing transfers to the works from Nathaniel Mackey and M. NourbeSe Philip. On one level, this thesis addresses the actual act of experimentation; on another level, it explores the implications of experimentation. The relationship between the levels is paratactic rather than hierarchical, in that the influence behind *being* experimental becomes relevant within the implications. In the section of *The Four Banks of the River Space* shared above, the “live absences” of re-created characters come from the writer, alone. Alone, the writer gathers any and all resources for this re-creation, thus taking from myths and history to create a re-myth. The author then participates in the recreation of a self as familiar as their own when it approaches the “mystery of inner space.” Furthermore, experimental form participates with intuition.

By investing in the spirit-world and dream spaces, Harris, Mackey, and Philip either call upon or give voice to the dead. For such a feat, investing in an intuitive world directs the measures of experimentation. The symbiotic relationship between intuition

and form gives language a double function as both the instrument and the sound. For example, language is the same as the “paintings and sculptures that paint and sculpt one as one sculpts them.” The foundation of language and “the mystery of inner space” is the foundation of intuition—“‘Absence’ and ‘presence’ are shared beneath the apparent loss of a guiding ‘author,’” who is at times replaced by the intuition the reader associates with the language.<sup>95</sup> Through absence and presence, the quantum variability of language and fiction essentially approaches wholeness through experimentation with the process of becoming through intuition, and thus, mythogenesis.

In Chapter Three of the thesis, the Moon Stories undertake an attention to language in terms of the act of translation, relationship, and absence/presence. The titles to each of the three Parts reference lines from Anglo-Saxon, elegiac poems translated by contemporary poets. These titles open the writing to both translation and intertextuality, but even the intertextuality remains an act of translation since interpretations of Anglo-Saxon texts remain fragmented and unreliable in terms of authorship. Within the three Parts, translation is re-voiced through the paratext introductions that announce the angle of the voice for the narrative. By varying the style in each of the three Parts, multifaceted angles of translation explore questions of association between word, image, place/time, and senses/memory. The forms of voice blend fragment and ambiguity with the wholeness created by intuition, and the objectivity relayed by images and voices that echo throughout the narrative.

In summary, the Moon Stories explore multivalent relationships between lovers, partners, and family members. Acting as a major theme, departure is represented through loss, travel, distance, or disinterest. The complexities of departure are mirrored by the

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<sup>95</sup> See D’Aguiar

juxtaposition of an intentional ambiguity of voice and place along with the objective memory of senses and sounds. As a setting, the moons, Enceladus and Belinda, and space create spatial metaphors mythogenesizing the re-creation of past (place in medieval poetry) and present (current image references that give a possible glimpse of the past) into the future (a place/time potentially as unknown as the past). Time spirals through the segments as fragmentation—creating endless ends alongside a complex whole. In Part One, “How Very Differently It Goes For Us,” the voice derives from a translation of pieces compiled from a file of blog posts about a departure from one place to another; Part Two, “Of Longing for a Love that’s Lost,” uses a voice from translated notes compiled by an anonymous resident of Enceladus researching the Partner Project, but also includes personal notes interwoven between the factual observations; finally, in Part Three, “Far and Wide People Fell Dead,” the paratext announces that the voice inhabits the realm of creative fiction as it creates a story based on the material pulled from Part’s One and Two, along with scientific artifacts left by the remains of Enceladus.

Within the fragments provided by the complex network of unreliable, fictionalized narrators, a glimpse of the story of the Partner Project unfolds. The Moon Stories inhabit a genre blend of fiction, poetry, science, history, and myth. The movement through space converses with ideas of diaspora and loss, but the realm of the unknown maintains the most significant space of narrative. Rather, intuition and mythogenesis possess the meaning behind the work.

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