

유색 인종이 승리할 때: 현대 미국 이민자의 시(時) 에서 나타난 폭로와 저항

When the Colored People Win: Disclosure and Resis- tance in Contemporary American Immigrant Poetry

Gery John
University of New Orleans

개별 시인이, 미국 태생이든 외국에서 태어났든, 정형화된 기법을 통하여 접근할 수 있는 자신을 드러내면서도 자신을 억누르는 시작법을 계발하는가이다. 사실 어떤 시의 형식은, 그 주제보다도 더 우리가 그 시를 이해하는데 더 큰 도움을 주고, 결과적으로 시인의 공동체 안팎으로 그 시를 평가하는 입구가 되어준다.

미국 이민자 시의 모든 영역에서 시들을 하나로 뭉치게 하는 것은 전형적인 “미국식” 이데올로기에 동화되기를 거부하는 그들의 암묵적 저항이다. 미국 이민자들의 대표적인 시 세 편-찰스 시미의 초현실주의 “카메오 외모”, 로렌조 토마스의 풍자적인 “다문화적” 그리고 김명미의 전위적인 “깃발 아래서”-을 대조하는 작업을 통하여 이민자 시인들이 채택한 다양한 독창적인 방식을 보여주고자 한다. 하지만 각 시의 정형화된 기법을 자세히 보면 각 시가 고전과 타협하고, 미국식 이데올로기에 저항하고, 미국 문화 정체성의 범위를 확장하면서 어떻게 저항을 표현하는 행위가 종래에는 차이의 충돌을 무력화하는지 알 수 있다.

*핵심단어: 시와 시작법, 미국 이민, 민족성, 인종

*부주제 집단: 교류와 공감

국문요약

시는 예술로서 현대의 사적, 공적 담론에서 필수적인 역할적인 위치를 점유하고 있다. 형태와 언어의 섬세한 결합 덕분에 한 편의 시는 내밀한 사상과 감정을 진술하는 동시에 인간으로서 공유하는 사회적, 정치적 측면에 참여한다. 테오도르 아도르노가 말하듯 “이데올로기가 감추고자 하는 것들을 들리게 만드는 저력”을 가지고, 시는 문화적 관점의 안팎 모두에서 발언한다. 이러한 이중적 역할로서 시는 적대자도 옹호자도 아닌 역할을 수행한다. 오히려 서정시는 세상을 드러낼 수 있고, 이를 투영하는 동시에 이에 저항할 수 있다. 미국 이민자 시인들의 경우, 시인의 혈통은 대개 국가를 초월한 미국 문화에 대한 충성과 동화에 도전함과 연관된 시작점을 만드는데 그쳤다. 모순처럼 보일 수 있지만 미국 이민자 시인들을 통합시키는 것은 그들이 공유하는 외국인이라는 입장이라기보다 그들이 어떻게 때로는 반항적으로 서로의 차이를 드러내는지, 어떻게

Abstract

Poetry as an art holds a paradoxical place essential to contemporary private and public discourse: Because of its intricate engagement with form and language, a poem can articulate intimate ideas and passions, while simultaneously engaging in shared social and political dimensions of being human. As Theodore Adorno notes, with “their power to let those things be heard which ideology conceals,” poems speak from both inside and outside their cultural perspective. In this dual role, poetry functions neither as an antagonist nor as an advocate; rather, a lyric poem can express and resist the world it portrays simultaneously. For American immigrant poets, a poet’s lineage often creates only a starting point for engaging the challenges of transnational allegiances and assimilation into American culture. As contradictory as it may seem, rather than their shared position as foreigners, what unites American immigrant poets is how they contrast each other, often defiantly, and how each poet, whether native or foreign-born, cultivates a poetics self-disclosing yet self-contained, accessible through formal technique. In effect, a poem’s style, more than its subject, guides our understanding of it, thereby creating a point of entry for measuring it from both inside and outside that poet’s community. Across the spectrum of American immigrant poetry, what draws poets together is their implicit resistance to assimilation into conventional “American” ideology. Contrasting three representative poems by American immigrants – Charles Simic’s neo-surrealist “Cameo Appearance,” Lorenzo Thomas’ satiric “Multicultural,” and Myung Mi Kim’s avant-garde “Under Flag” – exemplifies the range of inventive styles immigrant poets have adopted. Yet looking closely at each poem’s formal technique reveals how the act of expressing resistance finally disarms conflicts of difference, as each poem negotiates the canon, challenges American ideology, and expands the scope of American cultural identity.

*Keywords: Poetry and Poetics, American Immigration, Ethnicity, Race

*Subtheme group: Exchanges & Empathy

In the United States, as polarized politics have reached a feverous pitch, poetry continues to hold a paradoxical place that makes it essential: Because of its intricate engagement with language and form, a well-made poem speaks in a singular voice, essentially as private discourse, yet it also engages the most common dimensions of human experience, rendering it public discourse that can quietly shape a community. As Theodore Adorno argued, with “their power to let those things be heard which ideology conceals,”¹⁾ poems speak from both inside and outside their society. In this dual role, poetry functions as neither antagonist nor advocate for political postures; rather, a poem can express and resist the world it portrays simultaneously. In “Lyric Poetry and Society” (1957), Adorno posits that the content of a lyric poem is grounded in “a condition of unrestrained individuation” that “strives for. . .the realm of the general,” thereby making it “essentially social in nature” as it “remains true to its society.”²⁾ Nevertheless, in a modern poem, the revelation of cultural consciousness occurs less through “direct treatment of the thing” (as Ezra Pound defined Imagism in 1913)³⁾, than through the “historical relation of subject to object” as “precipitated in the poem.” “This precipitation will be more perfect,” Adorno adds, “the more the poem eschews the relation of the self to society as an explicit theme and the more it allows this relation to crystallize involuntarily from within the poem.”⁴⁾ For Adorno, lyric poetry must speak from within a poet’s perspective by “that specific importance which poetry gives to linguistic form,”⁵⁾ if it is to unmask ideology through what Alan Golding calls “complicit resistance.”⁶⁾

To adapt Adorno’s concept of lyric poetry’s function specifically to American immigrant poetry, we also need to consider Werner Sollors’s observation about how American attitudes towards ethnicity have changed since the 1960s. Due, in part, to formidable mid-century works by writers from Philip Roth to Malcolm X, who identify with ethnic outsiders, by the late twentieth century, “ethnicity” as a condition in the U.S. “transformed [. . .] from a heathenish liability into a sacred asset,” such that, ironically, “every American is now considered a potential ethnic.”⁷⁾ Combining Adorno’s notion that lyric poems implicitly resist what they express and Sollors’s argument that the formerly denigrated badge of ethnicity has evolved into a influence on ideology suggests approaching American immigrant poetry not only as “foreign” or “ethnic,” but as it impacts American identity itself. Indeed, in arguing for the “hybridization” of American poetry, Jahan

Ramazani contends that in the twenty-first century ethnic (or immigrant) poetry is not only re-defining American poetry but transforming “intercultural experience” itself, in “our era of transnational imagination.”⁸⁾ In other words, if, as Sollors says, “every American is now considered a potential ethnic,” an immigrant poet’s lineage creates only a starting point for engaging the challenges of assimilation and transnational allegiances. As contradictory as it may seem, rather than their shared position as foreigners, what unites American immigrant poets is precisely how they contrast each other – that is, how each poet, whether native or foreign-born, cultivates a poetics self-disclosing yet self-contained, accessible through formal technique. In effect, a poem’s style, more than its subject, guides our understanding of it, thereby creating the means to measure it from both inside and outside that poet’s community.

As David A. Gerber has argued about the history of U.S. immigration, despite the trauma of ethnic and racial clashes, often leading to violence, the prevailing paradox of cultural resistance lies in its potential reconciliation: Throughout immigration history, notes Gerber, “transnational ethnic political actions have been criticized on the grounds that the groups involved manifest disloyalty – or sometimes, more generously stated, unresolved dual loyalties. Yet ethnic activism of this type actually has drawn ethnic groups into the American mainstream, while widening the mainstream to legitimize their presence and concerns.”⁹⁾ Similarly, across the spectrum of American immigrant poetry, the poets consistently voice a resistance to assimilation into “American” ideology. Such resistance has been evident in American poetry since colonial times.¹⁰⁾ While immigrant poets express the same range of reactions to their displacement and resettlement as other immigrants, nevertheless, depending on their experience, education, and influences, their poems vary radically in poetics. Yet what binds them is their devotion to the English language’s potential for disclosing themselves with candor in their American milieu and for resisting that milieu’s tendencies toward homogenization. Contrasting three representative poems – Charles Simic’s “Cameo Appearance,” Lorenzo Thomas’s “Multicultural,” and Myung Mi Kim’s “Under Flag” – exemplifies the range of styles immigrant poets have adopted. Yet looking closely at each poem’s formal technique reveals how the act of expressing resistance finally disarms conflicts of difference. The more a poem resists prevailing poetics and mores, the more it inscribes the spirit of individual

integrity embedded in the American literary tradition, as each poem negotiates the canon, challenges American ideology, and expands the scope of American cultural identity. Born in Belgrade, Serbia, Charles Simic (1938-) was a child during the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia during World War II. His father, an engineer, separated from his family in 1944 to work in Italy, not to be reunited with them until a decade later in New York. Before he was six, Simic experienced the German bombing of Belgrade in 1941, then the Allied bombings in 1944, targeting German aviation fields but also killing Serbian civilians. Scenes from this period appear in both Simic's memoirs and his poems, though not usually as straightforward narratives. Instead, Simic, whose style is influenced by French surrealism, American "deep image" poetry, and the New York school, often evokes war memories unexpectedly in his poems. In a 1990 essay, he writes that his "ambition is to corner the reader and make him or her think differently"; rather than narrate his past, he sets out "to show readers that the most familiar things that surround them are unintelligible."¹¹⁾

Immigrant experience, which Simic describes as "yet the most effective way devised to impress on an individual the arbitrary nature of his or her existence,"¹²⁾ appears in his poetry less often as an explicit subject than as a flash of memory juxtaposed against other, clashing images, or even as figurative imagery, reenacting what he calls the "black and white movie" that characterizes his childhood memories. But in addition to portraying a vulnerable world in poems that undermine an expectation, Simic's poems persistently express the immigrant's diminished sense of self – what Simic defines, with his characteristic mix of humor and horror, as immigrants getting labeled as "small fry." Indirect, unrooted in its setting, and spoken in a sardonic tone, his poem, "Cameo Appearance," vividly renders the self as insignificant, unknowing of the world where he finds himself, and finally erased. Composed in four strophes with an odd symmetry of two five-line strophes framed by two seven-lined strophes, the poem's rhetoric is nonetheless straightforward and its imagery vivid, despite the disorienting details. Throughout, the speaker's voice remains dispassionate – comparing "our great leader" to a rooster, calling his own children "kiddies," and characterizing a crowd "like any other gray crowd," as though he is hardly interested in telling his own story.¹³⁾

The poem opens with the speaker declaring his having played "a small, nonspeaking

part / In a bloody epic,” as in a movie in which, as an extra, he plays “one of the / Bombed and feeling humanity.” The strange enjambment on the article, “the,” in line two, where the speaker hesitates, paradoxically intensifies his admission to being bombed, even as he calls his role “small,” himself as silent, and the bombing as merely staged. When he introduces “our great leader” crowing “like a rooster from a balcony,” invoking a Hitler or Mussolini as a caricature, he doubts whether the leader was there ‘in the distance,’ or just being impersonated by an actor. Then the second strophe shifts tonally, as the speaker excitedly points out, “That’s me there” – although again, his enthusiasm is undermined, because while this sentence is not in quotation marks, the speaker adds, “I said to the kiddies,” so the poem no longer recounts the film itself but the story of him pointing himself out in the film to his children: Neither in the movie nor watching the movie, the reader learns about the speaker showing the movie to others, creating yet further distance from the horror the poem depicts. As the speaker attempts to point to himself on screen, specifically between other victims (“squeezed between the man / With two bandaged hands raised / And the woman with her mouth open / As if she were showing us a tooth // That hurts badly”), the distortions slowly become evident – of the woman, who we learn only after the strophe break, is obviously screaming, despite appearing “as if she were showing us a tooth.” In fact, the speaker provides more detail about the woman than about himself, and the third strophe explains how, no matter how many times they look, “the kiddies” will never “catch sight” of him; he has been cut from the film entirely, his “cameo appearance” deleted: The speaker does not even appear in his own story. As one who fled war, this immigrant neither yearns for a new, stable self, nor is attached to his birthplace, but is one with no hope of belonging, there or here, to the past, present, or future.

Yet the irony is how, by virtue of the poem’s depiction of the immigrant at all, Simic places this “cameo” figure squarely into the poem’s landscape, where we cannot find him yet do find him, odd as that seems. The final strophe continues with the movie, after the scene in which the speaker is supposed to appear but doesn’t: “Trot off to bed,” he tells the “kiddies” lightheartedly, then insists to the reader, “I know I was there.” Still, he confesses how the filmmakers only had time for one take, one shot of “huge gray crowd” fleeing the bombers, left standing, “dazed in the burning city,” like so many bombed

cities throughout the world. The final line testifies to the utter devastation of the bombing, as it further diminishes the speaker, given that only he can testify to what occurred, since, he admits, “of course, they didn’t film that.”

The surreal manner of Simic’s “Cameo Appearance” distinguishes it from other immigrant poems on being displaced, mainly by its obliquity, off-hand diction, and fluent rhetoric: Despite not arriving in an English-speaking country until his teens, he demonstrates a mastery of American idioms that almost belies his background, yet his approach to English bears the signs of one who has developed a foreigner’s keen sense of the implications of its phrasing. As Diana Englemann has observed, “Simic’s poems convey the characteristic duality of exile: they are at once authentic statements of the contemporary American sensibility and vessels of internal translation, offering a passage to what is silent and foreign.” In his poem,¹⁴⁾ “Multicultural,” Lorenzo Thomas (1944-2005) shows equal facility with English, which was also not his first language. Born in Panama of Caribbean parents, Thomas immigrated with his family to New York in 1948. As he explains, Spanish was his first language, but when at age five other children beat him up because he “talked funny,” he drove himself to become “extra-fluent” in English, an effort which led him to books and, eventually, his sophisticated engagement with literature.¹⁵⁾ In the early 1960s as a student at Queens College, Thomas became the youngest member of the experimental Umbra writers workshop in Manhattan and joined the Black Arts Movement, active in social protest and avant-garde art. For Thomas, adjusting as a first-generation American concerned less learning English than confronting racism in the U.S., where despite his Hispanic origins, he was considered black and “if you are black you [have] to be more qualified than necessary” to be accepted.¹⁶⁾ Yet in a voice as colloquial and fluid in measure as Simic’s, Thomas’s poem, “Multicultural,” explores the complexities, contradictions, and hypocrisy of race relations obliquely, even as he offers an unflinching exposé of American mores.

Beginning in *medias res*, the poem situates its speaker in front of a television broadcast of a quintessentially American “game show” (such as the popular show, *The Price Is Right*), where participants in a studio audience are called forward to compete for prizes – usually material goods, such as automobiles or appliances, rather than money, but rated by cash value. Found in this setting, the speaker begins by telling the reader,

“Watch who ends up in the contestant’s row.”¹⁷⁾ Inconsistent in punctuation, phrased in colloquial diction (with eleven sentences in only seventeen lines), the poem adopts a syncopated, jazz-like rhythm as it slides around its subject the way a jazz player skirting a familiar melody, as the speaker confesses in line two, in perfect iambic pentameter, “I like it when the colored people win.” As a codename for African Americans, “Colored people” dates at least from the mid-nineteenth century, later replaced by “Negro,” so using it in the television era comes across as quaint, if not patronizing.¹⁸⁾

The unidentified speaker then turns drolly to reflecting on how game shows are undoubtedly rigged, to guarantee that a preferred person wins: “It always was all women years ago,” he remarks, dismissively, if not cynically (revealing himself as probably male), followed by the exception: “Once in a while maybe a young Marine / LCpl in dress uniform / Every other word he said was ‘sir’ / Probably a newlywed on top of that.” Clearly, the Marine’s rank, compliance (using “sir”), and newlywed status convey that as the right kind of marine, he poses no threat, therefore making him worthy of winning. Without affect, the speaker adds: “You know he’s going to win a car / Or bedroom suit,” as he extends his thought:

Not that the game is fixed but to be fair
I’m sure someone at CBS
Made lots of money figuring this out
Before I did.

Despite his moderate tone, the speaker edges toward disapproval, if not resentment, of corporate entities (“CBS”). His distrust of the company’s game-fixing is matched only by his assuming the one who fixes it is well-paid. Despite his distrust, Thomas’s speaker is self-denigrating, even as he reveals his envy.

The last four lines then move toward disaffection, although Thomas masks the speaker’s politics, since his cynicism about television could as easily be a corporate lawyer’s as a laborer’s: As though about to condemn television’s “political correctness,” wherein each program, each advertisement, is deliberately designed to display varying racial and social types, in order to appear equitable, the speaker scoffs, “The way they’ve got it now / All kinds of people come on down.” While not exactly colloquial, the phrase,

“The way they’ve got it now,” reveals the speaker’s remove from those who have “got it.” However, the poem’s surprise, albeit muted, occurs in the last two lines where, as in a Shakespearean sonnet, Thomas reverses expectation, turning his Horatian satire on its head: He concedes to the ruling powers (“OK by me”), but then, after an oddly construed idiomatic phrase, “But yet and still,” he repeats, “I like it when the colored people win.” As Aldon Lynn Nielsen notes, “Throughout his published works, Thomas can be seen subjecting the literary heritage of English poetics to a transfiguring interrogation.”¹⁹⁾ However underplayed as satire, “Multicultural” also critiques the social construction of racial consciousness, cross-racially. Like Simic’s film extra in “Cameo Appearance,” Thomas’s speaker also seems powerless to effect change and, therefore, remains unseen. Both speakers find themselves with no recourse. But how, then, do the two poems end differently? True, both speakers belittle themselves – one regretting how not even his getting bombed has been documented, the other regretting how one cannot “win” without forces oblivious to him. But does Thomas’s poem promise positive change more than Simic’s – even if that change may only occur because the ones who make “lots of money figuring this out” create the appearance of change, probably for the wrong reasons?

The scrupulous questioning of social identity prevails throughout Thomas’s poetry, evident in its engagement in African American history, linguistic experimentation, jazz and blues, American slang, global poetics, and popular culture – all of which he delicately weaves together with humor and insight. In her very different style, Myung Mi Kim (1957-), like Thomas, also subjects the English language to “a transfiguring interrogation.” However, in her poems, Kim destabilizes the conventions of the language itself as her means to convey the disruption, lack of cogency, and isolation of a displaced immigrant sensibility. As Lynn Keller defines it, Kim’s poetry pushes “toward the limits of verbal expression [...] to reach beyond conventional understandings and ideologies. Kim employs extremely pared-down fragmented language and large spaces of visualized silence as if she can only gesture towards all her words are to convey,” as she “implicitly acknowledges how mediated our approach to understanding other people’s experience...has become.”²⁰⁾ Born in Seoul, the youngest of four children, Kim and her family emigrated from South Korea to the U.S. in 1967, when, as she says, the “political

unrest of the late 1960s in Korea made this move urgent.”²¹⁾ Upon arriving at age nine, Kim spoke fluent Korean.²²⁾

Her first collection, *Under Flag* (1991), consists of nine poems that indirectly trace the experience of fleeing a war for a new home, documenting the hardships of that journey. Poem titles offer oblique perspectives: “And Sing We,” “Under Flag,” “Food, Shelter, Clothing,” “Into Such Assembly,” “Arrival Which Is Not an Arrival.” While the poems use specific names, details, and encounters, as they appear to chart a course from the violence of war to the disorientation of refugees, they read as anything but memoir, to the extent that Kim’s voice and style are highly unconventional. The result is a dramatic disclosure of an interior voice in fragmentary passages, rising to moments of intense clarity. The layers of language vacillate from reportage to pure impression to abstract investigation – as several repeated themes emerge: voices and silence, geography, children, food, borders, earth, arrivals and departures, the tongue (pronunciation), and birds. The poem, “Under Flag,” is sixty-eight lines long in forty-four strophes. Spaced variably across four pages to form sub-sections, the poem divides into thirteen “clusters,” some of which contain sparsely linked lines without punctuation, as in its abrupt opening:

Is distance. If she knows it
Casting and again casting into the pond to hook the same turtle
Beset by borders conquered, disfigured [.]

Others passages are prose-like, such as cluster six, which begins:

At dawn the next morning, firing his machine gun, Corporal Leonard H.
was shot and instantly killed while stopping the Red’s last attempts
to overrun and take the hilltop [.]

and one strophe consists of only one line asking two questions (without question marks):

And how long practice how long drill to subvert what borders are²³⁾

Rather than the surreal narrative of “Cameo Appearance” and the “Signifyin(g)”²⁴⁾ meditation of “Multicultural,” “Under Flag” alludes to, without fully telling, its war narrative of a disembodied girl/woman (objectified as “she,” the one who “knows it”), as the poem

also expresses the girl's attempts, psychically, to grasp that narrative. In a cinematic pastiche, the opening cluster establishes a series of "borders conquered, disfigured," suggesting both her home's border and the larger border conflict between North and South Korea in 1966 that threatened a second Korean war. The second cluster builds on this perception, incrementally, with a transposed image: "One house can be seen // Then another thatched roof // On this side of the sea the rancor of their arrival / Where invasion occurs according to schedule." What may seem at first a set of disparate lines, abruptly disjointed phrases, and scattered impressions are nonetheless individually lucid, as in Simic's and Thomas's poems, once Kim's perspective of the displaced figures emerges. In fact, although using a historian's diction, the poem conveys its imagery as through a child's eyes.

The third cluster locates the civilians fleeing the battleground ("who carry households on their backs"²⁵⁾) into a safe-house, where a shell explodes in the distance, glossed by the fourth cluster, with "a wave of much white cloth," a striking panorama of a crowd of refugees. The fifth cluster again situates an individual here, as one removed from the war yet "inheriting it," as she points to the land, "Drilled at the core for mineral yield and this, once depleted, / never to be replaced." Both the human and the natural worlds are inalterably ravaged. The sixth and seventh clusters then comprise the most sustained sections, relating details from the armed conflict and (surprisingly) a litany of the weapons employed, summarized by another single-lined strophe: "More kept coming. More fell." The eighth cluster then splits the poem in half, echoing the opening line ("Is distance"), but altering "If she knows it," to "If she could know it," introducing not more war but a street protest, resulting in "gas meant to thwart any crowd's ambition." What follow are directions for an air raid drill, countered by one line that, in context, indicts the practice of rounding up civilians whenever leaders require a crowd, as the final three clusters turn to the people, war's consequences, and oppressive rule, as the poet asks,

What must we call each other if we meet there

Brother sister neighbor lover go unsaid what we are²⁸⁾

Throughout, Kim's lines seamlessly modulate and disrupt, line after line, shifting from silenced individuals to mass congregations in the sun "dwindling to size," to a single figure in his school uniform burned alive, reconceived figuratively in the "fierce tenement

of protest.” Although taken one at a time, Kim’s lines cohere, collectively they disorient the reader. Imitating speech neither in Korean nor in English, without undermining individual experience, the poem nonetheless conveys radical uncertainty, destabilizing the reader’s impulse to follow its meaning. Attending to this form, a reader can sense the poem’s progress, glimpse its disjointed settings, and experience confusion, only to find herself or himself unsettled, although not disenfranchised from the poem’s vision, especially when it closes: “Faces spread in a field / On the breeze what might be azaleas in full bloom // Composed of many lengths of bone.” Kim’s alliterative and assonant lines, together with the vivid imagery of faces and “lengths of bones,” though ambiguous, resonate. Though dramatically different in form from “Cameo Appearance” and “Multicultural,” “Under Flag” resembles both poems in its resistance to dehumanizing acts and its reverence for human integrity.

Whereas Simic and Thomas use first person pronouns, Kim’s poem avoids the “I,” creating instead an outsider (though neither “objective” nor “authoritative”) perspective. In other poems in *Under Flag* on immigration – with its contingent problems of racism, language differences, survival, education, and loss – she also writes in a disparate style that suspends signification, not to isolate her subject but to perform it. As she describes her aim, “When you feel like you’re in the company of someone who is occupying undecidability, when things are in fact not known, you come into a kind of knowing or negotiation through the writing act itself.”²⁹⁾ “Poetry, for me,” she explains, “unbounds knowledge from Fact, Truth, or final articulation,” as it “continually probes and refunctions conceptions of “openness.”³⁰⁾

Despite their differences as poems by American immigrants, “Cameo Appearance,” “Multicultural,” and “Under Flag” each add a new voice that articulates the disorientation and discomfort of displacement. Yet for all their implicit fear, whether expressed through fantastic imagery (Simic), social satire (Thomas), or deconstructive poetics (Kim), all three poems reward a reader’s engagement. All three also resist prevailing American poetics. Yet paradoxically, their disclosure and resistance, as realized through formal innovation, align them with the U.S.’s most celebrated poetry. As they contribute to the ever-expanding range of voices in American poetry, such immigrant poets not only speak from and for diverse peoples and crises, they offer paradigms of assimilation

that sustain American ideals of inclusion without personal compromise. The contemporary world needs such poets to create the discourse essential to our culture's survival amid the polarized politics, dangerous technology, and fragile environment threatening us all. "But yet and still," despite these towering fears, as Thomas concludes, mildly, "I like it when the colored people win."

NOTE

- 1) Theodor Adorno, "Lyric Poetry and Society," *Telos: A Quarterly Journal of Radical Social Theory* 20 (Summer 1974), 58. Trans. Bruce Mayo. For an alternate English translation of this essay originally published in German in 1957, see Theodor Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, Volume 1, Ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 37-54. http://www.english.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Adorno_LyricPoetryAndSociety.pdf
- 2) Adorno, 57.
- 3) Ezra Pound, "A Retrospect," *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T.S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, [1935] 1968), 3.
- 4) Adorno, 61.
- 5) Adorno, 62
- 6) Alan Golding, *From Outlaw to Classic: Canons in American Poetry* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 170.
- 7) Sollors, 33.
- 8) Jahan Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), 184.
- 9) David A. Gerber, *American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 119.
- 10) For example, Anne Bradstreet's (1612-72) colonial poems challenge Puritan mores, even as she espouses them; African Phillis Wheatley's (1753-84) Revolutionary-era poems negotiate her identity as a slave against her dependence on her owners for opportunities as a black artist; and the works of Jamaican-born Claude McKay (1890-1948), British-born Denise Levertov (1923-97), Russian-born Joseph Brodsky (1940-96), and Chinese-born Marilyn Chin (1955-) all often elicit radical change in their adopted country.
- 11) Charles Simic, *Wonderful Words, Silent Truth: Essays on Poetry and a Memoir* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 87.
- 12) Charles Simic, *A Fly in the Soup: Memoirs* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 4.
- 13) Simic, *The Voice at 3 A.M.*, 97.
- 14) Diana Englemann, "'Speaking in Tongues': Exile and Internal Translation in the Poetry of Charles Simic," *Antioch Review* 62.1 (Winter 2004): 47. Jstor. Accessed 13 July 2020. doi:10.2307/4614597.
- 15) Aldon Lynn Nielsen, *Black Chant: Languages of African-American Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 146-47.
- 16) Charles H. Rowell, "Between the Comedy of Manners and the Rituals Workings of Man: An Interview with Lorenzo Thomas," *Callaloo* 4:1-3 (1981), 20.
- 17) Lorenzo Thomas, *Dancing on Main Street* (Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House Press, 2004), 125.

- 18) See Tom W. Smith, "Changing Racial Labels: From 'Colored' to 'Negro' to 'Black' to 'African American'." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (1992): 496-514. Accessed September 15, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2749204>. Smith notes how after the Civil War Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois advocated for "Negro" to replace "Colored" as "grammatically more versatile" and as "etymologically and phonetically. . . more logical." See Smith 497.
- 19) Nielsen, *Black Chant*, 147.
- 20) Lynn Keller, *Recomposing Ecopoetics: North American Poetry of the Self-conscious Anthropocene* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2017), 232.
- 21) Lynn Keller, "Generosity as Method: An Interview with Myoun Mi Kim," *Contemporary Literature* 49.3 (Fall 2008): 354.
- 22) Marian Kaufman, "Interview with Myoung Mi Kim," Bayou Online. Accessed 15 September 2020. <https://bayoumagazine.org/interview-with-myung-mi-kim/>.
- 23) Kim, Myung Mi, *Under Flag* (Berkeley, CA: Kelsey Street Press, [1991] 2008), 16, 17, 18.
- 24) For a definition of "Signifyin(g)," see Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 53-55.
- 25) Kim, 16.
- 26) Kim, 17.
- 27) Kim, 18.
- 28) Kim, 19.
- 29) Myung Mi Kim and Yedda Morrison, "Generosity as Method: An Interview with Myung Mi Kim," *Tripwire*, December 1997. Electronic Poetry Center. Accessed July 25, 2020. <http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/authors/kim/generosity.html>.
- 30) Keller, "Interview with Myung Mi Kim," 338-39.