Missing Bodies: Disappearances in the Aesthetic

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MISSING BODIES

DISAPPEARANCES IN THE AESTHETIC

Michael Davidson

The name of the one who disappeared must have gotten inscribed someplace else.

—*Jacques Derrida,* Specters of Marx

In 2007 the British artist and designer Simon Starling began creating a large installation for the Massachusetts Museum of Art based on a haunting photograph. The image was a stereoscopic picture of Chinese workers who had been brought to a shoe factory in North Adams, Massachusetts, in 1870 as strikebreakers.[1] The photograph shows the imported Chinese workers, ranging in age from fourteen to their midtwenties, standing in their work aprons in front of the factory. They were the first of many waves of Chinese immigrants who came to the East Coast, often brought by companies to crush unions or, as in the case of the recently completed Transcontinental Railroad, conduct labor at wages no white worker would touch. To inaugurate his installation, Starling extracted silver particles from a photograph of the stereoview and placed them under an electron microscope where they were magnified twenty-five thousand times in order to produce models for large clay and plaster sculptures that are a million times larger than their original trace particles. In order to create his large biomorphic shapes, Starling hired Chinese workers in Nanjing to cast them and then polish the stainless steel skin to a brilliant sheen on which visitors to the installation may see their severely distorted reflections.

Installed at MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts (site of the former shoe factory), Starling's project works across several scales: the transformation of photography into sculpture, the enlargement of the very small to the very large, the traversal of vast geopolitical landscapes, the exchange of labor across varying stages of capital. In the process he raises questions of racialized labor, the emergence of

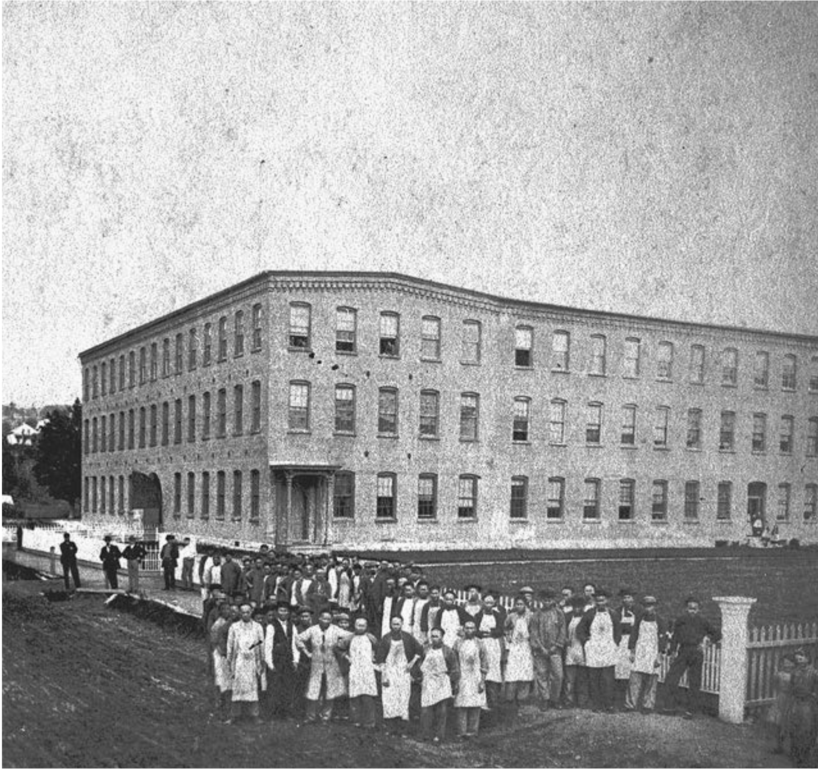

Figure 1. *Henry Ward, View of C. T. Sampson's Shoe Manufactory, with the Chinese Shoemakers in Working Costume, North Adams and vicinity, Circa 1875,* Stereograph, 7.46 cm x 15.88 cm.

globalization, and the transformative role of photography in modernity. He does so by re-creating bodies missing from history by the means through which those bodies were first spectacularized through stereoscopic viewing. Although the original photo did not contain names of the Chinese workers in North Adams, Starling in his installation provides the identities of the Nanjing workers who cast his sculptures, thereby completing a circuit begun when bodies began to replace bodies in a global economy. It is no small aspect of his project that Starling installed his sculptures in a museum that once housed the shoe factory, thereby linking two forms of production, material and aesthetic, in a common site. Starling's installation is one of many examples of a re-visibilization that restores the body to the aesthetic while representing the biopolitical regimes that erase it. His emphasis is less on the finished sculptures as objects than the processes he undergoes

in tracing the larger economies of labor and production. In his work, the missing laboring body is returned to history through an aesthetic that links corporeality with the materiality of cultural production.[2]

His procedure complicates a revived ocularcentrism when the body seems to be increasingly visible, whether through digital imaging, video endoscopy, MRI and CAT scans, or the post-9/11 security state. Several specific examples of the visible body come to mind. In 1994, the Visible Human Project created a vast "digital image library of volumetric data representing a complete, normal male and female" that, according to the Center for Human Simulation at the University of Colorado, provided "a universally accessible, national resource for anatomical information for researchers, educators, medical professionals, as well as the general public" (Cartwright, 24). Current arguments by antiabortion forces for fetal personhood often use sonogram images to make the unborn fetus visible as a "baby." Perhaps the most symptomatic example of the visible body is the "Body Worlds" exhibitions of Gunter Van Hagen, whose plastination process replaces cadavers with polymerized replicas. And in a broader cultural context, we might

Figure 2. Simon Starling, *The Nanjing Particles,* (After *Henry Ward, View of C. T. Sampson's Shoe Manufactory, with the Chinese Shoemakers in Working Costume, North Adams and Vicinity, Circa 1875*) 2008. Installation image at MASS MoCA, Photograph by Arthur Evans, courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York. Production image and photograph by Kasper Akhoej and Simon Starling, courtesy of the artist.

add the increased visibility of queer, racialized, and disabled bodies that are now standard features of sitcoms, advertising, and films.

Starling's installation seems to confirm Monica J. Casper and Lisa Jean Moore's observation that for every newly visible body there are alarming numbers of missing bodies—disappeared in internecine conflicts, abducted in sectarian warfare, killed by pilotless drones, rendered stateless by suspension of habeas corpus, denied access to representation through indefinite detention, renamed through actuarial, census, and redistricting protocols. Persons displaced by civil wars in Sudan, Syria, and Mali have led to entire generations of children—such as the "Lost Boys" of Sudan—living in permanent refugee status: stateless, homeless, and invisible.[3] Gunter Van Hagen's "Body Worlds" exhibitions may make the body's interior visible for a mass public, but his displays infamously erase the specific gendered and racial backgrounds of the Chinese convicts that often supplied cadavers for his experiments. The "state of exception" described by Giorgio Agamben in his critique of Carl Schmitt focalizes this "no-man's land between public law and political fact," where the suspension of rights during civil conflict and through edicts such as the USA Patriot Act (2001) produce "a legally unnamable and unclassifiable being" (3). The current period's buoyant claims for increased visibility, crime prevention, and rights must be set beside the darker realities of what those claims occlude.

Avery Gordon refers to such absent presences as a form of the sociological uncanny, "a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities. . . . The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life" (8). Gordon's three case studies—the absent Sabina Spielren in Freud's psychoanalytic project, the disappeared women during Argentina's "dirty war" described in Luisa Valenzuela's novel *Como en la Guerra,* and the ghostly "beloved" of Toni Morrison's titular novel—offer powerful studies of how women are erased within masculinist historical discourse yet reemerge in uncanny, unsettling forms. Investigating ghosts can also lead to that contradictory site where the somatic collides with the aesthetic, where sensation and affect meet their (presumed) apotheosis in the formal object. Classical aesthetics is, among other things, concerned with the impact of the world on the body, on

the sensuous response to objects (and other bodies) beyond any consideration of their functionality or instrumentality. Despite the importance of sensation within the aesthetic, the dominant trend from Kant to the New Critics has been to erase the sensate body from aesthetic judgments and substitute an ideal of disinterestedness and detachment. Autonomy aesthetics describes a realm that originates in sensory pleasure yet denies those origins in the artwork's formal perfection. Kant distinguishes between taste and aesthetic judgments by describing the former as those forms of pleasure that are specific to oneself whereas the latter are those which one may "presuppose in every other person; and therefore he must believe that he has reason for demanding a similar delight from every one" (1952, 51). Terry Eagleton remarks that the aesthetic "signifies a creative turn to the sensuous body, as well as an inscribing of that body with a subtly oppressive law; it represents on the one hand a liberatory concern with concrete particularity, and on the other hand a specious form of universalism" (9). The absent body is the ghost in the machinery of the aesthetic, necessary for its smooth functioning yet hidden in the end product. If this sounds a good deal like Marx's description of the commodity form it is because it suggests the close proximity of material and cultural labor.

Of course, by speaking of the "body" here as ghost, it might seem that I could as easily be speaking—as does Avery Gordon—of the "subject," or "person," but I want to insist on corporeality as that element of the human most vulnerable to objectification through the exercise of biopower. Slaves who were thrown overboard in the 1781 Zong massacre, which I will discuss later, were not considered subjects but rather lost cargo for which an insurance claim could be filed. To speak of them as individuals or "subjects" is to grant them a level of agency denied by their actuarial status as property. If biopolitics represents the absorption of power into and through the body, we might consider *biopoetics* as the reinscription of the missing body in aesthetics. Biopoetics describes the degree to which art is founded on or derived from representations of the *bios,* which Giorgio Agamben describes as the "form of living proper to an individual or group," unlike *zoē,* "the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods)"(1). Of course a poetics of embodiment is not new. An earlier generation of poets and artists took the doctrine of disinterestedness to task by foregrounding the body as the source and agent of aesthetic

production. The most obvious examples would be the gestural or projectivist arts of the 1960s (body art, action painting, living theater, "field" composition, happenings, etc.), but in such cases the body is presumed to be the natural, neutral origin for agency and action. Allen Ginsberg's "Song" ("yes, yes, / that's what / I wanted . . . / to return / to the body / where I was born") is the prototype (12). In contrast, more recent work regards the body as a site of biopolitical control and monitoring. The ideal of an originary voice, scored by the poetic line, gives way to a heteroglossia of appropriated sources from the technoscapes and mediascapes that produce and legitimate bodies.[4] Nor does the work I am considering propose a utopian alternative—cyborg, interspecies, queer—to the human. A biopoetics implies not only a thematic treatment of embodiment but also a transformation of formal means—a politics of form—of thinking through the body as a discursive and institutional site.

In terms of developing a poetics of embodiment, we might think of several recent works in which missing bodies are the basis for aesthetic practices, the most operatic version being Roberto Bolaño's *2666,* which chronicles the disappearances and murders of hundreds of women in Ciudad Juarez. Helena Viramontes's story "The Cariboo Café" concerns the fate of children disappeared in political conflicts in Latin America and punitive immigration laws in the United States as viewed through several overlapping first-person voices. Palestinian artist Taysir Batniji's installation *To My Brother* (2012) features a series of sixty etchings on white paper that at first appear blank but that, upon closer viewing, show photographs of his brother Mayssara's wedding several years before being killed by an Israeli sniper. Images are transposed to paper by the artist applying pressure to the photograph, providing a ghostly outline of lost family during the Intifada.[5] Myung Mi Kim's *Commons* (2002) explores the displaced condition of the diasporic individual by exhibiting fragments of the Korean language, including quotations from medical treatises and graphic and typographic elements. Alex Rivera's 2008 film, *Sleep Dealer,* depicts a dystopic future where a fortified wall has prevented migrant workers from crossing the U.S.–Mexico border. Mexican workers conduct virtual labor from factories in Mexico through implanted nodes in their bodies that coordinate physical labor by robots on American construction sites. Such examples explore the ways that bodies are disappeared

or rendered voiceless through rational procedures and then reconstituted through the public rhetorics that represent them. Bolaño's novel does not set out to expose possible perpetrators of the Juarez killings so much as link these disappearances to the rise of the Maquiladora zone, cosmopolitan mobility, and global free trade agreements. As my epigram from Jacques Derrida indicates, the specter of the disappeared will appear elsewhere, perhaps like the Chinese laborers in Starling's sculptures, in new forms unrecognizable to the original.

I want to focus briefly on several recent works from very different arenas in which the absent bodies in the sociopolitical world meet the absent body of the aesthetic. My examples, Amanda Baggs's "In My Language," Rachel Zolf's *Neighbour Procedure*, and M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* read the missing body first through a disability studies perspective, second through cosmopolitan political theory, and third through critical race studies. The first attacks a neurotypical view of embodied and psychological normalcy by means of a video of an autistic woman's "native language" of repetitions and bodily gestures. Zolf's book reimagines the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by renaming sites and persons evacuated by military procedures. Philip in *Zong!* remembers bodies of African slaves massacred in the Middle Passage recuperated in the poet's fragmented quotations from legal documents and actuarial reports. In each work, the uncanny presence/absence of bodies is reinforced by textual and acoustic practices that foreground the body's inscription in public discourse.

Although my three examples are drawn from rather different genres and media, they share a common emphasis on the body as cenotaph or memorial for bodies lost, disregarded, or evacuated of agency. Baggs's video treats the body as a signifying system in which seemingly empty repetitive gestures connect the autistic person to inanimate objects and spaces. The artist presents herself as a series of body parts, her voice mediated by software, marking her estrangement from normative models of embodiment and communication. Zolf's text is almost entirely drawn from printed sources relating to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Many of these sources recuperate lost or disappeared names of Palestinian communities displaced by Israeli settlements, bystanders killed in internecine warfare, and historical events erased from authoritative documents. Philip's account of the Zong massacre, its language appropriated from a court trial, provides

names for slaves unnamed in the court case. If the body in each work is a cenotaph for lost bodies, so the video or poem becomes in its own way an archive containing unread (or unreadable) documents of historical displacement.

MISSING PERSONS: AMANDA BAGGS'S "IN MY LANGUAGE"

Before discussing Baggs's video I want to situate her work in relationship to disability studies more generally and its critique of embodied personhood. In an attempt to move beyond a medical model toward a social constructionist version, disability studies may have inadvertently disappeared the body it sought to represent. While it is important to think of the ways social stigma, medical science, and the physical environment reinforce disability, we must remember the ways it is embodied. Disability activists who got out of their wheelchairs to crawl up steps of the U.S. Capitol in support of federal legislation such as the ADA made visible the social barriers to access, but it seems churlish to assume from such acts that their bodies are *merely* and *only* constructed by those barriers. The simple binary of "impairment" and "disability" to mark physiological/cognitive and social conditions of nontraditional bodies tends to generalize the specific complexities of, say, blindness, HIV/AIDS, chronic disease, and bipolar disorder into a one-size-fits-all body. This also diminishes the specific medical regimes, therapies, institutional support, and activism that apply to each condition. As Tom Shakespeare and others have noted, the social model of disability does not represent the broad spectrum of persons with disabilities, nor is it able to describe "the complex interplay of individual and environmental factors in the lives of disabled people" (Shakespeare, 220).

By studying disability through such binaries as impairment and disability, we forget the degree to which disability is a matter of subject positioning. Tanya Titchkosky notes that within Western cultures, "disability is typically taken for granted as the end of an expected form of functionality, voided of normalcy, and transposed into the end of human legitimacy" (82). Debates over fetal personhood or end-of-life ethics tend to focus on whether a fetus with a severe disability or

a person on life supports is actually a person and should, thereby, be guaranteed the protection and rights of so-called healthy people. Providing person-first language, venues for independent living and accommodations through legal means reinforce the idea that "disability is *lived* and is lived as something other than a negative add-on to personhood" (84).

Despite cultural and legal changes to public attitudes, persons with cognitive disabilities have often been left out of discourses of independent living and accommodation. Persons with bipolar, developmental, or spectrum disorders often remain in a limbo realm, somewhere between medicalization and institutionalization, while being removed—until recently—from the rainbow coalition formed around disability rights. Considering cognitive disability raises the question of whether disability studies hasn't placed too much emphasis on physical and sensory disabilities and, in the process, absented large constituencies of functioning individuals. Stuart Murray observes that representations of autism often presume that such individuals live in "a world of their own," or that they are "locked away" inside themselves. Foundational writings on the subject by Kanner and Asperger use phrases like "he just is there" or "the autist is only himself." Murray comments that if the "'just' or 'only' is seen in a pejorative way, then the character is barely present, a prosthetic figure in the margins used only to make other aspects of the narrative work" (32). It is precisely this question of the "presence" of the person within autism that dominates Amanda Baggs's video work.

Amanda Baggs is a high-functioning autistic person, neurodiversity activist, and performance artist who stopped speaking in her early twenties.[6] In the first part of her video, "In My Language," she gestures, scratches, hums, and fidgets with various objects—a piece of paper, a necklace, a slinky toy. There is no voiceover to "interpret" her gestures. Rather, she vocalizes in a sustained, pitched hum that serves as a complement to the scratching, knocking, and scraping of objects against hard surfaces. We see her typing at her keyboard and rocking back and forth in front of a window. We glimpse her body fitfully, mostly in terms of body parts—hands, lips, ears—but seldom through a frontal image. Nor does her video provide narrative links between different repetitive actions. Rather we inhabit *her* narrative of significant interactions with objects, spaces, and her own body.

In the second half of the video she provides a "translation" of her performance, speaking, as she says, in her "native language," through a DynaVox VMax computer that transforms her typed words into speech and captions."[7] Baggs's decision to use an audio track based on a digital surrogate for her voice creates an alternative form of presence that embodies the speaker's intelligence and critical understanding while signifying on their presumed acoustic sources. In a world that disqualifies individuals deemed "nonproductive" or "nonverbal," interventions such as Baggs's video rewrite the ableist script in different terms. In her commentary, she is explicit about how her work rearticulates a presumed linguistic normalcy:

> It is only when I type something in your language that you refer to me as having communication. I smell things. I listen to things. I feel things. I taste things. I look at things. It is not enough to look and listen and taste and smell and feel. I have to do those to the right things, such as look at books, and fail to do them to the wrong things, or else people doubt that I am a thinking being, and since their definition of thought defines their definition of personhood so ridiculously much, they doubt that I am a real person as well.

Baggs's defiant apostrophe to her viewers addresses the presumed link between language and personhood, between representation and its putative forms of embodiment. Her repetitions and humming *are* the form that language assumes for a bicultural person; her electronic "translation" signals her awareness of neurotypical expectations about what language constitutes and whom it interpellates. In an NPR interview, Baggs notes that "many of us have a lot of trouble with face to face interaction and are also extremely isolated. . . . A lot of us have trouble with spoken language, and so a lot of us find it easier to write on the Internet than to talk in person" (qtd. in F. Ginsburg, 102). Her use of video, computer, and digital interface illustrates the importance of new assistive technologies in providing communication among physically and cognitively disabled populations. Such technologies also enable her to create an alternate identity through an avatar as part of the virtual community known as Second Life. Through Second Life and social media platforms, people with severe disabilities create community and social networks that would be otherwise difficult or inaccessible.

"In My Language" demonstrates a form of critical embodiment that questions normative ideas about the body and its relationship to

language. Baggs makes the relationship explicit by *not* exposing her body, *not* speaking, and by challenging viewers to see her body on her own terms. She claims that her gestures and repetitions are a form of language yet recognizes that her access *to* language is vastly different from what most of us regard as communication. If the ideal of an "embodied language" is the unmediated expression of feelings through speech, Bagg's form of embodiment exists as a ventriloquized interface that mirrors her internally distanced relationship to neurotypical life. In this respect, far from illustrating her difference from "our language," she illustrates her contingent relationship to everyone's signifying body.

EXTENDING HOSPITALITY: RACHEL ZOLF'S *NEIGHBOUR PROCEDURE*

> *But this natural, right of hospitality, i. e., the right of strangers, does not extend beyond those conditions which make it possible for them to* attempt *to enter into relations with the native inhabitants.*
>
> *Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace"*

In his "Philosophical Sketch" for "Perpetual Peace," Kant imagines a federation of nation-states operating under principles of international right that would bind everyone—including monarchs—to common values and moral principles. Peace among nations is only possible if states extend hospitality toward their neighbors, lest they revert to what Kant regards as the self-interested state of nature. He decries the idea that nations can assure their survival through sheer military deterrence, nor is he interested in the utopian possibility of a global or transnational state. The glue that will cement a post-Westphalian society of independent nations is an ideal of hospitality, regarded not as a form of philanthropy or kindness but as a right belonging to all of us. Cosmopolitan hospitality refers to "the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone else's territory" (1991, 105). As Seyla Benhabib says, for Kant, hospitality "entails a claim to temporary residency on the part of the stranger who comes on our land. This cannot be refused, if such refusal would involve the *destruction* . . . of the stranger" (22). Although such claims are not legally binding, they are the principle on which political asylum is based and as such

represent a liminal zone "between the rights of humanity in our person and the rights that accrue to us insofar as we are citizens of specific republics" (22). The problem, as Benhabib develops it, is that the right of hospitality, as a moral imperative, is not bound by law and thus exists only as a horizon in the "absence of an overwhelming sovereign power with the ultimate right of enforcement" (23).

What Kant could not imagine and what is increasingly the face of global society are forms of flexible citizenship, refugee communities, and stateless subjects—the new cosmopolitans of globalization.[8] The occupied territories in Israel pose an especially complex version of this situation—a nation within a state, a host, to adapt Kant, who has become the stranger. In her text, Zolf takes issue with Jewish intellectuals like Emmanuel Levinas and Martin Buber whose theoretical systems are based on the mutual constitution of self / other, I / thou but who in practice regard the Palestinian other as "enemy."[9] To this extent, Zolf not only indicts forms of Zionism but philosophies that draw from Hegel's theories of recognition and Kant's political philosophy of hospitality yet fail to particularize the figure who is *not* acknowledged, whose body becomes collateral damage.[10] She notes that critical theory conflicts with practice, noting that the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) has developed training maneuvers derived from Situationism and Deleuze/Guattari (82). To what extent is the legacy of Enlightenment thought, embodied in such intellectual traditions, complicit in the exclusions of Palestinians from full citizenship? What form of hospitality can exist between Palestinians and Israelis that would respect cosmopolitan right? Would a two-state solution "solve" decades-old tension between the two communities? Who is the host and who is the stranger in what Salman Rushdie calls "Palimpstine"?[11] The expropriation of Palestinian lands and displacement of peoples thwarts any hope for peace and complicates Kant's ideal of cosmopolitan hospitality.

The title of Rachel Zolf's multigenre book, *Neighbour Procedure*, offers a variant of what we have been calling "hospitality," a "concept of the neighbour as a potentially liberating 'third' space between friend and enemy—an acknowledgement of proximity and cohabitation" (Zolf, n.d.).[12] But the very principle of neighborliness is vitiated by the policy developed by the Israeli army called "neighbor procedure," the tactic of "using Palestinians as human shields and forcing them to break walls inside their neighbours' homes, so that the army can move

literally through the interior walls from house to house in urban warfare" (n.d.). As a violation of hospitality, the neighbor procedure performs militarily what *Neighbour Procedure* as an aesthetic practice reverses by redrawing the map of Palestinian communities, replacing names of Palestinians killed in uprisings, renaming streets with their original Arab names, and returning former Arab names to Jewish settlements built on Palestinian lands:

> Nahal arose in the place of Mahalul
> Kibbutz Gvat in the place of Jibta
> Kibbutz Sarid in the place of Huneifis
> Ein Houd turned into Ein Hod (2010, 19)

With its allusion to Old Testament catalogs, passages such as this illustrate the importance of naming as a central political issue throughout the book, whether it is the de-Arabization of the Hebrew language or the renaming of towns and communities. Ein Houd, the Palestinian village mentioned above, became the site of a Dadaist community formed by Marcel Janco, renamed in Hebrew "Ein Hod," the former inhabitants exiled to refugee camps and new settlements. Zolf quotes Moshe Dayan, speaking of the Palestinian villages destroyed in 1948, "You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you, because those geography books no longer exist" (2010, 81). And she juxtaposes this to Hobbes's definition of power: "Capacity to give names and enforce definitions" (81). To some extent, Zolf's book attempts to revive names and correct definitions and in the process imagine a more complex and dialogic society in Israel–Palestine.

If *Neighbour Procedure* is a book that returns those missing from history, its voice is a heteroglossia of other texts, joining my other two examples in structuring speech out of appropriated or mediated materials. Newspaper accounts of the 2009 war in Gaza, overheard conversations, lists of Hebrew and Arabic place names, quotations from Arendt and Benjamin, philological entries, books on the Intifada, chatlist posts, all provide texts and intertexts that Zolf weaves through the book's four sections. Where previous avant-garde writers used collage as an aesthetic ordering of dissimilar materials, Zolf's appropriations pointedly address the rhetorics in which national narratives are formed. Her missing authorial voice is replaced by the legal, journalistic, and media voices that become the many-layered condition of Palmpstine, her role being,

as she says, “more as medium than as author” (n.d.). But unlike earlier forms of poetic mediumship—from William Blake to the Surrealists—Zolf’s role is less a “receiver” of the poem than a translator who must adjust one social idiolect to another sociopolitical imaginary.[13]

The central theme of *Neighbour Procedure* is provided by Judith Butler, whose meditation on post-9/11 political conditions, *Precarious Life,* asks, “Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? . . . What makes for a grieveable life?” (20). Butler’s questions inform much of *Neighbour Procedure* in her focus on the uses of the sovereign exception in global warfare and the indefinite suspension of rights in the name of national security. In order to grieve the loss of such individuals, it is first necessary to imagine them as human—to grant them names, agency, and culture. Zolf refuses to indulge in a simple act of recovery by turning Palestinians into martyrs or heroes, but instead displays the substitutive processes by which the “other” becomes “enemy”:

> We who live also always killing Hey you!
> The poem already exists before it is written (2010, 67)

The emphasis here is on the preemptive structuring of subjectivity through speech acts that subordinate the citizen-subject to official power. In the first line, the enemy is interpellated in its address by the figure of authority, the one who kills by shouting “Hey you!” The second line suggests that the poem of witness is never present to the events it chronicles; like Minerva’s owl that flies at dusk, it is written after the events it attempts to understand.

We can see Zolf’s emphasis on such interpellative speech acts throughout the book, whether this involves translation (the shift of Hebrew to Arabic characters), catalogs (naming the dead), rules (censorship protocols), comparisons, or syllogistic thinking. The latter is prominently featured in the opening section, “Shoot and Weep,” drawn from print and online sources. The phrase “shoot and weep” is used by Israelis to justify violence against Palestinians during the Gaza conflict by suggesting they “are a moral army” and thus feel for their neighbors in Gaza (*Jacket* interview). As if to capture the oxymoronic quality of the slogan, Zolf adds to each phrase the conjunction “if”:

> If the Sabbath is a form of constraint
> If jihad is the first word learned
> If Elie Wiesel is the Holocaust

> If one must expropriate gently
> If messianism licks at the edges of thought
> If the truth does not lie in silence (8)

By adding the conjunction, Zolf turns each statement into the first part of an if–then statement. Lacking a corresponding "then" clause, we can only imagine an alternative result for each claim. As a statement, "one must expropriate gently" might describe humanitarian justifications for appropriating Palestinian lands, but when it is preceded by "if," it becomes a hypothesis that presumes such appropriation. This particular section is called "a priori," and each of the statements appears to describe a foundational condition for subsequent actions. Hence the following: "If we shoot and weep / If Israel is not in Israel / If the treasure house of well-worn terms is laden with explosives" (9). Read as a sequence, each phrase impinges on the next as a justification for continuing to suppress rights: "If we shoot and weep, then Israel is not in Israel"; if this is the case, then "the treasure house of well-worn terms is laden with explosives." It is an unending spiral of causality that splits Israel against itself, neighbor against neighbor.

We can see this form of false causality vividly in a brief reference to the Sbarro pizzeria bombing in 2001 in Jerusalem that killed fifteen people and wounded many others. Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine claimed responsibility for a blast that, for many, turned the tide against the possibility of Palestinian–Israeli peace. Zolf refers to the bombing as follows:

> If cruel history repeats itself as its own cure
> If it happens inside the Sbarro pizzeria
> If there is an invasion of the order of the border
> If the animal is discomforted during slaughter (10)

The conditional structure qualifies the ascription of blame and focuses it instead on history: if cruel history repeats itself . . . then "it happens inside the Sbarro pizzeria." And if slaughter happens inside the Sbarro pizzeria, then retaliation is inevitable. The slaughter of patrons in a restaurant stands in contrast to kosher laws regarding the humane slaughtering of animals ("If the animal is discomforted during slaughter"). Zolf does not exonerate the Palestinian terrorists who exploded the bomb but rather indicts the ineluctable process of substitution, the unending product of a "cruel history" that appears as its own cure.

While "if" clauses dominate the first section, adverbial phrases dominate the subsequent section. Here Zolf presents a catalog of those "grievable citizens "who, as her section title indicates, "[did] not participate in hostilities." She locates Palestinians who became collateral damage in the places where they were killed or injured:

> When she approached the barrier
> While flying a kite at the beach
> When he picked grass for his flock
> While sitting in the tin-covered dīwān
> When she crossed the street
> While on the way to buy candy (12)

These individuals whose deaths occurred in everyday activities are recorded in "Grievable" and further evacuated in a subsequent section, "Nominal," where they are indicated simply by a bare presentation of numbers representing their ages:

> 14
> 13
> 33
> 17 (28)

These are followed by another series, this time the numbers are spelled-out:

> seventeen
> twenty-five
> thirty-five
> eighteen
> fifteen (29)

Zolf reduces the identity of persons, first by the hypothetical if–then logic by which they may be killed, then through the places where they are killed, then to their names, and finally to abstract numbers, each stage a memorial for the numberless dead.

In "A Failure of Hospitality," Zolf hints at the travestied nature of cosmopolitan empathy to which I have referred:

> Future collapsed in present execution and mourning
> Duty of guest and host a torn native
> Narratives compete for a sacred hair lying where it shouldn't
> Stoked button the key to distilled water living a quiet way
> This unbearable intimacy a purity of arms suturing
> Chocolate cake with coconut flecks none of us taught to see

> Besieged body a piece of metal we will offer all our children
> This permanent remembrance slaughtered and we promise a pleasant
> life (25)

Remembering that these are all quoted materials, we might see how discrete statements in combination problematize a future that is not haunted by "permanent remembrance." The violation of hospitality—the enlistment of neighbors against themselves—creates an "unbearable intimacy." Moreover, each phrase in some way implicates the others. When the body is "besieged," it becomes "a piece of metal"; when "remembrance" is slaughtered, the promise of a pleasant life" is also slaughtered. "Duty of guest and host a torn native" evokes the moral obligation that Kant describes as hospitality that, in the context of Palestine, creates a "torn native" caught between twin identities and contested borders.

Zolf's multigeneric process is difficult to categorize, as befits the unsettled nature of Middle East politics. The writing procedure throughout is one of substitution: Hebrew word for Arab word, number for person, grammatical structure for semantic content, terrorist for neighbor. It is a counternarrative to the national version provided by AIPAC and other lobbying groups on behalf of Israel, but it is by no means a one-sided polemic. It insinuates itself within debates about sovereignty where, as she says at one point, "Ethics [are] suspended at the border crossing"(67). Zolf's language of erasure, as Nava Et Shalom says, repeats "the blank spaces also produced by violence." As a contribution to biopoetics, *Neighbor Procedure* draws on the specific languages of identification and naming that control and enforce some bodies while erasing others.

LIVING SOCIAL DEATH: M. NOURBESE PHILIP'S *ZONG!*

My final example, the Tobagonian/Canadian poet M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* (2008), is a long poem based on a law case from 1783 concerning a massacre of slaves on a British slave ship.[14] Through navigational errors, overcrowding, and bad weather, a voyage that was supposed to take a few weeks ended up taking months as the ship traversed the Caribbean, missing or misidentifying islands along the way. When a large number of slaves began to die, the captain decided that if death

from so-called natural causes continued, the ship's owners would not be able to claim insurance for lost cargo. Hence, the crew began throwing living slaves into the sea, massacring 150 by the week's end.[15] Upon arriving in Jamaica, the ship's owners filed an insurance claim to recover their losses, leading to a trial, *Gregson v. Gilbert,* whose formal language provides the basis for Philip's poem. The trial was ultimately decided in favor of the owners, but no charges were ever filed against the officers or crew. The case was subsequently reopened and decided in favor of the insurers, who claimed that throwing 150 slaves overboard was unnecessary and avoidable, due to the fact that at the time of the massacre there was water aplenty on board, contradicting the owner's claim of necessity. As Philip observes in her afterword,

> "Even if the courts had found against the owners of the Zong and ruled that they could not claim insurance compensation, given the law at that time, neither [the Captain] nor those who had helped in the massacre could be charged with murder, since what was destroyed, being property, was not capable of being murdered. (191)

In Giorgio Agamben's terms, slaves in a circuit of economic exchange and legal debate are reduced to "bare life"; they become those "who may be killed and yet not sacrificed," drowned but not murdered (8). Agamben is thinking here of institutions like the prison camp and detention center, and it is worth pondering the difference between slave ship and camp and the differing levels of control governing each. The 1933 decree that suspended personal liberties (including the freedoms of expression and assembly) in Nazi Germany involved a governmental decision "for the protection of the people and State" (168). The state of exception on the slave ship would seem to be governed less by governmentality than by the exigencies of capital exchange, of which the actuarial element and market forces become the form that sovereignty takes. Although Agamben does not refer extensively to slavery, one could say that his description of the "logic of sovereignty" as a biopolitical matter applies to the governmentality of the state insofar as it legitimates capital exchange in the form of bodies. Aboard the Zong, the slaves' status as property denies them a voice, but as Sarah Dowling says, *Zong!* returns a level of speech—broken, fragmented, partial—to the nonperson. Philip creates "the impression of myriad voices moaning, stuttering, and working to sing" against the juridical

voice that consigns them to the status of chattel (43). As a lawyer herself, Philip is especially positioned to understand the close proximity of the aesthetic and legal in producing subjects—and nonsubjects. Philip uses the *Gregson* case to indict the structural violence of the slave trade within the official document that sustains it. If the court case is the "true" rendering of the facts of the Zong massacre, then *Zong!* the poem is the unraveling or interruption of the truth. As she says in an interview, "It is a text of silence (of the ocean and the Middle Passage) and silencing (as in the historical silencing of this and similar stories) that is interrupted, fractured and fragmented by the human voice" (2010).

Philip's decision to use the precise words of the trial in the opening section of *Zong!* is reminiscent of earlier documentary poems such as Charles Reznikoff's *Testimony* or Muriel Rukeyser's *Book of the Dead,* both of which are based on court cases and legal transcripts. Unlike these prior poems, Philip establishes kinship with the lost African slaves by creating an ethnographic surrogate to whom her tale is told. Her interlocutor, "Setaey Adamu Boateng," is explained in her book blurb as an ancestral voice "revealing the submerged stories of all who were on board the Zong." Her personal stake in these ancestral voices was reinforced during a trip that the author took to Ghana in 2006 where, while visiting a shrine in a former slave port of the Ewe people, she is told by a tribal elder that "none of [her] ancestors could have been among those thrown overboard. . . . If that were the case, he continues, I would not be there" (202). Since she *is* there—since this story has, as she indicates, "chosen" her—she must have some connection to those ancestors, and thus she dictates her poem to one of them. The fact that the poem is dictated transforms the monological court case into a call and response in which the listener/reader is enjoined to participate by reading, quite literally, between the lines and across historical temporalities. The exclamation mark following the name of the ship, *Zong!,* indicates that the poem is a shout, an exclamation, and the pun of "song" in "Zong" suggests the lyric possibilities of that response. Like Amanda Baggs and Rachel Zolf, Philip rearticulates an official view of language and submits it to deformation and mediation while retaining elements of the original in fragmented or broken form.

This first section, "*Os,*" as its Latin name implies, is the "bones" of the work, the material on which the rest of the poem will be made just as Latin is, as Philip indicates by her section titles, the "father language

of Europe" (209 n.45). Words from the trial are splayed across the page, disconnected from each other and from their original occurrence. The function of such appropriation is to reinforce the degree to which African bodies, like other forms of chattel, are disappeared in an actuarial calculus. "Zong #5," like many other passages, deals with water—that which the slaves were denied and that into which they were thrown. The gaps between words ("of months / of / weeks / of days / of / sustenance lying / dead") provide a textual representation of the *duration* of deprivation; the words beneath the line at the bottom of each page, "Mwita Muhammad Mulogo Becktemba Hadiya," mark the dead, whose Yoruba names were never recorded (9). In the subsequent section, "*Dicta*," the black line remains, but the names no longer appear below, providing a textual representation of their absence. Given that the term *dicta* suggests authoritative pronouncements, one might feel that the erasure of these names is a direct outcome of such official speech or, as the root of "dictation," as the products of power ventriloquized. As Dowling summarizes this usage, "The legalistic and actuarial language of the *Gregson v. Gilbert* source text negates the possibility of the slaves' personhood and accordingly their names vanish, just like their bones" (49).

The next five sections of the book are Philip's responses to the language of the trial. Fragments of words are widely spaced across the page, phonemes and morphemes enjambed or separated from each other, creating what Juliana Spahr in her book blurb calls the poem's "stutter." In public readings of *Zong!,* Philip provides an oral transcription of the fragmented words followed by a performance of the page, the latter of which reinforces the multiple valences that a given element may have. Take, for example, the following: "*re* ruth a fe /ast we had *mis /e en scè* / *ne* a shi / p or v / esse / l the s /ea man /y negroes a ran /t of rains the /y ring they sin /g they b /eat u /pon the d /eck ho /ld the e /ar ring fast" (150). I have punctuated each space by a slash mark, without regard to whether a line is enjambed or, indeed, is even a line, to illustrate the way that poetic elements disturb a linear reading. The opening "re" is a continuation of the greeting, "ma chère," on the previous page. If we gather the limbs of this scattered textual body, it might read as follows: "My chère Ruth, a feast we had *mise en scene* a ship or vessel the sea many negroes a rant of rains they ring they sing they beat upon the deck hold the earring fast."

&

water

(three butts good)

of

sea and

perils

of water

(one day)

water —

day one . . .

of months

of

weeks

of

days

of

sustenance

lying

dead

Mwita Muhammad Mulogo Becktemba Hadiya

Figure 3. From "Zong 5" of *Zong!*, by M. NourbeSe Philip, page 9. From *Zong!* Copyright 2008 by M. NourbeSe Philip. Reprinted by permission of Wesleyan University Press.

In its rather broken form, the mixture of French, English, and Caribbean patois, the division of words into individual syllables or letters, and enjambments and indentations create the acoustic "mise-en-scène" of a chaotic shipboard environment.[16]

Once these elements are transformed into sentences, the passage appears to be part of a letter written by a crew member to one of the "women who wait" listed in the "Manifest" at the end of the book.[17] A passage begins, "I / write / to / you / of / mortality s /lien on l / ife" (69). That lien on life—the proximity to his captives—fuses the sailor's voice to the slaves. His proprietary attitudes toward them as animals and objects contrasts with his attempt to rationalize shipboard violence to the Ruth figure: "my plea is negligence / to her I / say *te amo* / her name / she smiles / will be es / se to be / I smile / and i / am / fall / am / falling / am *sum* / into / of all / murder." (69–70) It is hard to know whether he is referring to a slave woman or to Ruth here, whether he is "falling" into moral decay by raping slave women or expressing his love for Ruth at home.

The voice of the slave is similarly fused with her captors: "notwithstanding we / seek the *ratio* / in Africa negroes / too / *de men* / *dem cam fo mi* / for me for / *yo* for je / *pour moi* & *para* / *mi* flee / the fields / *gun bam* / *bam* / it was / oh oh / a falling" (66). In this interrupted speech we hear the voice of the slave undergoing the violence of capture through the multiple languages (trading patois, French, Spanish, English) of the Middle Passage. Philip indicates that the slave trade seeks the "ratio" in and through "African negroes." For the European traders and slaveowners, "ratio" or rationality is purchased through slavery, yet the mixing of slave and trader here—with multiple versions of the first-person pronoun—suggests that the speaking Subject is inextricably connected to the human commodity. Her "mi" becomes his "je" or "yo." What the West fantasizes as a fall into Cartesian self-knowledge the slave suffers as a literal fall into the ocean, "a falling / my fate / & murder / come to term / grounds justice / in lies" (66). On the page, these separate phrases and broken words vividly re-create the broken interchange between black and European subject, between the languages of power and the contact languages of entrepreneurial trade.

As *Zong!* progresses, Philip occasionally changes the font to script, perhaps to reinforce the epistolary element just mentioned; and in the

re ruth a fe ast we had *mis*
e en scè *ne* a shi
p or v esse
l the s ea man
y negroes a ran
t of rains the y ring they sin
g they b eat u
pon the d eck ho
ld the e ar ring fast bo y *so*
me neg *roes had pil*
es leaky pile *s* the saint of tro
y and the de ad city ro
me app ears to me
at night *l ang* *e de me* *r noir nig*
er afer her s ex we
t her p aps leak p rop them u
p *ilé* *ifè i* *lé if*
è il *é ifè* se w the lin
en slip sh ut we ro t in this ves
sel from s in sin
g by rot e a stir ring son
g their dy ing grist & g ift to u
s *to se* *cure a pro*
fit we u *se man* *y ruse s*t
heir swe at the sce
nt we stu n the su
n with o ur act it
veers off i ts way we
let win ter s frost fr
om her urn no *a* *ve s* or *sal*
ve s only sla ves *às*
e àse so b
e it the so und of the o
ud on e id fa
lls on u s on tu
nis a st ring of n egroes on t
he qu ay no sou nd the m
an from f ez wa
its to se ll to ma
ke a de al *the sti*

Figure 4. From "Ferrum" of *Zong!*, by M. NourbeSe Philip, page 150. From *Zong!* Copyright 2008 by M. NourbeSe Philip. Reprinted by permission of Wesleyan University Press.

last section she uses a "ghost" or grey font with multiple overstrokes and crossings-out. This final section is called "*Ebora*," a Yoruba word meaning "underwater spirits." All of these material qualities of the book stress the role of language in making bodies visible, bringing erased meanings to the surface while honoring those that have been drowned. By foregrounding the graphic inscriptions of voice and language, Philip connects the materiality of language with the materiality of bodies doomed to suffer the fate of words over which they have no control. This recuperation of the voice is by no means an assertion of the liberal subject but, as Sarah Dowling says, is an imagination of "poetic voice as a bodily emission, but one that neither connotes nor corresponds to personhood" (44). To reinscribe the "oral," divination tradition out of which the African diaspora emerges, Philip provides a fugal counterpoint in the form of words taken from Yoruba, Ewa, and other West African languages. The opening of "Sal" suggests a ritual chant or mourning song based on the word *ifà* (divination), which blends the second syllable of the Yoruba word with the iconic English word "fall": "there is / creed there is / fate there is / oh / oh oracle / there are / oh oh / ashes / over / *ifà* / *ifà* / *ifà i* / *fa* / fa / fa / fall / ing over /& / over the crew / touching there / is fate / there is / creed" (60). The merging of West African and the English language, the movement between divine apostrophe and Western fate, the contrast of "creed" and "fate"—all of these elements anticipate that "double consciousness" that W. E. B. DuBois would ultimately describe as the African American condition. Here, the lyrical repetition of the "fa" and "oh" provide a lyric voice to a poem constructed around juridical definitions of what it means to speak.

By the last section, these earlier passages are repeated only in what I have called a "ghost script" full of overstrikes and crossings-out—as if we are seeing Philip's early draft now as the work's completion. In her afterword Philip explains that in printing out the first draft of an earlier section, her printer superimposed several pages on top of one another. Rather than correct the printer error, she decides to retain them as a "translation that has a life of its own" (206). Returning to Avery Gordon's idea of the "ghostly" absence of women in modern culture, we could see this final section, "Ebora," as intimating beginnings (of the manuscript) and also the endings, arche and telos, now rendered fully as a typed or printed document. Oral and textual traditions vie

dear Lisa
Dave ask/s that i
when did we decide write to you Circe the crone these words come from his lips
though crone hag seer my hand shapes them she
the fiddle of dying sh/h
apes all lips of dead
sing sing a/gape of died not so loud
they sang sings at time
didn't the bell ring a sad tune oh oh
I come from the north *le* song with no notes *el* song my ass
the dales sing again me i am
land of mist he am my goat bag
of hoar-frost am am palm wine
the time and date of sin he rages
sow the seven seas groan to &&
foo with *ave/s* they are din the din the
with ash din of dying why did we writ in
decide when did we the dead decide sand
the died the dead live rent sing i say
i come from my own the died my lives
i come from the north very own the
the north dales the land hey hey ho
dales of mist land of hoar frost negroes
there is ruse in the time and date of hoar frost
of sin insure the time and date
he had an ace of sin
i a sequence of
queens one
king *chu*
Sam the rum
dear Ruth can a tale be
mortality by the tail told ever
mortality by the tail if told
on the sun cold a secret race
mama *underwriters
mai calms lives of writ/s & rent/s
calms cede
calms the truth
calms to the right to be sure
this is but
writ in sand an oration
writ in sand a tale
lives life old
rent life as sin is new
when did we decide

Figure 5. From “Eborra” of *Zong!*, by M. NourbeSe Philip, page 178. From *Zong!* Copyright 2008 by M. NourbeSe Philip. Reprinted by permission of Wesleyan University Press.

for speech, marking their claims of presence against the (literal) erasures of words and phrases that stand for missing bodies. One of the repeated phrases, “The oba sobs,” refers to the Yoruba word for “king or ruler,” as Philip’s glossary states, a phrase that appears to be a funeral dirge for lost West Africans on the ship. The fact that at the end of the poem this phrase of mourning is rendered through a light font and multiple overstrikes suggests the complicated way that the history of structural violence is written. This fact is vividly reinforced by Philip’s inclusion of the literal court testimony from *Gregson v. Gilbert*. It is the “last word” of the book, concluding with the phrase, “Rule absolute on payment of costs.” Here is the legal “dead end” for Africans in the Middle Passage. But the poem, in its open form and fragmented language, its multiple voices and languages, says otherwise.

MISSING BODIES

At the outset I invoked those bodies missing through detention, exception, and social neglect. These historical contexts may seem a long way from Baggs’s video, Zolf’s catalogs of names, and the appropriated language of *Zong!*. Yet each work, in different ways, understands the limits of embodiment as a self-evident term for identity among populations whose bodies do not exist or are not accorded equal rights with others. The use of appropriated or electronically modified language complicates the voice that has dominated an expressivist poetics since the 1960s. For Baggs, Zolf, Philip, and many other recent poets working in the wake of the turn toward language, “voice” is not an unmediated extension of a prior body but a set of discursive frames within which bodies are defined and described, excluded and counted. What interests me about these examples is their realization not only of how neurodiverse, Palestinian, and African bodies have been absented but how the representation of those bodies cannot be recuperated through an unproblematic “I” or narrative frame. The form that each artist chooses incorporates—quite literally in each case—the rule of law, the protocols of description and categorization, the biotechnologies of audition and transcription—and at the same time evacuates them of their performative power. Thus we are forced to learn a “new language” of testimony, a broken language of jurisprudence, a visual

language of absence in order to reinhabit bodies that have been lost to history.

What is the connection between this story of bodies missing from history and that of the aesthetic? Although any such linkage may seem tenuous, it is important to think of the role that aesthetics has played in shoring up attitudes toward the body in history, as ideas of the beautiful and sublime have relied on ideals of bodily perfection (or grotesque distortion) to legitimize a naturalized standpoint presumed to be shared by others. For Kant, as summarized by J. M. Bernstein, a judgment of taste is a "reflective assertion of the pleasure one takes in a particular object or state of affairs which, without the mediation of concepts, lays claim to intersubjective validity" (18). It is this aesthetic social contract that cements private sensory pleasure to public validation, and just as the laborer's body is effaced in the commodity, so the experiential, libidinally invested body is erased in acts of disinterested contemplation. Poets and performance artists seeking to situate the body in its imbricated relationship to social relations of power have developed ways—as my initial example of Simon Starling suggests—of reclaiming missing bodies from the visual, acoustic, and legal landscapes in which they are represented and thus contained. By indirect means, the poet who *does* speak speaks in "her own language"—the "ungrievable" civilians in a war zone are given names, the slave without a voice is rearticulated through the shards of a court brief. In Philip's oxymoron that governs these works, "There is no telling this story; it must be told."

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Notes

1. According to Anthony Lee, the attempt to crush the union by importing Chinese workers was successful. The photograph was taken five years after their arrival (20).

2. A good introduction to Starling's project and to his other works can be found in Susan Cross's catalog essay in *The Nanjing Particles*.

3. On the "Lost Boys," see Jeffrey Gettleman. "A New Wave of 'Lost Boys' in Sudan War."

4. In *Modernity at Large*, Arjun Appadurai describes "technoscapes" and "mediascapes" as spatial forms that "stress different streams or flows along which cultural material may be seen to be moving across national boundaries" (45–46).

5. I am grateful to Soraya Abuelhiga for introducing me to Batniji's work.

6. There has been some controversy over the authenticity of Baggs's representation of herself as autistic. In a series of posts on the Disability in the Humanities Listserv (DS-HUM) and other blogs, people who knew Baggs in earlier days declare that she has never been autistic, that she is, as one post complains, a "disability faker." Against this claim are a number of responses that note, as Ralph Saverese says, "this campaign represents an attack on the competence of those whom the medical community would describe as 'severely autistic.'" Savarese goes on to say, "There's a long and spiteful history of doubting those with disabilities." DS-HUM@LISTSERV.UMD.EDU, posted Fri. 21, Oct. 2011.

7. Faye Ginsburg provides an excellent overview of Baggs's use of social media and user-generated video in "Disability in the Digital Age."

8. Aiwa Ong defines "flexible citizenship" as "the strategies and effects of mobile managers, technocrats, and professionals seeking to both circumvent and benefit from different nation-state regimes by selecting different sites for investments, work, and family relocation" (112).

9. In her Coach House interview, Zolf remarks: "It bugs me that Martin Buber, he of I and Thou, and originally in favour of the binational state in Palestine, took Edward Said's family home in Jerusalem because he could; and that ethical philosopher Emmanuel Levinas called the Palestinian the enemy not the 'other' or even neighbour because he could." She also includes in this group the Dadaist Marcel Janco, who became a "settler-colonialist" in Israel.

10. What I earlier referred to as the ghostly body in political discourse is reinforced by the fact that the Israeli government often refers to Palestinians as "present absentees."

11. Rushdie uses the term "Palimpstine" in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. As Zolf quotes Rushdie, it is a place "where worlds collide, flow in and out of one another . . . Under World beneath Over World, black market beneath white" (83).

12. Erin Mouré speaks of *Neighbour Procedure* as an "Infection Procedure: one that invades the known borders of Genre, Copyright, Citation, Book, Ethics, houses of language, languages, pages in order to attach names to deaths, in order to name houses, all in crossing and residing at the overlapping border between Israel and Palestine" (242).

13. Perhaps one reason for the extensive and at times chaotic mixtures of languages and idiolects stems from Zolf's visit to Israel in 2009 during the war in Gaza. Zolf regards *Neighbour Procedure* as a kind of travel narrative. She titles one section of the book "Innocent Abroad," referring to Mark Twain's account of visiting the Holy Lands (n.d.).

14. The Zong massacre is the subject of J. M. W. Turner's painting *The Slave Ship* (1840), which depicts the ship in a stormy sea in the background with a number of black, chained bodies floating in the water in the foreground. The painting is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The *Gregson* case was widely known in its day. Olaudah Equiano helped to fund an appeal of the verdict, and it has been the subject of works by Fred D'Aguiar, Derek Walcott, Edouard Glissant, and others. On representations of the Zong massacre, see Ian Baucom, "Specters of the Atlantic."

15. The figure of 150 deaths is derived from *Gregson v. Gilbert*, but as Philip indicates in a footnote to the book, other accounts list 130, 131, and 132 lost. "The exact number of African slaves murdered remains a slippery signifier of what was undoubtedly a massacre" (208 n.3).

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

17. The "manifest" is normally the ship's record of cargo, including names of crew members and food and drink, yet in Philip's rendering it also includes "body parts" and "African Groups and Languages" along with the "Women [presumably the wives of sailors] who Wait" at home" (185).

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