

**ARCHITECTURES OF FREEDOM: LITERARY COLLABORATION IN
CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POETRY**

by

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The dissertation, “Architectures of Freedom: Literary Collaboration in Contemporary American Poetry” uses the praxis of the U.S. third world feminists to analyze literary collaborations from a contemporary cohort of writers. As developed by Chela Sandoval, the defining aspect of the praxis of the U.S. third world feminists is differential consciousness. Differential consciousness is the ability to form coalitions within and beyond different communities not just for personal survival, but through personal survival to transform social oppressions. This dissertation animates Sandoval’s apparatus, which she calls a methodology of the oppressed, to analyze how a current cohort of writers are using literary collaboration to decolonize globalization.

The three collaborations the dissertation analyzes are the artblog *Pënz (It’s Pronounced Pants)*, conceptual artists Mendi+Keith Obadike, and Encyclopedia Project, an editorial collaboration. Taken together these three collaborations offer a powerful blueprint for decolonizing globalization for Pënz decolonizes time, M+K decolonizes space (geographic and digital), and Encyclopedia decolonizes knowledge.

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1.0 DECOLONIZING GLOBALIZATION THROUGH LITERARY COLLABORATION

Faith that the frosting without which the cake is unfinished will always be wanted and welcome no matter how critical, how revolutionary the call for bread.

–Joyce Elbrecht and Lydia Fakundiny

María Eugenia Cotera devotes the final chapter of *Native Speakers* to an analysis of *Caballero: A Historical Novel* (1996) which was collaboratively written by Jovita González and Margaret Eimer in the late 1930s and 1940s.¹ Cotera sees collaboration as a potential avenue for social transformation arguing that the processes of collaborative writing enable the power dynamics of a fiction to emerge in and from the life practices of the writers. For Cotera collaboration is a world-making praxis: it creates the fictional world of the text and the actual world of the collaborators. According to Cotera the world in *Caballero* is a world of cross-cultural love and non-patriarchal love. It is a world where patriarchal desires for ownership and singular power disintegrate into madness on the borderlands of Mexico and the United States during the U.S.-Mexico War (1846-1848). Cotera argues that the utopian space of cross-national love in the novel is actualized through the processes of collaboration between Anglo-American Margaret

1. *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita González, and the Poetics of Culture* (2008) is a study of early twentieth century feminist writers in the United States.

Eimer, who published under the pseudonym Eve Raleigh, and Mexican American Jovita González. As Cotera explains:

Caballero is a collaborative text about collaboration, a text that self-consciously enacts the politics of its production within its pages. But it is also a utopian project, a bid to craft a world that was scarcely imaginable in the Texas of the 1930s. Such a project required a leap of faith from both sides of the boundary that divided Jovita González from Margaret Eimer. As feminist writer Joyce Elbrecht has pointed out, writing together means that “you have to desire the collaborative world under formation more than the unextended ‘yours’ and ‘mine’ of the old power structures.” This collaborative world, this borderland, is at the heart of *Caballero*’s prescient challenge to rigid notions of identity, authority, and resistance.²

Cotera argues that the actual processes of the collaboration between a Mexican and Anglo create an additional world—the utopian landscape in the novel of cross-national love in the borderlands is realized in actuality through the collaboration between González and Eimer. This world creates the grounds for change where new relationships and new power structures are possible. Cotera draws from the autocriticism of Joyce Elbrecht, Lydia Fakundiny, and Jael B. Juba on their collaboration to support the idea of collaborative writing as a utopian project, where the processes of fiction transform the world in which we live. For Cotera and Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba, analysis of fiction does not remain limited to mimesis. Processes of fiction can be and are cosmogonic. Collaboration provides a privileged perspective for analyzing the cosmogonic aspects of literature because the power dynamics of the world represented in the art is lived out

2. Cotera, *Native Speakers*, 224.

through the power dynamics of the members of the collaboration. Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba present this cosmogony in autocriticism on their collaboration.

Their collaborative work, “Scenes from a Collaboration: Or Becoming Jael B. Juba” (1994), is a peculiar piece of scholarship that requires a bit of an introduction. It was published in part-one of a two issue series in *Tulsa Studies of Women’s Literature* dedicated to feminist collaboration. The authors of the essay are listed as Joyce Elbrecht and Lydia Fakundiny. Joyce Elbrecht was a professor of philosophy at Ithaca College, and Lydia Fakundiny was a senior lecturer of English who retired from Cornell University in 2006 and recently passed on March 31, 2013. The two collaborators had a long friendship that revolved around taking vacations together when they were both able to find time. While on vacation, they had a variety of projects including making up stories, writing novels, and restoring a house. In their essay “Scenes from a Collaboration” they discuss their processes of collaboration and how a third consciousness, Jael B. Juba, was created through writing together. Juba is the fictional author of the collaborative novels between Elbrecht and Fakundiny. In the novel, *THE RESTORATIONIST: Text One, a collaborative fiction by Jael B. Juba* (1993), the first person-narrative of Susan Harding (protagonist-narrator) is cut through with psychemes, a form in which the novel’s authorial narrator, Juba, explores her own existence. Juba’s psychemes are “speculative, blackly humorous self-presentation[s]... [that] are equally fraught with mystery and peril as she finds herself without a home, with no community to speak of, running... culturally wild in the process.”³

Were Juba to remain in fictional forms like the novel and were she to be the object of analysis in “Scenes from a Collaboration” then Juba would remain a purely textual creation.

3. Elbrecht and Fakundiny, “Scenes from a Collaboration,” 241.

However, a third authorial voice emerges in the scholarly essay “Scenes from a Collaboration”; the essay endows the voice of Jael B. Juba with non-fictional subjectivity. Where she may be easily read as a fictive narrator in a novel, in the form of a scholarly essay, her subjectivity presents itself as real.

In the essay Juba provides a cosmogony that accounts for her creation through the text, particularly through collaborative writing. In Juba’s cosmogony the world is created through a “flow of fiction,” and it is a dual view that creates reality. If one person holds a fiction as truth then that is insanity, but if others start living out the fictions then those fictions start gaining truth-value. In the case of Juba, it is the dual view of Elbrecht and Fakundiny that initially creates Juba, whose existence continues to live through the collaboration of her readers. This theory of existence is radically different from the Abrahamic traditions in which existence is created from a transcendent power. Without discounting the possibility that some existence is created from a transcendent power, in the cosmogony created by Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba existence emerges from the processes of collaboration.

While not all collaborations will result in the creation of a named consciousness like Juba, Juba’s peculiar position as a being who exists only through collaboration provides a privileged perspective on existence. As Juba explains:

I don’t mean to denigrate our long traditional quest for truth, but I do call it into question as the privileged ground of our lives, probably because I’ve become highly aware of myself as the trace of a cosmogonic motion, the flow of fiction producing the world of my existence: the very stuff of fiction, which is never more than some kind of motion spun off like pre-Socratic ripples and rumblings of truth emerging. As the fictionalizing

process of two specific female individuals with discrete life histories, experiences, training, I am the truth that emerges from their work together. Fiction, not truth, is what we humankind live in, and truth arises from fiction, not the other way around. We don't ordinarily live without some sense of who and where we are—without, that is, a self and a world (no matter how shifting and multiple these may be); but these are our basic fictive constructs, which may become truths of a kind when lived out.⁴

The cosmogony in this essay is that creation happens through the shared vision of individuals with discrete life histories. Truth does not exist *a priori*, it emerges from a shared vision when it is lived out. Thus, when Cotera quotes Elbrecht saying that “you have to desire the collaborative world under formation more than the unextended power dynamics of ‘yours’ and ‘mine’ of the old power structures,” this world under formation is not only a fictive world, but the power dynamics of the collaboration which are represented in art are also lived out in a way that creates reality by “calling forth and using all your own resources for something other than your own power and survival.”⁵

Cotera, building on Bakhtin, describes the two perspectives in *Caballero* as a feminist dialogics that create a utopia through processes of fiction that they are living out in the real. The dialogics of *Caballero* “engendered a version of Texas history that destabilized the practices of historical myth-making itself.”⁶ Monologic historical mythmaking occurs when a single perspective is used to create historical knowledge. In the case of Texas in the 1930s the history was developed from the perspective of white masculinity. The dialogic imagination in *Caballero*

4. Elbrecht and Fakundiny, “Scenes from a Collaboration,” 253.

5. Ibid, 251.

6. Cotera, *Native Speakers*, 207.

is particularly feminist because Eimer and Gonzalez actively dismantle the patriarchal idea of the individual in power that exists in both white American and Mexican structures. As Cotera argues, the titular protagonist, Don Santiago, a caballero, exists in binary modes that figure all Americans as the other. Through the course of the novel his children and servants leave him for relationships with white Americans as his mental health disintegrates from the pressures of holding on to an identity based on singularity and the power of possessing land, resources, and human beings. In the novel the psyche that can survive the borderlands is a collaborative psyche that has the ability to merge with the other. The specific power of the dialogic imagination in *Caballero* is that it “refuses the polarity of these options, offering a radical critique of the foundational myths that serve to justify them even as it deconstructs the very grounds upon which the oppression/resistance binary builds its deductive logic.”⁷

Perhaps one would think that all collaboration was dialogic, but some collaborations are monologic where a single perspective has dominance, and the collaborators have to buy into that perspective and/or the power of the other perspectives are disavowed. For an excellent article on a patriarchal model of collaboration see Elizabeth Brunazzi’s article “The Question of Colette and Collaboration” (1994) which posits that Colette’s collaboration with her husband Henri Gauthier-Villars taught her the skills to successfully collaborate with the Nazi occupation of France. Wayne Koestenbaum’s sensational *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* (1989) provides another model of patriarchal collaboration. Koestenbaum argues that much of our recent Anglo-American canon is actually based on collaborations between men and a disavowed (or objectified) female collaborator: Freud, Breuer, and Pappenheim; T.S. Eliot, Pound, and V. Eliot; and W. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and D. Wordsworth (to name three of the

7. Ibid, 208.

collaborations). It is important to note, patriarchal and colonizing literary collaborations are also endowed with world-making properties. The skills that Colette learned in her collaborations are the skills that she applied to building her career during the Occupation. The collaborations of the cooptation and disavowal of the female voice helped build the structure of our contemporary canon.

In summary, the formula I am constructing here is that literary collaboration has world-making properties, that there is a place from which existence emerges through collaboration, and that artistic collaboration between people with discrete histories offers a privileged site in which to analyze how reality is created because the text becomes an artifact of the reality being lived out through working together. Additionally, there are different types of collaboration. Some collaborations replicate or are the source of the old power structures. Other collaborations have alternate power dynamics; they are called dialogic, feminist, and decolonial, among other terms. These collaborations do not exist in a dialectical relationship, but following Cotera, these collaborations operate dialogically with the old power structures.

While studies including Brunazzi's and Koestenbum's show that patriarchal collaborations provide rich and fascinating material for analysis, this dissertation analyzes collaborations with feminist power dynamics, or alternate power dynamics, the dynamics of the dialogic where meaning is created through an interplay of perspectives. Cotera posits these types of collaboration as a potential avenue for social transformation. Rather than replicating accepted power structures of oppression, these collaborations create alternate power structures. In the epilogue of *Native Speakers*, Cotera turns to U.S. third world feminist Chela Sandoval to further explain the decolonial power of alternate power dynamics. These alternate power dynamics are

called love and are “a technology of social transformation.”⁸ This dissertation picks up where Cotera leaves off. It uses Sandoval’s methodology of love to analyze the decolonial power of contemporary collaborations. Cotera’s project is historical; she is analyzing decolonial literature of early twentieth century feminists. Sandoval’s methodology is culled from the praxis of the U.S. third world feminists of the 1970s and 1980s but ends imagining along with cyborg feminist Donna Haraway how these skills will be used in the twenty-first century. This dissertation tries to answer that question by examining literary collaborations from the generation of writers emerging out of the decolonial traditions that Cotera and Sandoval, among others, are laying out.

Sandoval’s methodology of love is grounded in the power of differential consciousness which acts as a punctum that can pierce through not only narratives of oppression that are hierarchical as in the patriarchal structures represented in *Caballero* but also can pierce “the postmodern illusion of a linear-homogeneous plane that typifies the new transnational space” (78). The difference between differential consciousness and the dialogic is that the dialogic is dealing with language and differential consciousness is dealing with language and action. These approaches are not in competition—the dialogic through being a fragmented understanding created through two voices in a dynamic exchange can also pierce the postmodern illusion of homogeneity, another type of monologism. While Sandoval does not directly mention the dialogic, her project is a dialogic solution to “the problematics of the disciplinization and apartheid of academic knowledges in the human and social sciences” (78). Sandoval’s methodology of love is a vocabulary of the skills of differential consciousness that she assembles from putting in conversation “racialized, sexualized, genderized, theoretical domains” in cultural studies: “‘white male poststructuralism,’ ‘hegemonic feminism,’ ‘third world feminism,’

8. Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 2.

‘postcolonial discourse theory,’ and ‘queer theory’” (79). Sandoval, as she proposes “a shared theory and method of oppositional consciousness and social movement” (78) does not take a Hegelian approach to resolving the disciplinary apartheid by presenting a universal language. Sandoval’s methodology of love itself is a fragmented terrain that moves horizontally and vertically as she develops and shows the connection between the different disciplines where they share the desire to “further politically oppositional goals” (2). This dissertation animates Sandoval’s differential consciousness because it is culled from the practice of “people of color in the United States, familiar with historical, subjective, and political dislocation since the founding of the colonies, [who] have created a set of inner and outer technologies to enable survival within the developing state apparatus, technologies that will be of great value during the cultural and economic changes to come” (79). Sandoval makes visible these practices and the shifting cultural and economic landscape using terminology and arguments from the different academic disciplines. Through taking a dialogic approach, Sandoval builds an apparatus that can analyze texts but also function in non-linguistic spaces as a tool for action in and through multiple media, which is particularly useful at the start of the third millennium as the forms of communication become increasingly multi-modal.

The center of Sandoval’s work is the praxis of the U.S. third world feminists of the 1970s and 1980s: Cherríe Moraga, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, Barbara Smith, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Paula Gunn Allen, Barbara Noda, Mitsuye Yamada, Gayatri Spivak, Maria Lugones, Patricia Hill Collins, Barbara Christian, Emma Pérez, Merle Woo, Janice Gould, Emma Pérez, Haunani-Kay Trask, Leslie Marmon Silko, bell hooks, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Angela Davis, June Jordan, Bernice Johnson Reagon, Joy Harjo, Janice Gould, Norma Alacrón, Yvonne Yarboro-Bejarans, Alice Walker, Maxine Baca Zinn, Maxine Hong Kingston, Nellie

Wong, Toni Morrison, among many others. These writers, thinkers, and activists sought to challenge and transform oppression through working multiple sites and locations—moving within and through identity categories. The consciousness that is able to move through and with multiple, sometimes contradictory, allegiances is what Sandoval calls differential consciousness. The differential power operated in several ways among the U.S. third world feminists who were a community made up of different genders, sexualities, ethnicities, races and nationalities. Differential consciousness operated within a community made up of Black women, Latinas, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Caribbean coming into conversation with their different experiences to work together to understand the nature of their oppressions. Iconic examples of differential consciousness include the anthology *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981) co-edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga and “An Interview: Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich” (1981) which was excerpted from three hours of transcript from an interview held on August 30, 1979 in Montague, Massachusetts. These are examples from a community of people who came together because they were all developing a praxis of differential consciousness.

The other element of differential consciousness is moving into communities of resistance that do not operate differentially. As Bernice Johnson Reagon describes this experience it is not easy but necessary: “I feel as if I’m gonna keel over any minute and die. That is often what it feels like if you’re *really* doing coalition work. Most of the time you feel threatened to the core and if you don’t, you’re not really doing no coalescing...The only reason you would consider trying to team up with somebody who could possibly kill you, is because that’s the only way you can figure you can stay alive.”⁹ Differential consciousness is the consciousness that not only can

9. Reagon, “Coalition Politics,” 356-357.

survive coalescing but also seeks it out not just for a personal survival, but through personal survival to transform social oppressions. A consciousness that can operate differentially treats identity as a masquerade. The masquerade is a term used for a variety of cultural practices, but I think it is most useful to think of the West African masquerade, where the English term is used to refer to both the object and the process. In Yoruban agricultural ritual, a performer dons the masquerade which is a sculpted wood headpiece that represents an animal. Through dance the performer becomes the animal. He is both dancer performing the masquerade and becomes the masquerade. The masquerade is both the object that enables the transformation and the transformation. When identity is treated as a masquerade you become something other while also being what you were or are. Identity operates as performance which enables movement through different groups, even through groups that “could possibly kill you.” The differential approach to identity and coalition work was a central aspect of the U.S. third world feminists.

While Sandoval explains the academic erasure of the U.S. third world feminists by what she calls hegemonic US feminism, their work and writings are not lost in that erasure. The generation of writers following them, taught by them, readers, buyers, and givers of their books, who were and are their friends and mentees continue to teach and build on and develop the praxis of U.S. third world feminism. The U.S. third world feminists formed a cohort of writers building a praxis of differential consciousness and thus feminism is a central term of Sandoval’s book. This feminism is queer, of color, and allied with multiple and different approaches to social transformation within the academy and on the streets. This dissertation uses the term feminist and not the term queer to describe the U.S. third world feminists because they self-consciously called themselves U.S. third world feminists and not U.S. third world queers. Their conversation, as positioned by them, was a feminist conversation based in the US while allying

themselves with the third world. The term “U.S. third world” fractures representations of the US as *only* world super power and presents a lens for seeing the US as a place where the third world lives, meets, and builds resistance to forms of domination. The current cohort of writers that this dissertation examines does not self-consciously name itself using a single all-encompassing term; rather the writers and artists gathered in here emerge from and engage multiple practices and resist being defined by a single term.

The three collaborations that this dissertation examines—*Pënz (It’s Pronounced Pants)*, Mendi+Keith Obdaike, and the Encyclopedia Project—all make a praxis of differential consciousness. And while differential consciousness is not the exclusive province of the U.S. third world feminists, these collaborations all emerge from a community of decolonial literary practices that were created from the energies of U.S. third world feminists among other literary traditions. This contemporary community of decolonial literary practices is part of and part of creating—while not confined by—what Christopher Beach calls the macrocommunity of contemporary American poetry that shares the goal of “fac[ing] our common enemy: the impoverished cultural spirit of American life.”¹⁰ These three collaborations are all part of the macrocommunity and are creating communities within it that take a decolonial approach to that battle.

Pënz was a collaboration between two writers—Samiya Bashir and Ana-Maurine Lara—and two visual artists—Senalka McDonald and Wura-Nastasha Ogunji—who made time expand through their commitment to make art every day of 2008 and document the process on a blog (www.penzitspronouncedpants.blogspot.com). Of the four members of *Pënz*, Samiya Bashir is the most visibly active in the macrocommunity of contemporary American Poetry. She was poet

10. Beach, *Poetic Culture*, 187.

laureate of the University of California system and was a student of June Jordan at UC Berkley where Jordan founded Poetry for the People. Bashir is also a co-editor of *Role Call: A Generational Anthology of Social & Political Black Literature & Art* (2002) which worked to establish a community of writers around issues including equality and social justice. Published by Third World Press and with a forward by Haki Marabudhti, Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford positions the artists in the anthology as the heirs to the Black Arts Movement.¹¹

Mendi+Keith Obadike are an interdisciplinary wife-husband collaboration that is building an impressive oeuvre that works to confront and transform the racism rampant in our institutions and imaginations. We see an explicit engagement with the strategies of U.S. third world feminists in *Document*, a two-sided praise song that celebrates different approaches to resistance. The B side is “The Earth Will Here” and is a praise song to Marlon Riggs and U.S. third world feminist Audre Lorde. M+K explain Lorde and Riggs as artists “whose strategies involved zeroing in on those painful events, parsing them, and making work about them.”¹²

Encyclopedia Project is an editorial collaboration between Tisa Bryant, Miranda Mellis, and Kate Schatz that uses the form of an alphabetical encyclopedia to dismantle hierarchical approaches to meaning-making. One of the ways the Encyclopedia Project claims the tradition of the U.S. third world feminists is by including entries on them. For instance, there is an entry on Gloria Anzaldúa and one on Barbara Christian. Anzaldúa’s formative work in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) and *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* has made Anzaldúa one of the central figures of U.S. third world

11. Collins and Crawford, “Introduction.”

12. Obadike, interview by Laura Wetherington.

feminism. Barbara Christian was at the forefront of black feminist scholarship in the academy. In *Encyclopedia* the two entries are cross-referenced to each other.

As we can see the three collaborations discussed above have in common explicit links to the work of the U.S. third world feminists. Their connection to the U.S. third world feminists is not coincidental. These three collaborations are all part of a community of writers and artists whose work builds structures of emancipation. The members of this community are not working in isolation and while many have individual projects, they also seek out collaborative projects.

It is no easy task to define a community that is in the process of becoming. Their affiliations to and memberships with different poetry organizations and institutions help us see the community, which I am going to leave unnamed as a way to preserve the power of being a “‘third,’ feminist ‘force.’” As Sandoval via Derrida lays out—to be unnamed so that “what is performative and mobile never be set into any place: freedom resides, thus, everywhere” (195n22). Suffice it to say this community is part of and actively creating the macrocommunity of contemporary America poetry while not being limited by national borders; they also exhibit the utopian cross-national decolonial love in *Caballero* as lived out by Eimer and Gonzalez.

To begin sketching this community, I will examine the members of the collaboration *Pënz (It's Pronounced Pants)* and the additional ways they exist in the macrocommunity of American poetry. For disciplinary reasons we will focus on the two writers of the collaboration—Samiya Bashir and Ana-Maurine Lara. Both these writers share common institutions and organizations—Cave Canem: A Home for Black Poetry, RedBone Press, and Fire & Ink. Co-founded in 1996 by Toi Derricotte, who was published in U.S. third world anthology *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (1983), Cornelius Eady, and Sarah Micklem, Cave Canem began as a week-long workshop/retreat for black poets and has grown to include

regional workshops, book prizes, and publications.¹³ Cave Canem is known for not just nurturing individual poets many who have earned great prestige but is also known for nurturing community that is a large family directly engaged in gaining academic power. As Eady acknowledges in the poem “Gratitude,” “I am a brick in a house / that is being built / around your house.” This quote serves as a lens for creating and seeing the activist aspects of Cave Canem. Here house is metaphor for the academy and Eady positions the poet as building something that will consume, but not displace. The structure changes by who has power but the change is not a radical transformation of the foundations. Similarly, RedBone Press was created to create space and visibility for black lesbian and black gay male writers in the existing marketplace. The story of its creation is featured on the RedBone Press website: “Lisa C. Moore founded RedBone after white feminist publishers told her that there was ‘no market’ for her anthology of Black lesbian coming-out stories, does your mama know?—which is now in its fourth printing.”¹⁴

Where Red Bone Press and Cave Canem are primarily American institutions, Fire & Ink is a place where national borders are transgressed: “Fire & Ink is devoted to increasing the understanding, visibility and awareness of the works of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender writers of African descent and heritage.” One of the ways they fulfill their mission is through sponsoring internationally focused forum “for the scholarly and professional examination and celebration of black GLBT writing and publishing.”¹⁵ (“About”). Fire & Ink III: Cotillion, had a strong global presence with panels including “Contemporary Caribbean LGBTQ Writing,” “Dialoguing about the Arts Across the Black LGBTQ Diaspora,” “Broadened Visions: Black

13. Locations for the regional workshops include New York City, Minnesota, and Pittsburgh. The Cave Canem first book award is now in its second decade, and the second book award has begun its first decade. Publications include chapbooks from the annual retreats and the anthology *Gathering Ground* (2006) published by University of Michigan Press.

14. Piepzna-Samarashinha quoted in “About the Press.”

15. Fire & Ink, “About.”

LGBTQ Writers and Global Human Rights,” “Black LGBTQ Translation workshop,” and “Witness to Tradition: LGBT African Media Makers.” While focused on literary arts, Fire & Ink III had special evening events that were interdisciplinary including a theater program and *Dash: Metaphor and Connection*. *Dash*, curated by artist Torkwase Dyson, which showcased three pairs of artist and writers “to explore the relational patterns between form, content and the context of language.” Ogunji, one of the visual artists from Pënz presented with Tisa Bryant one of the co-editors of the Encyclopedia Project. In 2011 Dyson presented a version of DASH featuring poet LaTasha Diggs at Yale University. Additionally, Dyson is seen as part of this literary community through a representation of her painting “Pilot Want Her Wings” that was published on the front inside jacket of *Role Call*.

Ogunji, a visual artist, also participates in the international writing community through her attendance at Yari Yari Ntoasa in Accra, Ghana, May 16-19 2013. As explained in an excellent and precise post by poet R. Erica Doyle for the Best American Poets blog: “Yari Yari is a conference that gathers women writers from all corners of the African diaspora, and was created by the Organization of Women Writers of Africa, founded by Jayne Cortez and Ama Ata Aidoo.”¹⁶ This important conference, which was also held in 1999 and in 2007, is co-sponsored by New York University. Ogunji presented on performance art and using the body as a tool for writing.

If the primary characteristic of the U.S. third world feminists is, as Sandoval asserts, differential consciousness, we see that technology functioning in how the members of Pënz

16. Doyle, “Back to the Future.”

engage the literary and arts community.¹⁷ They are not confined by one genre; rather they move through the different genres including poetry, visual art, and performance—nor are their imaginations confined by the limits of national borders. As artists they move between different groups and identity categories. A key word from *Fire & Ink III* was fluidity, where we do not conceptualize ourselves as existing in only one identity; rather identity is as mobile as our bodies. *Cave Canem* similarly asserts the differential power when talking about how they have a diversity of aesthetic approaches. As Camille Dungy writes in the preface to *Gathering Ground* “Cave Canem poets cover a range of styles (formal, experimental, and performance, to name a few broad groups) and often move between boundaries, creating new and exciting modes for their poems.”¹⁸

The second collaboration this dissertation examines is Mendi+Keith Obadike, a husband-wife collaborative duo of poet and scholar Mendi Lewis Obadike and sound artist and musician Keith Townsend Obadike. M+K Obadike overlap with Pänz as Mendi Obadike is, like Bashir and Lara, a *Cave Canem* fellow. Additionally, Keith Obadike received an MFA in Sound Design from Yale University where Lara is currently working towards a PhD in African American Studies and Anthropology. Mendi Obadike is currently teaching at Pratt Institute which is another of the academic centers of this community as performance artist and scholar Tracie Morris teaches there as does feminist and avant-garde writer Rachel Levitsky, who founded *Belladonna* in 1999 which has published chapbooks and full-length manuscripts from several of the writers discussed here including Tisa Bryant, LaTasha Diggs, and R. Erica Doyle. Levitsky’s most recent project is the Office of Recuperative Strategies a collaboration that opened in 2010

17. Sandoval’s methodology of the oppressed, which she presents as a science, is comprised of different technologies. A more thorough analysis of her use of both terms and to contextualize them within a larger history are worthwhile projects beyond the scope of this dissertation.

18. Dungy, “Preface,” xi.

with Christian Hawkey as a result of a course they team-taught at Pratt. Where Pënz was just a one-year collaboration, Mendi+Keith have been collaborating together for decades and constantly open their processes up to collaborate with other artists as well as members of the public. For instance, for their opera-masquerade, *Four Electric Ghosts*, which was developed at Toni Morrison's Atelier at Princeton University and premiered at the Kitchen in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan, NY, M+K collaborated with Angela's Pulse, a home for interdisciplinary collaborations, founded by sisters Paloma MacGregor, choreographer, and Patricia MacGregor, director. Angela's Pulse has also collaborated with Patricia Smith, a National Slam Champion and Cave Canem faculty member, to make a performance of *Blood Dazzler*, a book-length poem about hurricane Katrina, which premiered at Harlem Stage September 23-26, 2010. In conjunction with the performance of *Blood Dazzler*, Mendi Obadike organized a story circle with Wendi O'Neal of Junebug Productions which was founded by O'Neal's father, John O'Neal, a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. M+K also collaborated with poet-performers Karma Mayet Johnson and LaTasha Diggs who performed vocals with Mendi in *Four Electric Ghosts*. Like Bashir, Diggs is vital a figure in the macrocommunity of contemporary American poetry as Diggs moves through many different communities as she creates them. Her first book, *Twerk* (2013) was published by Belladonna Press, and she coedited the journal *Coon Bidness: The Critical ASS Issue* (2011) with performer, poet, and scholar Greg Tate. *Coon Bidness* published many of the writers from the community of writers and artists that exist differentially as they treat identity as a masquerade. The cover of the magazine is a photograph "GOLDLICKS (Wangechi Mutu)" by Marilyn Minter. The photograph is a close up of a face—mouth open, blue lips, and glittery gold tongue—verging on the grotesque. By having this image on the cover, the magazine plays with negative

representations of blackness—historical coons in the title and contemporary gold-teeth gansta in the image. Identity operates as a masquerade because these representations shimmer rather than confine. The magazine moves through the history of representations of blackness trying them on, performing them without being limited or confined by them, and through this performance breaks the hold these representations have on us. *Coon Bidness* works to document the community while also creating it and making it visible. Part of that work includes the events to celebrate and promote the magazine. While neither Mendi nor Keith Obadike were published in *Coon Bidness*, they were both at the January 31, 2011 launch at the Kitchen in which Paloma MacGregor performed a dance about pollution in our oceans.

At the center of many of M+K's projects is a global conversation. Keith's family is Nigerian, and M+K explore the nexus of America and Nigeria in pieces including "Uli Suite" (1998-1999), "4-1-9, Or You Can't View a Masquerade by Standing in One Place" (2005), and "African Metropole: Sonic City Lagos" (2012). Their project *Big House/Disclosure* (2007) explores the impact of the relationship between Britain and Africa in the transatlantic slave trade on contemporary economics and memory in Chicago, United States. "The Sour Thunder: An Internet Opera" (2002) moves between Atlanta, US and Santiago, DR.

The unnamed community I have been laying out exhibits differential consciousness as its members treat identity as masquerade and build community on the borderlands. While Pënz and M+K have specific projects that also work to document and create community around art practices, the effort to document and create community is a central aspect of the third collaboration, the Encyclopedia Project. The community being formed around Pënz, M+K, and Encyclopedia where for Pënz it is Bashir, Lara, and Ogunji that are visibly a nexus and for M+K Mendi is a nexus, Bryant is most visibly overlaps with the community as I have been laying it

out using the U.S. third world feminist tradition in African American poetry. Bryant's photographs of Pënz in New York are featured on the Pënz artblog. And as mentioned above, Bryant and Ogunji were on a panel together at Fire & Ink III. However there are additional overlaps. Mellis' book *The Revisionist* was published by Calamari Press who also published a novel by Robert Lopez who teaches at Pratt. Bryant overlaps with Pënz but also with the contemporary American poetry community. She has been one of the readers at the historic New Year's Day reading at the Poetry Project and Belladonna published a section of a novel in progress. Additionally, Bryant is a member of the Dark Room Collective which was co-founded by Thomas Sayers Ellis and Sharan Strange in Cambridge, Massachusetts in response to the death of James Baldwin. One of the goals of the Dark Room Collective was to build community among black poets in academia, and the community they created centered around a house in Cambridge and served as an inspiration for Cave Canem. Several of the members of the Dark Room were students at Harvard including Ellis, Strange, Kevin Young, Tracie K. Smith, and John Keene; Bryant was one of the Dark Room members who grew up in the area and had more of an autodidactic approach to her education, which she discusses in her entry, "Autodidact" published in *Encyclopedia Volume 1, A-E*. Through her involvement with the Dark Room, she found her way into academia and applied to the MFA at Brown University which did not require applicants to have a bachelor's degree. It was at Brown where she met her co-collaborators and conceived of Encyclopedia.

Encyclopedia uses cross-referencing as an organizational tool that creates community. As Bryant explained in a presentation at the Schomburg Library's Ordinary People series, the cross-referencing in encyclopedia creates connections between writers and artists who wouldn't necessarily be connected in a macrocommunity that at times mirrors, perpetuates, and creates

divisions of race, class, gender, and sexuality that occur in American culture at large. Juliana Spahr and Stephanie Young mark and address the sexism in the contemporary poetry community in their essay “Numbers Trouble” which was a response to Jennifer Ashton’s assertion that there is no longer gender discrimination in American poetry. Spahr and Young take an empirical approach in which they count and compare the representation of women to men in American poetry. From their data, they assert that there is still gender discrimination. In their essay’s conclusion they move from thinking exclusively about gender to thinking differentially about identity. They write: “We did not chart out race and class as we did this. But we can assure you without a doubt that racial and class representation is dramatically skewed toward white middle-class writers in all the contemporary writing scenes we examined, way more than gender. And that this also has a lot to say about the failures of feminism.” Encyclopedia exists in the place that Spahr and Young use their essay to imagine, “a feminism that begins with an editorial commitment to equitable representation of different genders, races, and classes but that doesn’t end there—an editorial practice that uses equitable representation to think about how feminism is related to something other than itself, and to make writing that thinks about these things visible.” Encyclopedia does not merely work against the discrimination in contemporary American letters by committing to publish at least one half writers of color but they actively build a cross-cultural community through cross-referencing. In Encyclopedia cross-referencing operates as a differential power. The differential here is not just with race, gender, and sexuality but also with the global nature of the community. For instance if we start with the entry “Bazaar,” written by Mahwash Shoaib, we are in a seventeenth century Punjab Hills watercolor. “Bazaar” is cross referenced with “Action,” written by Melissa Maristuen, which takes us to the summer of 2004 search for weapons of mass destruction and gay rights. “Action” is cross-referenced with

“America,” written by Minal Hajratwala, and “collective,” written by Kofi Natambu. “America” is a short meditation on “the fiction of Arab terrorism” after the Timothy McVeigh bombings in Oklahoma.¹⁹ “America” is cross-referenced with “ego,” which does not have an entry. “Collective” provides the history of Detroit-based Creative Arts Collective 1979-1990. “Collective” is cross-referenced with “Ending,” written by Micah Perks, an essay that mixes literary criticism with memoir. The movement between geographies, cultures, and genres is easy and taken for granted without critical explanation of the movement; the editors just let it happen and emerge, an approach quite different from how our bodies are allowed to move across different national geographies or gender identities. The editors of Encyclopedia apply a differential lens to documenting and creating the literary community of which they are a part.

It is not surprising that a community of poets that operate using the technology of differential consciousness will be ripe with collaboration because the ability to collaborate is at the heart of differential movement: “where people meet, where they must negotiate their differences, where they may contest each other’s powers, and where, while retaining their bodily borders, they may momentarily ecstatically merge.”²⁰ Cave Canem, which started as a collaboration, in many ways is becoming an institution through the collaborative practices of Derricotte, Eady, and Micklem with the faculty, the fellows, and the staff. The Dark Room Collective started as a collaboration between two people that grew into a collective. The differential operates in these collaborations as Eady is a black man, Derricotte is a black woman, and Micklem is a white woman; Ellis is a black man and Strange a black woman. The communities formed around collaborations that already navigated difference create community that will also navigate difference.

19. Hajratwala, “America,” 33.

20. Laird, *Women Coauthors*, 13.

It is not just in organizations and projects that this community collaborates; they also collaborate on books. Poet and scholar John Keene and poet and artist Christopher Stackhouse collaborated on *Seismosis* (2006). Poet, scholar, and community activist Erica Hunt collaborated with renowned artist Alison Saar on *Arcade* (1996). The poet, scholar, and artist Ross Gay has collaborated with fellow painter Kim Thomas on several art books. Krista Franklin and Ruth Ellen Kocher collaborated on *Sl*tbook* (2013), a handmade book for the exhibit “Handmade/Homemade Sister Exhibit” at Musehouse, Philadelphia. Jaded Ibis Press has a series dedicated to publishing collaborations between artists and writers.

There are also literary collaborations that move beyond the technology of the book. The Black Took Collective (BTC) is a collaboration between poet scholars Duriel E. Harris, Ronaldo V. Wilson, and Dawn Lundy Martin. BTC developed the process of live-writing using the technology of a computer, projector, screen, and a word processing program. During their events as one poet reads or performs another poet will be writing their thoughts and responses that are projected on a screen above the reader. BTC premiered this technique at the Contemporary Writing Series at the University of Pittsburgh Friday, September 22, 2006 and read the transcript of the collaboratively written document at the Schomburg Library as part of the Cave Canem tenth anniversary conference on Sunday, October 22, 2006.

Fiction writer and scholar Alexander Chasin recently turned a house into a collaborative writing project that challenges notions of genre. Over the course of three weekends in June 2013, Chasin invited writers to organize writing workshops in which registered participants and members of the public wrote on the walls of the house, the floors of the house, ceilings, a couch with a white sheet draped over it, and the windows. Writers who participated include the

Kundiman poets, Wendy Walters, Anne Carson, Rachel Levitsky with dancer Jovanina Pagano, and Tracie Morris.

Though not a comprehensive survey of collaborations within the community of poets operating differentially within the macrocommunity of contemporary American poetry, this initial sketch works to highlight the different collaborations and approaches to collaboration within poetry and the connections between the different poets, writers, and artists that form the community.

If there are so many collaborations, why specifically Pënz, M+K, and Encyclopedia as case-studies for analyzing how the processes of collaboration can be a decolonial force by living out through processes of collaboration a textual utopia? These three collaborations, taken together offer a powerful blueprint for decolonizing globalization through world-making processes, for Pënz decolonizes time, M+K decolonizes space (geographic and digital), and Encyclopedia decolonizes knowledge. To decolonize globalization we need to be working on the large structures of time, space, and knowledge and how to have freedom of movement within them. The ways in which we have been confined within these structures has been naturalized. We take it for granted that the Gregorian calendar and Greenwich Mean Time organize our sense of sequence. We take it for granted that we need passports and visas to travel across national borders—we take it for granted that national borders are part of geography. We take it for granted that knowledge is something transcendent that can exist independent of the social forces that create it. These three collaborations challenge normative constructions of time, space, and knowledge.

Secondly, I choose to focus on these collaborations because each one has a different number of collaborators. Pënz is a collaboration among four, M+K Obadike is a collaboration

between two, and Encyclopedia is a collaboration among three. Much of the research on literary collaboration is on collaboration between two people. By focusing on collaborations in groups with multiple numbers of members, we resist creating an uncritical norm for collaboration.

Thirdly, all three of these collaborations are what I call open collaborations. An open collaboration occurs when there is a core group of people working together on a project but they find ways to open up their collaboration for other people to become involved. This concept of open collaboration, one of my contributions to the academic scholarship on collaboration, is key for thinking about how to build community around art practices. A closed collaboration can create a world of alternate power dynamics—as discussed above in the collaboration between Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba and in the collaboration between González and Eimer. These are closed collaborations that create liberatory (or decolonizing) worlds. Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba think about the ways form invites the reader to be co-creator of meaning through discussion of the gap. The form of their novel does not allow complete absorption; Juba's psychemes force the reader into critical engagement. In a closed collaboration, the reader can still be figured as co-collaborator but the reader does not change the collaboration. An open collaboration is distinguished by its ability of teaching skills for the readers to become active co-collaborators that write the text, not just read the text. For example, Mendi+Keith Obdaike, which is a husband-wife duo, build open components in most of their collaborations. In *Big House/Disclosure* they worked with Northwestern students to gather street interviews of Chicago residents on racism, architecture, house music, and the recently passed slavery disclosure ordinance. The students and residents, thus, become part of this world that M+K create in their work (in this case, a world where we think critically about the history and legacies of racial slavery). Additionally, open collaborations become a two-way street, where the collaborators are

also influenced by the participants. As M+K explain in an interview about their process in *Big House/Disclosure*, “So while we wouldn’t say that our original ideas about the content of the project necessarily change when our projects are interactive...we have found that artworks that invite an engagement with the public necessarily broaden our sense of that public. We are, in fact, reaching for that kind of experience.”²¹

The past twenty-five years have seen an increase of scholarship on collaboration offering a variety of terms used for analysis, perhaps most notably the two-part series edited by Holly Laird in *Tulsa Studies of Women’s Literature* which opens with Elbrecht and Fakundiny’s “Scenes from a Collaboration.” While some of the opening essay’s terminology, like “architecture of freedom” and “parallactic sequence,” are useful, this dissertation will turn elsewhere to what Sandoval calls the methodology of the oppressed, methodology of emancipation, and hermeneutics of love to analyze how the utopian space created in a collaboration can transform the social. What is especially valuable is that Sandoval develops this apparatus differentially moving through the academic erasure of the U.S. third world feminists and building allegiances with other more visible traditions.

Sandoval’s apparatus operates on the assumption that there are multiple worlds—there is the world created by dominant ideology, and there is the world created by the methodology of the oppressed. The relationship of these two worlds is not binary. Rather the methodology of the oppressed exists in an Althusserian “within, yet beyond” dominant ideology. According to Sandoval, Althusser posits that a “citizensubject can learn to identify, develop, and control the means of ideology, that is, marshal the knowledge necessary to ‘break with ideology’ while at the same time *also* speaking in, and from within, ideology” (44). To exist “within, yet beyond”

21. Obadike, interview by Jason Huff, 38.

is the function that allows the methodology of the oppressed to decolonize dominant ideology. Through the process of decolonization additional worlds are being created—that is the beyond. The within is a decolonizing process; and the beyond is a world-making process. This “within, yet beyond” is also called “meta-ideology” and the “masquerade”.

Sandoval’s worlds are created through rhetorics, and she draws heavily throughout her book on Roland Barthes’s “Myth Today,” the concluding essay of *Mythologies* and presents his rhetoric of supremacy to explain the moves that are used to create and maintain dominant ideology or a sense of the world as fixed and static—as already made—instead of as the mobile world that it actually is. The methodology of the oppressed, which can decolonize reality, frees our imagination from constraints of dominant narratives. Through the course of her book Sandoval shows how these moves overlap with a variety of moves from feminist, decolonial, poststructuralist, and postmodern theory. In what follows I outline the vocabulary that Sandoval develops for analyzing texts and creating social movements that she calls the methodology of the oppressed. This is the vocabulary I use to analyze the literary collaborations in the following chapters.

Love is at the center of Sandoval’s apparatus and has two primary: the processes of love create the realm of the methodology of the oppressed, which is a methodology of emancipation, and love is a technology that allows movement between the realm of dominant ideology and the realm of the methodology of the oppressed, a realm of freedom. The definition of love here is not limited by the Western narrative “falling in love” in which the script is predetermined. The realm of the methodology of the oppressed is created through revolutionary love. Sandoval draws on Barthes’s *A Lover’s Discourse* in which he theorizes the punctum as an example of love as drifting:

Turning thus from narrative's comforts and limits, from love's "Western" modes, Barthes searches for the punctum, he finds what is "obtuse," he gives himself over, he drifts "on the intractable bliss that beckons" in that place of life that survives outside and between narrative forms, where meanings live in some free, yet marked and wounded space, a site of shifting, morphing meanings that transform to let him in. (143)

The punctum brings us to the place of zero degree which is the place where meaning is made. To reach there, a break, a puncture is needed. This is the place where Sandoval's work overlaps with the increasingly influential philosophy of Fred Moten. In *In the Break: the Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (2003) Moten mixes Jacques Derrida and Nathaniel Mackey on invagination with the imperative of Duke Ellington to love. Moten develops a lens for seeing the Black radical tradition based in avant-garde ethics and aesthetics and the movement between Greenwich Village, Harlem, and Paris. The aesthetics of the black radical tradition are based in the sounds of Aunt Hester's scream as represented by Frederick Douglass in *Narrative*. This scream Moten uses to complicate and expand Marx's contemporaneous conception of a commodity that speaks. For Moten, the place where language becomes sound without semantic meaning is the place from which we can transform social structures.

In *Methodology of the Oppressed*, which was published three years before *In the Break*, that place of invagination goes by several names including Barthes's zero degree of language, Hayden White's middle voice of the verb, and Anzaldúa's *amor en Aztlán*. We reach that realm through the punctum—through breaking out of our shiny and whole narratives of self and world. This breaking is what Sandoval via Fanon calls bursting of self. And according to Sandoval, Fanon differs from Barthes in one key way—Fanon sees that by bursting the self, we can join a

revolutionary cadre of people, what Sandoval calls the new countrypeople-warriors. These revolutionary warriors have the skills for decolonizing globalization by building worlds within, yet beyond the worlds of dominant ideology. Revolution, here, is not an overthrow of the system; the radical change is to find a freedom within a system of oppression by building an alternate world within, yet beyond the systems of oppression.

One of the primary activities of the new countrypeople-warriors is what Sandoval building on Jameson's 1984 essay "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" calls differential cognitive mapping. She develops this strategy for decolonizing our imaginations, which she gets by remixing Jameson's theory of cognitive mapping with the praxis of differential consciousness of the U.S. third world feminists. Jameson's cognitive mapping is a call for an aesthetic practice that can chart spatial and social space: "a pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system."²² Sandoval argues that Jameson's understanding of the subject as either whole or fragmented is insufficient for the type of "pedagogical political culture" he imagines while it also renders invisible "an anticolonial, mestiza, U.S. feminist of color, queer, and differential conceptualization of the subject" which inhabits both a modernist/historicist whole subjectivity and a poststructuralist/postmodernist fragmented position (33-34). The differential consciousness of the U.S. third world feminists makes a praxis of what Jameson calls cognitive mapping. As Sandoval explains:

Under this third form of subjectivity, the citizen-subject is understood to exist, just as it is understood as always capable of dissipating, but both in quotients measured in order to bring about forms of being that will be capable of

22. Jameson, "Postmodernism," 92.

intervening in power... The radical form of cognitive mapping that differential consciousness allows develops such knowledge into a method by which the limits of the social order can be spoken, named, and made translucent: the body passes through and is transformed. (34, 36)

The skills of differential cognitive mapping are the skills of seeing the masquerade. If we believe the world to be static then we exist in that realm, and if Jameson is correct, we are now all oppressed in that realm. However, if we are able to see the masquerade, which means we are able to see the construction of the realms, what Barthes calls being a mythologist, then we are able to intervene in the construction of reality and by using the skills of the methodology of the oppressed, we can decolonize our imaginations. The ability to intervene in power was the praxis of the U.S. third world feminists and as this dissertation develops is the praxis of this contemporary cohort of writers.

While most of this dissertation is focused on the methodology of the oppressed, there is an additional and equally essential aspect to Sandoval's physics of love—the oppositional social movements. The relationship between the two is dynamically woven, and the differential activity is the portal between the two. The methodology of the oppressed consists of semiology which is reading the signs; deconstructing the sign-systems (being able to identify how power is created and maintained), meta-ideology which is manufacturing new meaning in a sign system in order to make visible its history as a sign-system, differential movement which “allows consciousness to challenge its own perimeters from within ideology” (111) and democracies which is the ethical technology. If we follow the line of differential movement it brings us to the oppositional social movements of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s which Sandoval breaks into four types: revolutionary, supremacist, exclusionary, equal-rights, and differential. The differential is

the oppositional social movement able to move within and between and through the other social movements and was the praxis of the U.S. third world feminists. Sandoval argues that it is the differential social movement that is necessary for radical transformation; otherwise the movement becomes its own master narrative. For Sandoval the methodology of the oppressed can work for analyzing texts; to use the apparatus for creating social change, engagement with the oppositional social movements is necessary.

This dissertation animates Sandoval's apparatus by using the methodology of the oppressed to analyze how collaborations are decolonizing our world and to analyze the power dynamics of the worlds they are building. The theories of feminist collaboration are saying the same thing that Sandoval is saying—transformation happens through building a world, within yet beyond. Cotera allows us to see that link. Electa Arenal and Stacey Schlau describe the world making processes of feminist collaboration by using arithmetic to contrast different approaches to collaboration: “While I’ve worked with others—in political action, coediting, planning activities, our collaboration has been richer and deeper than most. I wrote one piece with another person, but it was a composite back and forth ($1+1=2$), not a synergistic togetherness ($1+1=3$).”²³ This idea of “ $1+1=3$ ” and “synergistic togetherness” are the cosmogonic properties of collaboration which Elbrecht and Fakundiny argue create Juba. Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba posit you have to desire the collaborative world under formation over the old power structures in order to commit to building that world. For them, that commitment to the collaboration, to working together, is a jail that is a jell, and that commitment becomes the architecture of their freedom as embodied by Juba who is the consciousness that exists in the wilds formed through the collaboration. While Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba

23. Schlau and Arenal, “Escribiendo yo,” 42-43.

provide a cosmogonic praxis for understanding collaboration as a process for creating a world within, yet beyond, Sandoval provides a theoretical science for analyzing how creating worlds with alternate power dynamics decolonize globalization. Thus, the dissertation “Architectures of Freedom: Literary Collaboration in Contemporary American Poetry” animates Sandoval’s apparatus to analyze how this contemporary cohort of warrior writers are decolonizing globalization through literary collaboration.

Chapter two, “Architecture of Freedom I: Pënz (It’s Pronounced Pants): Commitment to Decolonizing the Time” analyzes the artblog *Pënz (It’s Pronounced Pants)* and how it decolonizes time through building a calendar within the Gregorian calendar. The chapter reads Pënz as a concrete example of the Althusserian position of “within, yet beyond” and uses Barthes’s essay “Myth Today” to explain how the Gregorian calendar operates as tool for colonizing time. The Gregorian calendar which is a specific historical instance of organizing time has been naturalized as the real where we perceive the Gregorian calendar as the only or the best possible tool for organizing time rather than a tool that has emerged from specific historical needs. The Pënz collaboration denaturalizes the Gregorian calendar by building a calendar to make time expand.

Chapter three “Architecture of Freedom II: How Mendi+Keith Obadike Use Differential Cognitive Mapping to Decolonize Geography ” analyzes the collaborations of husband wife duo Mendi+Keith Obadike and how they decolonize space, both digital and geographic, by showing and building masquerades around race and wealth. The chapter focuses on Sandoval’s remix of Jameson’s cognitive mapping and the skills of the new countryside warriors—ideology as masquerade, zero degree of language, and trickster consciousness—to understand the oeuvre of husband-wife collaborators Mendi+Keith Obadike as they use a variety of media and technology

to contend with constructions of race from the movement between the African coast, Europe, and the United States—both geographic movement and economic movement.

Chapter four “Architecture of Freedom III: How the Encyclopedia Project Decolonizes Knowledge” analyzes the Encyclopedia Project and how it decolonizes knowledge by moving it back to the realm of active speech rather than already predetermined. The Encyclopedia Project is an editorial collaboration that publishes a form that the editors describe as literary journal meets alphabetic encyclopedia. The three editors, Tisa Bryant, Miranda Mellis, and Kate Schatz met at the MFA program at Brown University where they conceived of their project and created a publishing company (Encyclomedia) to publish it. It is a beautiful book project where contributors write entries for words that they either chose or were given. The chapter on *Encyclopedia* focuses on how a community is created through bursting normative approaches to canon formation.

Chapter five, “Oppositional Social Movements in the Third Millennium” examines the links between the contemporary literary community and oppositional social movements. In the final chapter, we turn to the oppositional social movements and the question of the extent to which this contemporary cohort is involved with the social movements and to what extent should they be.

2.0 ARCHITECTURE OF FREEDOM I: PËNZ (*IT'S PRONOUNCED PANTS*)'S COMMITMENT TO DECOLONIZING TIME

At the end of Gregorian year 2007, the Patronesa of Masonite published the post “Anyone in Austin Interested in Doing an Oil-Painting-a-Day for a Year?” on the online community website www.craigslist.org. The post offered a box of 366+ tiles to anyone living in Austin, Texas, who was willing to use them to make art every day of 2008 and document the process on a blog. This offer spurred a year-long collaboration among four artists—two writers and two visual artists—who committed to doing the project together. To document the collaboration, they created the blog *Pënz (It's Pronounced Pants)* (www.penzitspronouncedpants.blogspot.com) using Blogger. To organize their collaboration, they restructured time. Instead of relying on the solar Gregorian calendar and standard time, they created a calendar that made time expand through having two types of days—the lunar day and the Art Day. Each tile marked the passing of one lunar day. Four lunar days—the length of the cycle to share the process of making art every day between four—made an Art Day.

The Pënz calendar is a lunar calendar made up of Art years and begins with Art Year 1 also referred to as AY 2008 and AY 08. An Art Year is made up of thirteen Art Months, an Art Month is made up of seven Art Days, and an Art Day is made up of four lunar days: Morning; Noon; Twilight; and Night. There are no weeks. Instead of weeks there is a rotation in which the four parts of the day become days in and of themselves thus making time expand. For

instance, morning in the Gregorian calendar is just part of the rotation of a lunar day, while in the Pënz calendar morning is the length of a full lunar day. The Pënz tiles and the process of four people creating art every day restructured time.

Days before the project started, the Patronesa offered the collaborators a second box of tiles. While the first box was used to structure the collaboration, the second box was used to open the collaboration to a wider world. The collaborators wrapped these tiles in instructions and handed them out to their friends and left them in a variety of locations throughout the world inviting the finder of the tile to create art on it and email a digital picture to be posted on the blog as a guest Pënz.

In Pënz the collaborative world under formation is a world in which time is a tool of emancipation and not a tool of oppression in the service of capitalism. The tiles in the first box become the architecture of a world formed through processes of emancipation. The tiles in the second box function as a punctum, as a vehicle that enables transport between the realm of dominant ideology and the methodology of the oppressed.

The Pënz calendar as a methodology of the oppressed can and does transform dominant ideology, which for Sandoval is a colonizing consciousness that remains unchanged in the encounter with difference. Colonization is “the political and strategic quest for nationalist solidification of strength and identity.” Colonization’s minions include identity categories, styles of analysis, narrative, and social scripts (146). The methodology of the oppressed goes by several names including, a methodology of emancipation, a hermeneutics of love, and a physics of love. These terms are the different ways Sandoval names the apparatus that she constructs to “decolonize the imagination.”²⁴

24. Davis, “Preface,” xiii

One of the ways dominant ideology controls reality is through the human function of measuring time. The Gregorian calendar, which was created to address the specific needs of Rome, is a Christian solar calendar forever tied to the logic of the Jewish lunar calendar and emerging as the global standard for measuring time. The Pënz calendar challenges and calls into question the limits of the Gregorian calendar. The Gregorian calendar from its inception was used as a tool for moving global capital; its creation was about the need for a standard temporal reference framework.²⁵ As Soraj Hongladarom explains in an article on the debates surrounding measuring time in Thailand: “Due to the expansion of the Europeans and their ways of thinking and practicing throughout the globe in the past four or five centuries, time-keeping in most countries of the world today changed from the old system of observing nature in the locality, to the familiar one of relying on Western calendars and clocks.”²⁶ The universalization of a standard temporal reference framework serves the needs of globalizing economic systems and works in conjunction with how mobile technology is used to facilitate global capital. In the nineteenth century it was the railway system and factory system that demanded a further standardization of time than the mere day. Through this need came the universalization of GMT which was created to coordinate the British Postal Service.²⁷ To decolonize time the Pënz calendar does not break with the Gregorian calendar; it exists in an Althusserian relationship of within, yet beyond dominant ideology’s Gregorian calendar.

The specific Althusserian beyond that Pënz builds is what Joyce Elbrecht, Lydia Fakundiny, and Jael B. Juba describe in the autocriticism on their collaboration as the jail that is a jell. Juba, who is the fictional self created from the collaborative processes of Elbrecht and

25. I get the term “standard temporal reference framework” from Eviatar Zerubavel’s extensive work on the sociology of time.

26. Hongladarom, “The Web of Time,” 242.

27. Zerubavel, “The Standardization of Time,” 6-7.

Fakundiny, explains her existence as the “the collective being of their collaboration, what glances off them and cools. Their jell. And their jail, the hollow wherein they find shelter from their street lives and from their ordinary life-routines, the space wherein they confine their freedom. A jail of their jell, always cooling, melting, shifting the shape of their space together. I am the architecture of their freedom.”²⁸ The jail for Pënz is their calendar which locks them into two types of daily commitments—to post on the blog each lunar day and to make art on a tile and post an image of it to the blog for each Art Day. The four artists lock themselves into this regime because they “desire the power dynamics of the collaborative world under formation more than the unextended ‘yours’ and ‘mine’ of the old power structures.”²⁹ (251). The processes of the collaboration are concrete models that can be used to continue building a world alternate to dominant ideology.

Maria Cotera, in her book *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita González, and the Poetics of Culture*, concludes her analysis of the collaboration between Jovita González and Margaret Eimer by extending this idea of the “collaborative world under formation.” As developed in chapter 1, Cotera argues that through collaboration a utopian fictional world is created in the collective real. By analyzing the collaboration between González, a Mexican American, and Eimer, an Anglo American, Cotera shows how love becomes a process for moving between racial and national boundaries in the utopian world of the novel and the collaborative world in which the novel was written. The utopian world imagined in the fiction is realized through the process of writing the fiction. Similarly, Pënz is a utopian project that imagines a fictional world that exists in a different temporal order and brings that temporal order into the real through the processes of the collaboration.

28. Elbrecht and Fakundiny, “Scenes from a Collaboration,” 252.

29. *Ibid*, 251.

While the representation of the collaboration between Gonzalez and Eimer is the novel *Caballero*, the representation of the collaboration between the four artists in Austin is the blog *Pënz (It's Pronounced Pants)*. A blog is not only something to follow as it unfolds in time; the blog is also something that you can go back to and read as an archive or as literature. A blog when it becomes static can be read as a document issuing from a certain time and space (and political, social, and economic conditions) which are no longer present. In that sense I approach the blog *Pënz (It's Pronounced Pants)* as literature. This means that I will use the disciplinary practices developed and animated by scholars of literature for analysis. There is the collaboration, and there is the representation of the collaboration, which is the blog. My focus is the representation of the collaboration.

I make a distinction between the collaboration and the representation of the collaboration because the posts leading up to the first morning of the Art Year provide an interpretative framework for the project. The artists could have chosen to begin the blog on Art Month 1; Art Day 1; Morning but instead the blog precedes AY1. These posts in December 2007 of the Gregorian calendar work as a preface to the collaboration. They introduce the narrative beginnings of the collaboration, the calendar, the members of the collaboration some of the themes of the collaboration; and they also work to build excitement and suspense in terms of the transformative and revolutionary possibilities of the Art Year. Additionally, the preface works to introduce the two ways the tiles function in *Pënz*. The first I have mentioned: these are the tiles upon which art is created every day for the length of a calendar year. Even though they restructured the temporal framework, they also stayed within the original confines of the craigslist offer. They did, or attempted to, make a piece of art every day by the standard calendar. These tiles on which they created art were used to structure the collaboration between

the four artists which required the expansion of time animated by the Pënz calendar. These tiles operate in an Althusserian dynamic that builds a world within yet beyond.

The final posts of the preface introduce a second box of tiles which is the second way the tiles functioned. The tiles in the second box were used to open the collaboration for others to participate. These tiles were left in museums, by water fountains, and in airplanes—to name a few locations the tiles were left—and invited the finder of the tile to create art on the tile. The finder of the tile could then make a digital image of the art and email the image to Pënz. While the preface does not explain how this box functions, a reading of the formal aspects of the blog as well as self-conscious posts in the blog allow us to understand the function of the tiles in the second box as a punctum, where love operates as a technology for moving between the realm of the methodology of the oppressed and the realm of dominant ideology. The post “On Seeing Blue-Claudia F. Manz,” discussed further below, describes the process of making art on the tile as love and describes love as a process that unfolds spontaneously in time through rupture and chance.

2.1 THE NARRATIVE BEGINNINGS OF PËNZ

The February New Moon is an eclipse! Eclipses happen when the Sun and the Moon join within 10 degrees of the transiting Lunar Nodes. Eclipses are known through out history to mark the beginnings and ends of cycles, movements, governments and leaders.

–Anne Orteele (quoted in “are you ready....to breathe.....”)

The first post of the blog Pënz is titled “This is where we begin.” It sets up the narrative beginnings of the collaboration and provides a brief introduction to the members of the collaboration:

The Materialist was grazing. Looking for new landscapes - a shade pastoral. She received a message, forwarded it to the others: The Linguist, The Feeler and The Conceptualist. The Feeler made the connection. The Linguist called forth the people. The Conceptualist cooked crepes. They met for hours a circle around the table.

The post begins by introducing the four members of the collaboration: the Materialist; the Linguist; the Feeler; and the Conceptualist. The members are referred to by allegorical names, and each member is described as having a role in the creation of the collaboration: finding the project; making the connection; organizing the group; and cooking. This works to create a sense that we are not in hierarchical relationships, rather they are all existing with each other with similar power but acknowledging that the strengths that they bring are complementary. Through reading the blog and following its hyperlinks, further details about the members accumulate. The Linguist who wrote this post is poet Samiya Bashir who in addition to the collaborative blog Pënz maintains the blog *ScryptKeeper*. The Linguist uses hyperlinks to have the two blogs overlap at times. For instance, the fifth post on Pënz, “ScryptKeeper: Pënz (it’s pronounced pants) is born” links to a post on Bashir’s blog that casts the Art Year as a commitment.

According to Bashir, the Linguist, the Art Year “starts with a gift, a promise and commitment. For Pënz (it’s pronounced pants) it started with four women saying yes.” In a post at the end of the first Art Month, Bashir posts further information on the members of the

collaboration explaining that they are “four black women artists—two writers, two visual artists.”

The four women are Samiya Bashir, the Linguist, Ana-Maurine Lara, the Conceptualist, Senalka McDonald, the Feeler, and Wura-Natasha Ogunji, the Materialist. Bashir, a poet, has two published collections: *Where the Apple Falls* (RedBone Press, 2005) and *Gospel* (RedBone Press, 2009). Bashir also edited *Best Black Women’s Erotica* (Cleis Press, 2003) and co-edited the anthology *Role Call: A Generational Anthology of Social and Political Black Art & Literature* (Third World Press, 2002). Lara, author of the novel *Erzulie’s Skirt* (RedBone Press, 2006) maintains the blog *The Magic Makers: A Record of the Lives of Lesbian, Gay, Transgendered, and Two-Spirit Artists of Color* (<http://themagicmakers.blogspot.com/>). McDonald is “a visual and performance artist who focuses on the monstrous side of domesticity.”³⁰ Ogunji is an internationally renowned visual and performance artist whose projects include stitching images into paper and exploring the temporal limits of photography.

As explained in the first post, “This is where we begin,” Ogunji, the Materialist, found the offer of the gessoed tiles. The person that Pënz names the Patronesa of Masonite posted the offer on craigslist. The second section of “This is where we begin” cuts and pastes the craigslist post from the Patronesa, “Anyone in Austin Interested in Doing an Oil-Painting-a-Day for a Year?” The Patronesa imagined the project as being done by one person over the course of one year. To re-imagine the project for four people required a new calendar in which one day, which consists of morning, noon, twilight, and night, becomes four days. Each member of Pënz chose their favorite time of day and were responsible for creating art on a tile for that day. The Feeler posts at morning; the Materialist posts at noon; the Conceptualist posts at twilight; and the

30. “About,” Senalka McDonald.

Linguist posts at night. In addition to sharing the process of making art on a tile every day of 2008, the four artists committed to posting on the blog every lunar day. On lunar day Morning, the Feeler, Senalka McDonald, is responsible for making art on the tile and posting it to the blog but the other three artists also post to the blog. These posts include links to other websites, recipes, poems, notes, photographs, and videos. Over the course of the Art Year which exists within, yet beyond the year 2008 in the Gregorian calendar, the four women created art every day to fulfill the requirements that came with the offer of a gift of 366+ gessoed tiles.

What about the offer was so compelling that it inspired a restructuring of temporal space?

The form of the original message begins with a marketing tone:

Do you have any interest in doing a small painting (3" x 5") a day for the next year?

Are you willing to start a blog to document it? (blogspot.com is free and easy)

Do you live in the Austin area?

The set of three questions that explain the limits of the project are written in the second-person and directed to the reader, "you." They are in the same form as countless advertisements and create a message that only those interested should read on. The limits are living in the Austin area and willingness to make a painting every day for a year and to document the process. The tercet of questions does not explain why the paintings are to be 3" x 5." The second section of the message explains the project in further detail and moves from questions in the second person to first person declarative sentences:

I have a box of containing 400+ pieces of 3"x5," pre-gessoed, ready to paint on masonite.

I'm willing to give it to a person willing to swear to take up this challenge, who is willing to send me to either a link of their work online or jpegs of some of their paintings, who could meet me somewhere in Austin to pick up the box.

Because this message is written for craigslist, the writer who wants to offer the box is trying to use a set of rhetorical moves that will be understood by a large audience but will inspire only serious inquiry (use of the word "swear" and the requirement of a certain degree of professionalism—wants to see the work—there is a screening process). The tone then shifts from straightforward description of the logistics to two sentence couplets that assure the reader that this is not a scam. The final quatrain is what focuses the target audience further and shows what is at stake. The first couplet of the final quatrain is written in two sentence lines, the final couplet is a one sentence line followed by the final line which mixes elements of the previous sections using the two sentence line and returning to the form of the second-person question:

I WILL NOT SHIP THIS BOX. It's too damn heavy.

I do not want any of your paintings. I do not want any money.

I just want to see someone up and painting this year.

New Years is coming up. Are you ready for a painting resolution/revolution?

The first line of the last quatrain explains why the project must be local to Austin; the box is too heavy to ship. The use of caps is common among craigslist posters to signal that this stipulation is non-negotiable. The follow-up sentence which elaborates on this idea uses the humor of curses. The line is a line of hyperbolic statement with the use of caps and the curse on the weight of the box. The second sentence explains that it is not a scam while raising the question of what is wanted, by stating what is not wanted, which the third line promptly answers: "I just want to see someone up and painting this year." The use of "just" makes it appear like a simple

request. However, through reading the blog produced in response to this desire to “see someone up and painting” shows that the fulfillment of this desire was a complicated and challenging task that required a renaming of the year and a new calendar. The last line of the post cleverly looks to the future, using the trope of the New Year as a grabber and in the second sentence returning to the marketing ploy of asking a question in the second person to entice someone to commit to the project. It is not just a resolution to make art every day for a year. The last word of the post is “revolution.” By using the forward-slash, resolution is ambiguously linked to revolution.

The straightforward relationship between a new year’s resolution and the concept of a year which is marked by one revolution of the earth around the sun brings in the cosmogonic dimensions of the collaboration. The word revolution is also used to describe political, social, and economic change. As explained by Peter Collins in his book that uses analysis of architecture to argue the modern period begins in 1750, “A revolution was originally a mathematical or astronomical term meaning a rotation round an axis, and hence was also used figuratively to mean any cycle, such as the biological or historical cycles of growth, maturity and decay. But from the time of the English civil war it had begun to mean a radical political change, and today it means any radical change, as when we use the term ‘industrial revolution.’”³¹ At the end of this craigslist post, the Patronesa suggests that through a resolution, a commitment to painting for the time it takes for one revolution of the earth around the sun, additional types of revolution become possible.

The revolution in Pënz is not an overthrow of the system; the radical change is to find freedom within a system of oppression by building an alternate world within, yet beyond the system of oppression. This is the case for all three of the collaborations that this dissertation

31. Collins, *Changing Ideals*, 32.

examines. The energy does not go to overthrowing an oppressive system; the collaboration is a way to build an alternate world within the oppressive system. This methodology of emancipation, Sandoval calls differential consciousness. Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba provide a lens for how differential consciousness works as a cosmogonic force in a collaboration. They argue that this alternate world is a jail that is a jell that holds together the architecture of freedom. They are not speaking metaphorically here. As Cotera elaborates using the collaboration between Jovita Gonzalez and Margaret Eimer their collaborative novel was a utopian space of interracial love—however, through the practice of their collaboration the two writers live out the utopian space that the novel creates. The process of collaboration can and does create alternate and additional worlds. All three collaborations that this dissertation examines not only create the additional world but open up their world making for others to join.

The members of Pënz are conscious that they are architects. In the second post, “An Art Year, built on egg shaped table,” the Linguist posts a digital visual image of a wooden egg-shaped table with piles of the tiles stacked high and separated into four distinct groupings as a visual representation of the Pënz calendar. The Linguist describes the image as “the architecture of the beginning.” In Pënz the architecture of the collaboration, the jell that is a jail, is their calendar. The Pënz calendar is what organizes the collaboration.

2.2 THE RHETORIC OF SUPREMACY AND THE GREGORIAN CALENDAR: HOW THE GREGORIAN CALENDAR HAS BEEN NATURALIZED AS THE REAL

In fact, I'd prefer it if I could walk around barefoot. All the time. Without sandals, even.

--Ana-Maurine Lara (“Notes on a Sandal”)

*I'm feeling anxious about the fact that its night already, and tomorrow will be morning. The day
flys by so quickly!*

--Senalka ("Magic! A Secret tile....")

While we often perceive the Gregorian calendar as time itself, time is only captured and measured by the Gregorian calendar, which is just one of many structures that humans have built to measure time. It becomes difficult to discuss time because the logic of the Gregorian calendar and a linear sense of time are so pervasive in our vocabulary for time. For example, it would be easy to write that as early as 2100 BCE humans were struggling with the relationship between lunar and solar time. According to the *Hutchinson Chronology of World History*, in 2100 BCE Sumerians added an intercalated month to their lunar calendar to bring it in line with the solar year.³² However, with closer examination the phrase "as early as 2100 BCE" immediately signals time as linear and tied to the Gregorian calendar. In fact, the *Chronology* marks every entry with the date according to the Gregorian calendar. This move is anachronistic as it applies a temporal order outside of the temporal order of the moment to which it refers. The *Chronology* does not provide information on how the Sumerians might have referred to that moment in time. And, even the term "anachronistic" signals a sense that time is linear and does not fold back upon itself. As if never in ancient Rome did a clock bell ring as the clangs of the Elizabethan age reach past to break the logic of linear time. Additionally, Sumer shares a geographical location with Iraq which also uses the lunar Muslim calendar whose contemporaneity is made invisible by the *Chronology*.

One of the theories central to Sandoval was developed by Barthes in his essay "Myth Today" which concludes the collection *Mythologies*. In "Myth Today" Barthes creates a dialogic

32. *The Hutchinson Chronology of World History*, 3.

relationship between the rhetoric of supremacy and the methodology of the oppressed. The rhetoric of supremacy is a set of moves that can make a dynamic world appear immobile. The methodology of the oppressed is the set of moves that can liberate reality from the fetters of colonizing consciousness. Mythmakers use the moves of the rhetoric of supremacy to present the world as it is; mythologists create the world as it is changing. To apply the lens Barthes created to bear on our discussion of time, books such as the *Chronology* which present one reality as the only valid reality are myth-makers; it presents a dynamic world of multiplicity as a stable world by ordering diversity and choice hierarchically. The Pënz calendar is a methodology of emancipation; it mythologizes time-keeping by occupying the standard calendar thus making the constructedness visible of that which has been normalized. The Gregorian calendar, as Ann Prescott presents it in her essay about the years leading to England's adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1752, is a standardizing force. However, in the context of contemporary projects to reform the Gregorian calendar to greater immobility and fixedness, the aspects of it that are mobile become more visible. The rhetoric of supremacy and the methodology of the oppressed that Barthes develops in "Myth Today" allow us to see concretely and in detail the processes through which dominant ideology immobilizes time and the processes through which time is liberated.

To make these moves where one single approach is represented as the only possible approach even while acknowledging the existence of other approaches is what Chela Sandoval describes as the rhetoric of supremacy. In *Methodology of the Oppressed* Sandoval provides a digest of the rhetoric of supremacy from Barthes' *Mythologies*. Sandoval draws on Barthes because he "represents one of the first efforts to critique and outline "white" forms of consciousness by a member of the colonizing class responding to the decolonizing processes

going on at the time he was writing” (126). Sandoval argues that his work is overlooked by “contemporary theorists of culture” because of Barthes’ failure to contextualize his work within a tradition of decolonial theorists. Sandoval takes up Barthes to resituate him in a context that allows for his work to be in dialogue with a diversity of approaches towards similar decolonial goals.

Barthes concludes his essay “Myth Today” by listing the set of moves “which defines the dream of the contemporary bourgeois world” (150). This set of moves is able to make an active world appear immobile. It is through the appearance of immobility that the bourgeoisie is able to secure their power against change even when confronted with the active speech of those oppressed by the current power structures. As Sandoval—who names Barthes’s rhetoric “the rhetoric of supremacy”—explains: “The danger of this rhetoric and its categories for behavior is that it encourages the development of authoritarianism, domination, supremacism—and even fascism—in its practitioners” (118).

The seven figures of Barthes’s rhetoric of supremacy are inoculation, privation of history, identification, tautology, neither-norism, the quantification of quality, and the statement of fact. These figures are the moves of white consciousness in its colonizing mode. It is a consciousness that approaches difference without being transformed by the difference. It is important to note that it is not just a white colonizing consciousness that can inhabit the moves of the rhetoric of supremacy. According to Sandoval, the rhetoric of supremacy can and does “tempt, inhabit, and shape not only the most obedient and deserving citizen-subject, but also the most rebellious agent of social change” (119). The seven figures of the rhetoric of supremacy work in tandem to protect a consciousness from transformation in the encounter of difference. These figures protect the consciousnesses of individual citizen-subjects.

The Gregorian calendar is a technology for measuring time that we rhetorically position as the only way or best way to organize time. It is one of the foundational structures of the modern world that has been naturalized as the real. Sandoval explains the way the rhetoric of supremacy works: “What becomes called up and naturalized as the real, as history itself in this arrangement, is, to Barthes’s horror, however, a ‘dream’: the dream of the contemporary Euro-American world” (119). The sociologist of time Eviatar Zerubval explains that calendars are used to create group identity. A shared calendar allows for group solidarity; a different calendar allows for keeping groups separate. Zerubavel uses the relationships between Muslim, Jewish, and Christian holy days which fall on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday respectively to argue how calendars can be used to create group solidarity through using calendars to distinguish between different groups and maintain segregation.³³

The Gregorian calendar emerges from the specific tensions between the Jewish lunar calendar and the Roman Catholic solar calendar. The need to switch from the Julian calendar had to do with a problem of incommensurability between a solar and lunar calendar. The Julian calendar is a solar calendar; the Hebrew calendar is a lunar calendar. The reason these two calendars need to be in relation to each other is that Easter is linked to Passover: “The challenge is to reconcile the solar Julian count with the largely Jewish one, for Easter is related to Passover and hence to the first full moon after the vernal equinox.”³⁴ Easter is forever tied to Passover through trying to make sure it never falls on the same day as Passover. The calendar we now refer to as the Gregorian calendar was created because the Julian calendar needed to be tweaked to correspond to the lunar calendar of Judaism. The Gregorian calendar’s accuracy is essentially linked to the needs of a Christian cosmogony even as it presents itself as universal.

33. Zerubavel, “Easter and Passover.”

34. Prescott, “Refusing Translation,” 1.

The Gregorian calendar is one the ‘dreams’ that Euro-American ideology has “naturalized as the real,” and citizen-subjects use the different moves of the rhetoric of supremacy to support the dream. The following section will analyze how the rhetoric of supremacy operates in *The Hutchinson Chronology of World History*, a reference book generically organized using the structure of a time-line, and analysis of scholarly publications to maintain “the dream of the contemporary Euro-American world” as real.

The Hutchinson Chronology of World History is a four volume book that organizes world history as a chronology. Volume 1 is called *Ancient and Medieval World: Prehistory-AD 1491*. This is the type of history that represents white consciousness in its colonizing mode—it makes the West the center of the world. The overall structuring principle of the *Chronology* is the Gregorian calendar. Within the unfolding of history as a temporal experience, there are additional organizational subdivisions, including: “Science, Technology, and Medicine,” “Society,” “Arts and Ideas,” and “Politics, Governments, and Economics.” Even while these categories allow a forward and backward temporal movement between the different sections, these subsections are always organized within a larger section that limits the date range of the subsections.

In world history that orders time using the singular logic of the Gregorian calendar, as *The Hutchinson Chronology of World History* does, we see several of the figures of the rhetoric of supremacy operating including inoculation, privation of history, quantification of quality, and statement of fact. The *Chronology* presents the Gregorian calendar as the right calendar, as the most accurate, when it is not. Through its specific history it is becoming a globalized standard temporal reference framework.

The first figure in the rhetoric of supremacy, the inoculation, works by allowing in a little bit of difference but controlling how that difference is perceived: “by incorporating a small, tidy portion of difference, the good citizen-subject does not have to accept its depth or enormity, and thus s/he can remain as is... This figure, pose, or habit of consciousness thus protects not only the psyche, Barthes writes, but culture as well against any threatening difference that can cause the ‘generalized subversion’ of what is” (*Methodology of the Oppressed*, 119-120). In the *Chronology* all systems for measuring time are contained within one singular system (i.e. the Gregorian calendar). Additionally, the form of the *Chronology* only allows for a short description of each event. Thus the Sumerian calendar is reduced to one sentence: “c. 2100 BC. An intercalated month is added to the Sumerian calendar to bring the lunar calendar in line with the solar year.” To order world history provides glimpses to what has happened, but to order world history in the logic of the Gregorian calendar: this is the inoculation. The *Chronology* safely contains the Sumerian calendar in the past where its logic is deemed as no longer useful.

Rather than being contextualized within the material history of its emergence, the Sumerian calendar is contextualized with other things. Information on the Sumerian calendar appears on page three of the *Chronology*. The page, as all pages in the *Chronology* are, is white with small black text in serif-font. The top of the page has a heading that for odd pages gives the page number on the left side of the page, the section title in caps (for page three it is “Science, Technology, and Medicine”), and on the right side of the page in white font in a dark grey textbox are the time spans of the history provided on the page (for page three the dates are 3000 BC-2001 BC). On even pages the dates are on the upper left side of the page and page numbers are on the upper right. The information about the Sumerian calendar is placed under the subsection, “Science,” which is on the second column of the page. Titles of subsections are in

black text and centered in a light grey textbox. This subsection “Science, Technology, and Medicine” for the dates 3000 BC-2001 BC provides information about Egypt, England, Mesopotamia, Sumer, and China. Most of the information is about human systems for measuring the earth or time. The entries are a sentence or two at most with the exception being the entry about science in England which is seven sentences. By prioritizing the length of the entries on England, the Anglo bias of the *Chronology* is established.

There are two entries on the Sumerian calendar, each a single sentence. The *Chronology* explains, in c. 2400BC, “Sumerian scribes develop a calendar consisting of 12 30-day months (360 days). Then in 2100BC the Sumerians add an intercalated month to their calendar. No information is provided as to what might have prompted the Sumerians to want to coordinate the calendar with the solar year. In a move that Barthes has named, the privation of history, the Sumerian calendar is distanced from its material history.³⁵

It is not only in the individual entries that the privation of history operates. The whole move to order world history in a chronology is the figure of the privation of history in the rhetoric of supremacy. Different historical moments are removed of their particular context and put in the context of a Euro-American world as if that were the only real possible.

Similarly, the *Chronology* does not explain why it chooses the Gregorian calendar as its organizing principle, it just does. This is tautology, the fourth figure in the rhetoric of supremacy. It presents the Gregorian calendar as the most accurate calendar when it is not. The *Chronology* acts as if it were obvious that the Gregorian calendar is the correct way to organize time because it is the calendar that they use.

35. The privation of history is similar to the work that Sybille Fischer does theorizing disavowal in her book on the Haitian Revolution: *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (2004).

The sixth figure, the quantification of quality, uses a rhetoric of ‘more is better’ as a value system. As Sandoval explains, “The more, the better: more tears, increased emotion, added travel, hyperexperience, accumulated commodities, heaps of money, amassing collections, dwellings, books, knowledge—the measure is never finally enough” (123). The quantification of quality is about hyperaccrual. Indeed, the entire logic of the *Chronology* is about the hyperaccrual of facts as world history. To apply Barthes’s development of the quantification of quality highlights the problem of a book project like the *Chronology*, “for ‘the quantification of quality,’ quality disguised as quantity, economizes scholarly intelligence itself, and academic knowledge has come to ‘understand reality more cheaply’” (*Methodology of the Oppressed*, 123). The *Chronology* cheapens reality because it makes world history seem containable. The four volume collection is massive. Through the privation of history these books quantify quality, where the amassing of facts make complex structures to seem as if they just appeared rather than emerged from dynamic social, political, and economic circumstances: “the quantification of quality, wherein differences are counted, added up, cataloged, and hierarchically displayed in order to demonstrate the depth and quality of existence as it already is” (*Methodology of the Oppressed*, 125). This is what the *Chronology* does, and that which presents itself as world history is contained in the logic of the West.

The seventh and final figure, the statement of fact, is complicated because it is the figure that supports all the others: inoculation, privation of history, identification, tautology, neither-orism, quantification of quality. Barthes explains the aphorism and the maxim as speech acts that simplify thought and explains the proverb as a radical liberating speech act. The statement of fact is the aphorism and maxim. It takes on the guise of common sense—not an Aristotelian common sense grounded in a sensory perception of phenomena, but rather common sense as

“truth when it stops on the arbitrary order of him who speaks it” (“Myth Today,” 155). The choice to order the entire chronology of world history using the Gregorian calendar is statement of fact. It makes it seem as if it were common sense when really it is a way of valuing one specific tool for measuring time as if it were the only and right way to measure time.

It is not only reference books like *The Hutchinson Chronology of World History* that inhabit the poses of the rhetoric of supremacy to create the illusion that the Western calendar is the best instrument for measuring time. Dominant ideology operates similarly in David Ewing Duncan’s book *Calendar: Humanity’s Epic Struggle to Determine a True and Accurate Year*. Duncan provides us with an extensive history of the material factors that have shaped and are shaping the calendar as we know it at the turn of the third millennium. However, through enacting the rhetoric of supremacy, Duncan is able to maintain an illusion of the supremacy of the Gregorian calendar even as he presents it as emerging from particular political, social, and economic conditions. Duncan is able to sustain the dream of Western timekeeping as the best timekeeping through focusing his book on the quest for an accurate calendar. Even as his conclusion on atomic time discusses the impossibility of accuracy, “for in the end the earth itself is not entirely accurate,” Duncan is unable to imagine alternate reasons for having calendars.³⁶ In his lack of imagination, Duncan is animating the statement of fact in his presentation of the history of the calendar as a teleological Western desire for accuracy.

The extent to which the Gregorian calendar has colonized our sense of time can be seen in Ann Prescott’s essay, “Refusing Translation: The Gregorian Calendar and Early Modern English Writers.” In a nuanced analysis of the archive during the 150 years England resisted

36. Duncan, *Calendar*, 234.

adopting the Gregorian calendar, Prescott argues “not-translating” can create a “fear of disorder” but also promotes a “if not multiculturalism, exactly, then a broader awareness of others” (4).

Even an essay as nuanced as Prescott’s on the value of “not translating” can conclude by side-stepping what almost became an argument for having multiple calendars. The third figure in the rhetoric of supremacy is identification. In the encounter with difference, identification operates by camouflaging that which is different as identical. Prescott, in her essay that charts the history of England’s transition to the Gregorian calendar, animates identification to conclude her otherwise capable analysis of calendrical difference. She concludes her essay by contextualizing the historical moment of England’s transition to the Gregorian calendar to the global celebration of January 1, 2000 in her contemporary moment:

Eventually Britain sent eleven days into oblivion and followed Gregory’s ‘account’. Much of the planet was to do the same. That uniformity, literally visible as televised celebrations of 1 January 2000 circled the globe, has been useful for commerce and communication. Few in England now mourn the Julian Calendar. For a while, though, English rejection of papist novelty and fear of disruption had provided, along with inconvenience and occasional embarrassment, a chance for cleverness and a sharpened insight into cultural difference. Not translating can be almost as valuable as having everyone on the same page. (11)

In this passage identification works in conjunction with tautology to present an image of the Gregorian calendar as the only calendar. In a synecdochic move that includes taking a vehicle of dream production as a representation of the real, Prescott uses the mainstream news on television to present a picture of people across the globe celebrating the New Year according to the

Gregorian calendar. This image does not take into account the people and locations where the change in millennium was not celebrated. Prescott presents an image of a unified world by only showing aspects of different locations that are identical to the actions in the West.

The final sentence of the quotation—“Not translating can be almost as valuable as having everyone on the same page”—is an example of tautology, the fourth figure of the rhetoric of supremacy. This is significant because Prescott asserts her position that we should have a single global calendar as the only possible position. As Sandoval explains, “Tautological reasoning enables citizen-subjects to believe that Western knowledge can be understood and justified as such.” It is through tautology that Prescott can assert that to have a universal calendar is more valuable than having multiple calendars. Under tautology, Prescott does not need to support the claim; she inhabits the pose of: ““That’s just the way it is—that’s all”” (122). It is possible to read the “almost” as subtle sarcasm, where Prescott acts as a mythologist by inhabiting the pose of tautology in order to make visible and dislodge the way we naturalize the Gregorian calendar. Either way, the moment of tautology at the end, sincere or masquerade, supports the fact that Gregorian calendar is naturalized as the best calendar.

In the article “Fictitious Calendars: Early Rabbinic Notions of Time, Astronomy, and Reality” Sacha Stern describes a moment before calendars became fixed and normative. For Stern, like Zerubavel, calendars are always representative of ideology. As Stern explains:

Inasmuch as they imply specific notions of time and of astronomical reality, calendars are also *ideologically* significant. They are the product of a broader ideological context which determines, within any given culture, the specific forms that various calendars take. Conversely, calendars have an active part to play within their broader, contextual culture. The religious and political significance

invested upon calendars is a typical example of how calendars can both contribute to their cultural context and be shaped, in turn, by its distinctive features.³⁷ (104)

Calendars have a dialogic relationship with their cultural contexts; they “can both contribute to their cultural context and be shaped, in turn by its distinctive features.” The Gregorian calendar is a Catholic calendar that works to balance a mathematical understanding of the earth as part of a larger cosmos with the beliefs of a faith that defies containment within science and mathematics. This is the calendar that is becoming the standard temporal framework reference for the world to serve the needs of globally coordinated travel and commerce. There have been attempts to break with its hegemony. In 1793 France, the secular French Republican Calendar was introduced to break with the Catholicism of the Gregorian calendar. In the early twentieth century, the *Journal of Calendrical Reform* worked for a standardization of the calendar so that the days of the week and the dates of the year would be uniform across the years. While organized by businessman primarily in the United States, they used the rhetoric of world unity and a letter from Mahatma Gandhi as support.

A more recent attempt to make the calendar regular has been taken up by Richard Conn Henry, an astrophysicist at Johns Hopkins University. Conn explains the benefits of the calendar he developed with Steve Hanke, an economist at Johns Hopkins, “Our plan offers a stable calendar that is absolutely identical from year to year and which allows the permanent, rational planning of annual activities, from school to work holidays” (“Time for a Change?”). This means that every June 1 would fall on the same day, for example. The Gregorian calendar has resisted these attempts at opting out or attempts at standardization. Its cultural context represents

37. Stern, “Fictitious Calendars,” 104.

a balance of mathematical science, faith in Christianity, and faith in Ancient Rome while also becoming a vehicle for promoting these value systems.

The French Revolutionary Calendar tried to create a new order by breaking with the old order; the effort held on to the idea of organizing time with a singular calendar. The radicalism of the Pënz calendar does not break with Gregorian calendar. The Pënz calendar builds an additional standard temporal reference framework that exists within, yet beyond the Gregorian calendar.

2.3 THE METHODOLOGY OF THE OPPRESSED AND THE PËNZ CALENDAR

She'd be feeling all wiggly right now.

For so many reasons. And probably,

improbably in love.

—“If Pënz were in Pakistan this afternoon”

Pënz (It's Pronounced Pants) is hosted by Blogspot. Blogspot organizes all posts using the Gregorian calendar. At the top of each post is the date according to the Gregorian calendar; the day of the week, followed by the name of the month, the date of the month, and finally the year. Underneath the date is the title of the post (if the post has a title) and then the content of the post which can include a combination of text, images, and embedded videos.

Like the *Hutchinson Chronology of World History*, Blogspot organizes posts chronologically. However, unlike the *Chronology*, Blogspot begins with the most recent post, and a reader moves back in time. The first post on penzitspronouncedpants.blogspot.com is the last one posted and is titled “going home.” The background color of the blog is white. The post

begins (we are reading from top of the screen down) with the date according to the Gregorian calendar in a pale grey sans serif font: “TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2008.” Underneath the date is the title of the post in an orange serif font: “going home.” The title of the post also works as a hyperlink which opens a page on which the post is the only post rather than presented in chronological sequence with other posts.

The content of “going home” is a combination of text and image. On the left side of the post is a digital visual image of a watercolor and ink on gessoed tiles. The image on the tiles is of an airplane flying over a rocky pink mountain landscape. The skyscape is painted across three vertical tiles that are lined up slightly askew which gives the artwork the appearance of being produced on folded paper instead of on tiles. On the right side of the post is the text in a black serif font: “My last morning. It’s kinda sad actually.” Underneath the original content of the post is the information about the post in the same grey sans serif font of the date. The first line reads, “POSTED BY SENALKA AT 2:46PM” and then in a hyperlinked blue, “1 COMMENTS.” The second line reads, “LABELS:” and then in a hyperlinked blue, “MORNING.” Morning refers to the time of the Art Day during which McDonald, who is the Feeler, posts. Morning in the Pënz calendar is the length of a lunar day. In a post from the beginning of the Art Year, the Materialist explains the expansion of time numerically: “enjoying this 24 hours of morning/ $\frac{1}{4}$ of the day” (“from the Materialist.....on our first morning”).

Posts on the blog begin in the logic of the Gregorian calendar, but as each post progresses, it moves into the logic of the Pënz calendar. The structure of the post that begins with the Gregorian calendar and concludes with the Pënz calendar is a visual representation of the Althusserian consciousness of existing “within, yet beyond” dominant ideology. While the form of the post, “going home” includes the date according to the Gregorian calendar, the content

focuses on the Pënz calendar through the references to morning and the end of the Art Year. Additionally, McDonald uses the label to tag the post with “morning.”

It is common for the Pënz artists to use the Blogspot label function to indicate the lunar day. In the blog, there is little tension between the two calendars. The Conceptualist marks many of her posts with the dates according to the Pënz calendar. Thus the Pënz calendar and the collaboration are not in a competitive relationship with the Gregorian calendar and Blogspot. Pënz exists within, while building a world that cannot be contained—beyond.

This ability to exist within, yet beyond the structures of dominant ideology is what Sandoval calls differential consciousness and is the consciousness that can positively transform the social fabric. Sandoval’s *Methodology of the Oppressed* is structured around a premise which is the difference between the rhetoric of supremacy which works to maintain dominant ideology and differential consciousness which works to transform dominant ideology. The practitioners of the rhetoric of supremacy animate a colonizing consciousness which in the encounter of that which is different is able to resist transformation. The colonizing consciousness is not in a binary relationship with differential consciousness which is transformed through encounters with difference, including with encounters of colonization. A consciousness that can be transformed has been described in various locations in and outside the academy with a variety of terms. As Sandoval explains:

It is no accident that over the last twenty years of the twentieth century new terms such as “hybridity,” “nomad thought,” “marginalization,” “*la conciencia de la mestiza*,” “trickster consciousness,” “masquerade,” “eccentric subjectivity,” “situated knowledges,” “schizophrenia,” “*la facultad*,” “signifin’,” “the outsider/within,” “strategic essentialism,” “*différance*,” “*rasquache*,”

“performativity,” “*coallicue*,” and “the third meaning” entered into intellectual currency as terminological inventions meant to specify and reinforce particular forms of resistance to dominant social hierarchy. Taken together, such often seemingly contending terms indicate the existence of what can be understood as a cross-disciplinary and contemporary vocabulary, lexicon, and grammar for thinking about oppositional consciousness and social movements under globalizing postmodern cultural conditions. (69)

Sandoval argues that there are multiple locations within the academy that are theorizing and naming and practicing “oppositional consciousness and social movements.” She is putting together a physics that can account for and serve as a handbook for a praxis of oppositional consciousness and social movements. While these terms have been theorized in many diverse locations including feminism, post-colonial studies, and post-modern studies, oppositional consciousness was the praxis of U.S. third world feminists. This praxis is continued in the work of the contemporary cohort of artists I am writing about.

This praxis includes a set of moves used by U.S. third world feminists as grouped by Sandoval that can transform dominant ideology. As Sandoval explains: “These five technologies together comprise the methodology of the oppressed, and the methodology of the oppressed is what enables the enactment of the differential mode of oppositional social movement that I described in the example of U.S. third world feminism as interventionist praxis” (83). The five technologies are: semiology, mythology, meta-ideology, democratics, and differential movement. The first three technologies (semiology, mythology, and meta-ideology) gain their force and orientation by the other two (democratics and differential movement). Semiology and

mythology are inner technologies which allow citizen-subjects to decolonize their consciousness. Meta-ideology is an outer technology which allows the citizen-subject to intervene in the social.

Semiology, mythology, and meta-ideology are the technologies that can identify and transform dominant ideology. The danger for Barthes is that Western consciousness has made the dynamic between what Barthes identifies as Signifier and Signified seem determined rather than capricious. Thus, the Sign appears to be identical to the Signifier. Ideology is produced when the dynamic between Signifier and Signified becomes a Signifier. For instance, there is the concept of measuring time, which is a Signified. There are also the forms for measuring time, often referred to as calendars; these are Signifiers. Then, there is a particular dynamic between the activity of measuring time and the specific tool named the Gregorian calendar. The Sign for the Gregorian calendar has been emptied of meaning and reconstituted as a Signified. Thus, for the Western consciousness the Gregorian calendar, Signifier, is the same as the Signified, which is the activity of measuring time. The form is not perceived as emerging in a historical context. It is perceived as existing a priori. The ability to see the Sign, which is “what Anzaldúa calls ‘*la facultad*,’ or Henry Louis Gates Jr. calls ‘signifin’” is semiology, the first technology in the methodology of the oppressed” (82).

Semiology is an inner technology, which is how a citizen-subject transforms her own psyche. Pënz, which is a collaborative project to make art every day, acknowledges the concept of measuring time as a Signified that can have multiple Signifiers, including the Gregorian calendar and the Pënz calendar. As Fanon explains, we need to break our psychology to transform the society. The Pënz calendar works as a tool of semiology because the members use the calendar to transform their sense of time by living within two calendars.

Mythology is the decolonization of meaning. Ideology is created by a colonization of meaning: “Barthes goes so far as to define ideology *as the process of colonization itself*: the occupation, exploitation, incorporation, and hegemonic domination of meaning — by meaning” (99). Time, for the Western consciousness, has been colonized by the Gregorian calendar. The four artists of Pënz decolonize time by creating an additional calendar. In Pënz time is no longer the equivalent of the Gregorian calendar. Pënz deconstructs the dominant ideological form that the concept of time takes by creating an additional calendar that unfolds alongside the hegemonic calendar. The Pënz calendar occupies the Gregorian calendar and thus decolonizes the Gregorian calendar.

The most notable visual representation of the occupation is the calendar on the sidebar. Blogspot offers a variety of ways to format a blog, including the information that appears on the sidebar. Like the white background on each page, the sidebar is one of the constant formal aspects of the blog. Every page of the more than thousand pages of www.penzitspronouncedpants.blogspot.com has a background color of white and a sidebar with the same set of features. One of the features of the Pënz sidebar is a google calendar. The members of Pënz created events for the Pënz calendar that names each Gregorian day with the time of the art day. Thus over the course of 2008, each day of the Gregorian calendar is labeled with the name of the Pënz lunar day, be it morning, noon, twilight, or night. Visually, the dates on the Gregorian Google calendar become dominated by the strip of blue with white font that names the part of the lunar day according to the Pënz calendar.

While the inner technologies of semiology and mythology work to decolonize a consciousness, meta-ideologizing is an outer technology which transforms ideology:

The third and “outer” technology is what Barthes calls “revolutionary exnomination,” and what I call “meta-ideologizing” in honor of its activity: the operation of appropriating dominant ideological forms, and using them whole in order to transform them. This third technology is absolutely necessary for making purposeful interventions in social reality, whereas the previous two technologies, “semiology” and “mythologizing,” are “inner” technologies that move initially through the being of consciousness itself. (83)

Pänz appropriates the forms of dominant ideology: the Gregorian calendar and Blogspot. The internet, like time, however, is not a dominant ideological form; the internet is still a beast whose energies can be harnessed to create multiple and multiplying forms, including the forms of dominant ideology and the forms of the methodology of the oppressed. In the third chapter, I analyze the work of husband and wife collaborators, Mendi+Keith Obadike who write their own websites for their projects. Pänz does not create their own website to make their collaboration public. Instead, they occupy a blog “using it whole to transform” it. They use the form of the blog which is in a Gregorian logic and transform it with the intervention of the Pänz calendar. While the calendar never supplants the Gregorian calendar, its logic is there and unsettles the logic of the Gregorian calendar. For instance, the Art Year and the Gregorian calendar unfold in near parallel temporal dimensions. The start of the Art Year coincides with the first day of 2008. However, the end of the Art Year and the Gregorian year do not coincide: the Art Year ends on the Gregorian date, December 30, 2008. As Prescott points out in her article on the moment in England before adoption of the Gregorian calendar, there can be a fear of chaos when calendars do not correspond. Pänz does not fear the chaos; Pänz does need to make the calendars correspond. Pänz is able to leave off in morning going home in a cartoon airplane that flies

across three tiles. There is no need for intercalation. The goal of their calendar is not to match perfectly with the Gregorian calendar but to organize the Art Year, which began and ended on morning. Blogpost and its Gregorian logic become occupied by the Pënz calendar.

2.4 DEMOCRATICS OF LOVE: THE PËNZ TILE AS PUNCTUM

The fourth technology, democratics, provides the ethical drive for the identification, deconstruction, and transformation of meaning as ideology. As explained by Sandoval:

A fourth technology of the oppressed that I call “democratics” is a process of locating: a “zeroing in” that gathers, drives, and orients the previous three technologies — semiotics, deconstruction, and meta-ideologizing — with the intent of bringing about not simply survival or justice, as in earlier times, but egalitarian social relations, or, as third world writers from Fanon through Wong, Lugones, or Collins have put it, with the aim of producing “love” in a decolonizing, postmodern, post-empire world.

(83)

The democratics of Pënz is how the members open up their collaboration. The preface of the blog discusses two boxes. The first box is the one described in the initial craigslist post. The second box is described over two posts on December 31, 2007. The first post is posted by Ana-Maurine Lara and is a textual narrative:

It's the dawn before Art Day 1, Morning. As if 400 tiles weren't enough of a gift, our daring Patronesa of Masonite has gifted us an additional box of gessoed possibility. The Linguist is making plans to sweep them up. Off their feet and into

our collective bosom. We've decided we will be dropping these gifts like crumbs along a trail. Will be asking the world around us to devour these crumbs, and still make it possible for us to find our ways home. There have been peeps of silver ink poking through words in our conversation. Rubber stamps. Postage. Journeys. Evidence that we have been there. And witnessed each other. A gessoed crumb. Waiting for your fingertips.

In this post Lara explains that they have been given a second box of tiles. She describes the tiles poetically naming them “gessoed possibility,” “gifts,” and “crumbs along a trail.” The crumbs, an allusion to the folktale Hansel and Gretel, are a conceit for how the tiles in the second box will function. They move from their “collective bosom” out to the world. The poetics of this post, like the poetics of “Step 4,” as discussed below, are about a secular faith, meaning it is not faith in a transcendent being, a god, it is faith in love where love is a dynamic between people. This is the type of faith M+K situate the strategies for resistance that Lorde and Riggs use when M+K offer two approaches to transformation in their piece *Document*: focusing on heaven and focusing on the earth. The title of their piece leans towards favoring the strategies of the earth, as the title is “If the Heavens Don’t Hear the Earth Will Hear” which situates the earth as being the back up for heaven which may not come through, but the earth will always come through, in the logic of the title. Like Lorde and Riggs, love in Pänz is emergent from the earth. The tiles have come from their collective bosom, a place of love. The crumbs are the tiles and are left on a trail for the world to devour. They leave the tiles for the world to consume, and they want “it possible for us to find our ways home.” Their desire in opening up their collaboration to the world is that they don’t lose their way home. And, according to the Feeler in the last post of the Art Year, they do make their ways home.

The tiles in the second box are the democractics, and the democractics function as the punctum. The punctum is what allows movement between dominant ideology and the methodology of the oppressed. According to Sandoval, one of the ways to move between the realm of dominant ideology and the methodology of the oppressed is through the punctum. The tiles in the first box represented the freedom of the jail that is the jell. The second represents the freedom of drifting: “I choose not to choose.” At the end of the instructions in which the tile may or may not be wrapped is the gift of freedom:

If you find a Pënz tile do you *have* to create something?

No. We believe in freedom. But wow, we'd really be jazzed if ya did. Or gave it to someone who did.

They send the tiles out from their collective bosom, a home, the architecture of their collaboration, which is Pënz, for the world to devour if the world wants. Pënz offers love unconditionally without demanding reciprocity and names the space for choosing as “freedom.” To love without a set of conditions—a prefigured narrative—is the drifting that creates the punctum “that which breaks through social narratives to permit a bleeding, meanings unanchored and moving away from their traditional moorings” and allows for the movement between the realm of dominant ideology and the methodology of the oppressed (141). There is love as in falling in as in a Western ethic of love. There is also love as drifting, the movement of the punctum. Sandoval explains:

Turning thus from narrative’s comforts and limits, from love’s ‘Western’ modes, Barthes searches for the punctum, he finds what is ‘obtuse,’ he gives himself over, he drifts ‘on the intractable bliss that beckons’ in that place of life that survives outside and between narrative forms, where meanings live in some free, yet

marked and wounded space, a site of shifting, morphing meanings that transform to let him in...‘I stubbornly choose not to choose, I choose drifting. I continue.’ This ‘drifting’ is the movement of meanings that will not be governed; it is the intractable itself as it permeates through, in, and outside of power. (143)

The tiles drift through the world in the subjunctive mood. They provide the choice to “choose not to choose” while simultaneously offering access to participation in a community of art-making. Most poignantly, the punctum as a democratics of love is seen in the process of making art on the tiles as articulated by Claudia F. Manz. For Manz, a shard of glass from a broken vase becomes the inspiration for her guest Pänz. The broken vase works as a symbol for the broken narrative. It is through the breaking that freedom from dominant ideology is possible. As I will return to discuss below, the tile is the vehicle for Manz to choose not to choose.

Sandoval explains the problem of dominant ideology, “Under conditions of colonization, poverty, racism, gender or sexual subordination, dominated populations are often held away from the comforts of dominant ideology, or ripped out of legitimized social narratives, in a process of power that places such constituencies in a very different position from which to view objects-in-reality than other kinds of citizen-subjects” (105). She uses Jameson’s theorization of the postmodern condition to explain how all citizen-subjects exist in this relationship to the narratives of dominant ideology. Jameson argues that fragmentation is disabling for revolution. Sandoval argues that this fragmentation is what enables differential movement. Differential movement is revolutionary because it “joins together the possible with what is, the place where indirect style or discourse occurs until it finds purposeful, guided, political reason to be through the reconfiguration of units-of-power in the interests of egalitarian distribution” (180). The differential power “can be understood as a *symptom* of transnational capitalism in its

neocolonizing postmodern form... as well as a *remedy* for neocolonizing postmodernism” (179-180).

One of the primary goals of Pënz is to produce “love in a decolonizing, postmodern, post-empire world.” We see this in the instructions in which they wrapped the second set of Pënz tiles, in the description of the process of handing out the tiles, and in Manz’s post about creating a guest Pënz. The second box functions as the democratics of the collaboration and allows them to produce love in a decolonizing world.

On the right sidebar of the blog, Pënz includes the instructions—“What do you do if you find a Pënz tile?”—in which they wrapped Pënz tiles. The instructions begin with a brief description of the globalization of Pënz:

Pënz (it’s pronounced pants) tiles are slowly infiltrating the globe. You may be in California or Alabama, Ireland or Morocco or Hawaii, Australia, Spain or France, on the Q train, on the Tube, or walking the trails at Lady Bird Lake and find yourself face to face with a tile.

This global movement here is not a colonizing movement. There is no hierarchy of geography. The movement is subjunctive (“you may”) and highlights the choice which is at the center of Pënz’s praxis of freedom. There is no grand plan for the infiltration; connection is based on the capricious. This is a distinctly different global movement than the movement of tourism which is a colonizing movement based on pre-mapped and hierarchical value systems of geography. After establishing the decolonizing movement of the Pënz tiles, the description then describes what the tile may look like:

That tile may have nothing on it but a label with our web address. It may or may not have a ribbon or a bow. **It may be wrapped in instructions:**

The use of the subjunctive mood continues with the description of the tile. Pënz is not positioning itself in a rhetoric of certainty; it is the realm of possibility. The opening section of the sidebar then reproduces the instructions which come in two sets. The first set of instructions is a lineated list of verbs in italics:

write draw paint feel do create

love think paste sculpt change

print write draw paint feel do

create love think paste sculpt

change print write draw paint feel

do

The italics and the shifting order mitigate the force of the series of verbs in the imperative tense.

The second set of instructions is a list of steps:

Step 1:

Make something with this tile.

Step 2:

Take a photo of it. With a camera. With your phone. With a Polaroid.

Step 3:

Email it to penz2813@gmail.com

Step 4:

Know you are loved.

Both sets of instructions have the word “love” in common. The first set of instructions direct the finder of a Pënz tile to “love” as one of the possible actions for art-making.³⁸ The final step of the process is to “know you are loved.” Thus, on the sidebar love becomes a dynamic where the reader is invited to actively love through making art. “Step 4” makes that love reciprocal by

38. For additional contexts for love as a reason for art-making see Cotera’s discussion of June Jordan in *Native Speakers* and Fred Moten’s discussion of the sentimental avant-garde in *In the Break*.

turning the finder of the tile, the you, into both subject and object. “Know” is in the imperative voice which is the second person; “you are loved” is in the passive voice which makes the subject the object. We do not know who is doing the loving. Who is doing the loving is not important; to know that it is the case is what is important. It is as if they are asking for us to cultivate a practice of faith. This is the democracies of the collaboration. This type of love—which is an art-making and a faith—is what orients the inner and outer technology of the methodology of the oppressed.

In the post “Pënz Travels to NYC” on Friday, February 29, 2008, the Conceptualist describes the experience of leaving Pënz tiles about in the world. In this post, we see the praxis of Pënz as performance as transgression, which is the masquerade (“performance”) animating the punctum (“transgression”). There is also the beyond articulated in here (“something bigger than both of us”) and the democracies of the collaboration, which in Pënz is a democracies of choice (“No pressure”). The Conceptualist writes:

So, I've been in NYC for about 36 hours now...almost, and have had the opportunity to drop Pënz in various places - even the subway. Today, on my way home, I saw this beautiful artist looking cat on the platform and had to go back and give him a Pënz - if you read this, sorry I didn't get your name, but I'm excited about your work.

And I've been thinking all day about performance as transgression. The transgression of social and institutional rules, relationships, spaces. A security guard was following me around the gallery for about 15 minutes when I turned to him and asked him if there was something wrong. He said he wanted to know if I(we) were enjoying the exhibit, and then disappeared. After he disappeared, I

planted a Pënz against the column. And then, I dropped another one in the video viewing room for the "Dinner Party" piece. All in the dark and stuff.

Handing Pënz to a stranger feels kind of like inviting someone into something bigger than both of us. Transgressing expectations and boundaries. No pressure.

Let's see where Pënz and NYC meet tomorrow.

The Conceptualist

The description is about boundaries and transgression. The presence of the security guard at the Brooklyn Museum signals how the public institutional spaces fortify themselves from interventions. Even as the exhibit works to inspire transgression and transformation, the presence of the security guard is a reminder of how the institution manages and controls what an appropriate response may be. In this post, the Conceptualist describes how the encounter feels between the world of the collaboration and the world of security guards and strangers. The post begins with a series of images. The first image is a portrait of a Pënz tile in front of a piece of mixed-media art in a museum. The caption explains: "Pënz and Ghada Amer's work from the show "Love Has No End." The title of Amer's show signals a definition of love that is not immersed in a Western teleological approach to existence. Love is taken out of a narrative framework. This is how the tiles operate.

The Conceptualist explains how it feels to invite someone into the collaborative world she is creating, "Handing Pënz to a stranger feels kind of like inviting someone into something bigger than both of us." The sense that the collaborative world under formation is bigger than the members of the collaboration is a common trope in autocriticism about collaboration. Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba explain how a third being is created from their collaboration. Similarly, Stacey Schalu and Electra Arenal in their essay on their collaborative work on the

collaborative writings and practices of nuns in seventeenth century Spain differentiate between types of collaboration: “While I’ve worked with others—in political action, coediting, planning activities, our collaboration has been richer and deeper than most. I wrote one piece with another person, but it was a composite back and forth (1+1=2), not a synergistic togetherness (1+1=3)” (“Escribiendo yo,”43). Pënz is a collaboration of synergistic togetherness where the collaborative world under formation is larger than the individuals whose energies are creating the world. The tiles as they drift between worlds and within worlds work as the vehicle, the punctum, for movement between the worlds. The punctum, here, is the democracies of the collaboration. The tiles are wrapped in a gift of love and freedom. The sidebar is one location that creates the movement between realms. The section “What do you do if you find a Pënz tile?” is written in the second person, to “you,” the reader. Similarly, the Google calendar on the sidebar is also directed to the reader. It has the caption: “**What day is it? What time of day?** *Are you a MORNING person? Is NOON your time? Do you love TWILIGHT? Perhaps you're more of a NIGHT owl. Get in where you fit in*” (bold, underlines, and italics in original). Additionally, during the Art Year, there were often polls posted on the sidebar. Polls are one of the add-on features that Blogger provides to its users. Pënz used the polls as a way to create reader participation. While most of the polls and results vanished from the website after voting closed and the results were posted, one of the poll winners remains featured on the sidebar—“Belongings” by Wura-Natasha Ogunji is a video of a dancer moving across a sand earth-landscape propelled by the strength in her arms and dragging packages tied with red twine to her ankles. Pënz’s invitations to its readers are the democracies of the collaboration. The collaboration opens to allow guests the option to participate.

The tiles are central to the collaboration and operate in two ways: as a jail that is a jell and as the punctum. This is the model of collaboration that I am looking at which is a model of literary practice—a practice in which literature is produced through an open collaboration. Here my definition of literature is not confined to the textual but rather literature that actively explores synaesthetic relationships between text and image and text and sound and text and movement. The punctum is what allows the movement between dominant ideology and the methodology of the oppressed. It is love as drifting rather than love as a narrative. This is what Pënz creates for the world: a technology for moving between the realms of dominant ideology and the methodology of the oppressed. It is the movement between the tangible world and the digital world and an invitation to rethink hegemonic temporal structures as an art practice.

The post “On Seeing Blue—Claudia F. Manz” is a guest Pënz posted by the Conceptualist that explains the process of creating art on a Pënz tiles as love. It is written as an email that the Conceptualist adapted into a post. This post is an excellent example of the movement of the tiles as a punctum. Manz describes the process of making art on the panel as love. “I loved doing this,” writes Manz.

The email included a message to Lara and two images of her guest Pënz. The adaptation of the personal email into public blog post uses suspense to highlight choice as a process. The post “On Seeing Blue—Claudia F. Manz” starts with an image of the guest Pënz. The tile is white, oriented horizontally, and Manz wrote on it in a thick black handwriting:

There are places where people are surrounded by blue but cannot see the color. I
don't want to live like that. I want to quiver at the center of a star. TOUCH ME.

The word blue is highlighted in blue by a piece of thick glass. Underneath the image is the text of the email that Manz sent to Lara. The text explains the process of making art on the tile as

love. The love she describes is not a narrative love but a love that is about patience, drifting, and chance:

Dearest Ana,

I loved doing this! The panel just kind of sat on my writing desk for about 2-3 weeks. I'd look at it each morning and during my meditation I'd think "what do you want to be?" Right when I was moving out of my house in May, I broke a jar that was given to me by a dear family friend. I used to keep various bathroom things in it. The jar was from my friend's trip to somewhere far north: Norway or Sweden, I can't remember. The blue was the color of the coldest ice. In the mornings when I would remove the lid I could almost feel ice caving into the sea. When I broke it only a few pieces remained and I took one to keep on my writing desk to remind me that even the endings of things can be luminous.

I'm sending you two pictures, use whichever you like better. The only difference between them is the placement of the blue shard. I've been reading various books about water and color and various places in the world where colors are especially vibrant. I read this amazing book called *The Island of the Colorblind* where, apparently, nearly all the inhabitants have a certain kind of congenital color blindness that allows them to only see variations in tones, textures and brightness, kind of a heightened sensation of "gray." And, yet, they live in a place in Micronesia where everything is bursting into blue and green. Apparently they often night-fish because light causes them pain. I can't stop thinking about this and how it relates to my mother, a painter for 40 years, who only has a sliver of

her vision left. About 15 degrees worth in one eye. Do we crave more if we are more keenly aware of what we might lose?

These are the things that keep me up at night. The thought of not seeing color makes me want to be outside constantly. Or, perhaps, it is the call of spring.

Today I saw my first purple crocus.

With love,

Claudia

In the text that accompanies the two images, Manz describes the process of making art on the tile as love and describes love as a process that unfolds spontaneously in time through chance. The process includes a break and drifting. The panel sat on her desk for a while, and she waited as she wondered daily, “what do you want to be?” Manz endows the tile with subjectivity, the tile is a subject-object that shows the synergistic togetherness of a collaboration for which one plus one equals three. The art-making process requires a break of the vase and the patience of waiting for Manz to figure out what the tile wants to be. The break of the vase is the type of love that is a democratics. An ending is an opening. She writes, “even the endings of things can be luminous.” Manz is thinking about loss and desire. She asks, “Do we crave more if we are more keenly aware of what we might lose?”

The way Lara includes both photos is beautiful. The post begins with an image of the tile with the glass shard placed over the word blue. She then has the text of the email which explains that there are two images of the tile. Lara instead of choosing one as Manz suggested concludes the post with the second image. By beginning with one of the images, but including the context that it is just one of two images creates desire for the other image. At the end of the post, the second image is included and an experience of subtle difference is created. The expectation and

suspense is around which word would be highlighted—but the difference is not in which word is highlighted, the difference is in the frame—it is the directionality of the glass shard that has changed. In the comments to the post, McDonald marks reading this post as representative of her feeling towards Pënz. In her comment, she moves from being in love with Claudia to a formal declaration of love to Pënz. Through Manz articulating her process of making the art on the tile, Manz endows the tile with subjectivity, and thereby endows Pënz with subjectivity. This is what Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba explain about collaboration: through the processes of the collaboration a self can come into existence. Collaboration is a cosmogonic motion. In Pënz, the collaborative world under formation is a world of love, where love is drifting, the punctum.

2.5 DIFFERENTIAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

*An **art intervention** is an interaction with a previously existing artwork, audience or venue/space. It has the auspice of [conceptual art](#) and is commonly a form of [performance art](#). It is associated with the [Viennese Actionists](#), the [Dada](#) movement and [Neo-Dadaists](#). It has also been made much use of by the [Stuckists](#) to affect perceptions of other artwork which they oppose, and as a protest against an existing intervention.*

—Wikipedia (quoted in “It’s time for an intervention (pt. 2)”)

*The vestibular system, or balance system, is the sensory system that provides the dominant input about movement and equilibrioception. Together with the cochlea, a part of the auditory system, it constitutes the **labyrinth** of the inner ear, situated in the vestibulum in the inner ear.*

—quoted in “WHOA!!”

This chapter extends Sandoval's focus on Barthes's "Myth Today"—rhetoric of supremacy, methodology of the oppressed, and democracies which pulls us into additional pieces in Barthes's oeuvre—as still useful and relevant for analyzing contemporary decolonial texts.

The methodology of the oppressed has two parts. Thus far, the chapter has been focused on the technologies for decolonizing consciousness. The other part to the methodology of the oppressed is the differential social movements. Sandoval breaks them into five categories: equal-rights, revolutionary, supremacist, separatist, and differential consciousness. She explains, "These ideological positions are kaleidoscoped into an original, eccentric, and queer sight when the fifth, differential mode is utilized as a theoretical and methodological device for retroactively clarifying and giving new meaning to any other" (44). Differential consciousness is the Althusserian position of existing "within, yet beyond, the demands of dominant ideology." It is a mobile power that demands "alienation, perversion, and reformation in both spectators and practitioners" (44).

According to Sandoval:

The 1970s-80s social movement called U.S. third world feminism functioned as a central locus that shattered the construction of any one ideology as the single most correct site where truth can be represented. Indeed without making this type of metamove, any "liberation" or social movement eventually becomes destined to repeat the oppressive authoritarianism from which it is attempting to free itself, and become trapped inside a drive for truth that ends up only in producing its own brand of dominations. What U.S. third world feminism thus demanded was a new subjectivity, a political revision that denied any one ideology as the final answer,

while instead positing a *tactical subjectivity* with the capacity to de- and recenter, given the form of power to be moved. (59)

Differential consciousness makes this methodology mobile where “no enactment is privileged over any other; and the recognition that each site is as potentially effective as any other” (55). This chapter has shown that Pënz enacts differential consciousness and uses the techniques of the methodology of the oppressed, which is a physics of love and a methodology of emancipation, to occupy the forms of dominant ideology. That which I think is missing from their art-making is a visible connection to social movements. Certainly, social issues are addressed with differential consciousness. For instance, in the post “And, one more thing” McDonald discusses her ambiguous feelings about Lindsey Lohan. McDonald celebrates Lohan’s brash coolness as one of the few out young and famous Hollywood actresses openly dating a woman. Lohan as a white celebrity who described the President of the United States as “colored” represents a cultural problem and should not be idolized. McDonald does not need to resolve the conflicting feelings. Differential consciousness is the ability to not create a hierarchy. Where Lohan might be enabling for the queer community, she can be celebrated even if there are ways that her visibility furthers racial oppression.

While Pënz operates with differential consciousness existing within yet beyond—there are many instances of differential consciousness on the blog—there are not visible relationships to social movements. I am interested in exploring the relationship between the practices of these collaborative literary communities and their contemporaneous social movements.

Though social movements seem to be missing from Pënz that is not quite true. There is definite and explicit engagement with politics and the construction of the social sphere in several of the posts by the artists on the lunar days they are not responsible for creating art on a tile. For

instance, in a series of videos and photographs of the meters at gas pumps, Bashir has an extended engagement connecting the rising price of gas in Texas with the rising death toll in Iraq. These posts are both moving and raw. However, the alliance of this work with the social movements, for instance the political engagement of Iraq Veterans Against the War or other anti-war activist groups, is not visible. The isolation of this artist community from the social movements is a question I will return to in the conclusion of the dissertation: to what extent is this community of twenty-first century artists involved with social movements? To what extent should they be?

3.0 ARCHITECTURE OF FREEDOM II: HOW MENDI+KEITH OBADIKE USE DIFFERENTIAL COGNITIVE MAPPING TO DECOLONIZE GEOGRAPHY

The collaborations of wife and husband duo Mendi Lewis Obadike and Keith Townsend Obadike decolonize globalization by mapping and transforming geographical space in an activity that Chela Sandoval, building on Fredric Jameson, calls differential cognitive mapping. Differential cognitive mapping, as I explained in Chapter 1, is the activity of the new countrypeople warriors who map and chart the terrain while creating new terrain. Sandoval develops the term “new countrypeople warriors” as a collage of Fanon, Derrida, and Kingston to signal a tradition of activists emerging specifically from the U.S. third world feminists. The previous chapter discussed the strategies of Barthes’s mythologist who works as a solitary figure. Sandoval contrasts Barthes’s solitary mythologist with the decolonial work of Frantz Fanon who argues that as we burst the masquerades of colonial oppression, we enter a cadre of revolutionaries.

The apparatus Sandoval builds in *Methodology of the Oppressed* is complex with multiple terminologies to describe similar functions. Chapter 2 of this dissertation focused on Sandoval’s animation of Barthes’s theories in “Myth Today” to analyze how Pënz decolonizes time. Key terminology was the realm of the methodology of the oppressed and the realm of dominant ideology. This chapter pairs Sandoval’s animation of Jameson with M+K because they chart social space through geographical considerations. While a practice throughout their oeuvre, it is most self-consciously a praxis in their conceptual suite “4-1-9 Or You Can’t View a

Masquerade by Standing in One Place.” In “4-1-9” they have a complex use of the masquerade in which they create a masquerade in order to see a masquerade.

Differential cognitive mapping involves the processes that create the “collaborative world under formation.” In collaborations the process of mapping the world also creates a new world. Maria Cotera in *Native Speakers* explains the collaborative world under formation in the collaboration between Jovita González and Margaret Eimer to write the novel *Caballero*. Cotera argues that the processes of the collaboration between González and Eimer allow for the utopian borderland in the novel to be lived out in the real through the processes of collaboration between González and Eimer. Cotera is building on the work of Joyce Elbrecht and Lydia Fakundiny who explore the cosmogonic dimensions of collaboration. This is the terrain Sandoval talks about being called up by the U.S. third world feminists for whom the differential power *is* a power of collaboration. Differential cognitive mapping is part of the science Sandoval creates to explain this process of world-making.

What is the collaborative world under formation in the oeuvre of M+K Obadike? Theirs is a world much like the world that Sandoval says is created by differential cognitive mapping. Sandoval revives Jameson’s cognitive mapping by explaining that a differential consciousness is able to navigate the shifting ideologies of postmodernism. For Sandoval this is not only a theoretical argument; she argues that this is the praxis of the U.S. third world feminists and has been a survival skill of oppressed people. She looks to Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Woman Warrior*, Audre Lorde’s *Sister Outsider*, and Gloria Anzaldúa’s radical *mestizaje* among others for the praxis of opposing dominant ideology by creating new terrain. This terrain and the strategies used are neither singular nor stable. The strategies and the terrain change in relation to

the shifting terrain of dominant ideology: “Differential cognitive mapping would engage consciousness, ideology, citizenship, and coalition as masquerade” (31).

One of the third world writers through whom Sandoval has developed her ideas is Audre Lorde. An example of differential cognitive mapping is seen in Audre Lorde’s biomythography, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982) as she narrates a praxis of polyamory:

There was a chance to put into practice the kind of sisterhood that we talked and dreamed about for the future... I had to figure out some way I could have everything that I wanted and still be safe. That was very difficult, because we were in uncharted territory... Well, here was a chance to put theory into practice... It was a beautiful vision but a difficult experiment... None of the gay-girl books we read so avidly ever suggested our vision was not new, nor our joy in each other... So we knew there was a world of our experience as gay-girls that they left out, but that meant we had to write it ourselves, learn by living it out.³⁹

Here Lorde presents social-sexual space using geographic terminology. What they are trying to figure out is not necessarily new but feels new because they have no record to help them navigate their visions of social-sexual relationships. Lorde creates a record of the devastatingly difficult challenge of polyamory from her practice. It is not just figuring it out for herself but to leave a trail or not a trail but something that shows the work, a document, like a biomythography, that shows the work, the mapping that has been done. This is the type of work that M+K do as they “uncover[...] lost history of modernity.”⁴⁰ As they collaboratively make sense of their world, their art leaves a map of the terrain.

39. Lorde, *Zami*, 211-213.

40 Pfeffer, “Introduction,” 2.

To use the masquerade as a tool for mapping resists binary constructions of reality. Sandoval's focus is on a past praxis with the aim to imagine a new generation. As discussed in Chapter 1, she uses Derrida to explain how the academic erasure of the U.S. third world feminists enables the transmission of their revolutionary survival skills. Derrida imagines a "third force" that can challenge the binary constructions of Western (and non-Western) cultures. Sandoval argues that what Derrida imagines exists in our real for the U.S. third world feminists made a praxis of challenging binary constructions:

The mystery of the academic erasure of U.S. third world feminism is a disappearing trick. Its exemption from academic canon short-circuits knowledge but secures acquittal of a "third," feminist "force" about which Derrida suggested "it should not be named." Not named, he hoped, in order that what is performative and mobile never be set into any place: freedom resides, thus, everywhere. It is out of this terrain that U.S. third world feminism calls up new kinds of people, those with skills to rise out of citizenship to agency: countrypeople of a new territory. For these countrypeople-warriors who are no longer "U.S. third world feminist," the game beginning again, new names, new players. (195 n22)

The praxis of the U.S. third world feminists has remained free because it has not been named, but their praxis has continued and Sandoval provides the term "new countrypeople warriors" to name a new cadre who continues the praxis. Sandoval argues that the academic erasure of the U.S. third world feminists allowed for their praxis to remain unnamed and thus free. Mendi+Keith Obadike are the new countrypeople warriors; they play and replay the games with "new names, new players" with the skills to rise out of citizenship to agency." In their

collaborations, M+K develop a praxis in which their art creates a masquerade that identifies and explores processes of racism while teaching the skills of movement (digital and geographic) necessary for seeing the masquerade. This chapter concludes with an analysis of “4-1-9, Or You Can’t View a Masquerade by Standing in One Place.”

The work of differential cognitive mapping uses the activities of masquerade, zero degree of language, and trickster consciousness. Differential cognitive mapping reads signs and interrupts the turnstile of meaning by creating new meaning. It is the work of manipulating ideology: “These skills juggle, transgress, differ, buy, and sell ideologies in a system of production and exchange bent on ensuring survival” (30). An example of how M+K manipulate ideology is M+K’s intermedia suite “4-1-9, Or You Can’t View a Masquerade by Standing in One Place” which emerged from a critical engagement with the locations that produce dominant ideology. “4-1-9” is a meditation on the spam scam letters that they were receiving via email. These letters reproduce stereotypical depictions of Nigerians and the relationship between the West and Africa. In “4-1-9” M+K do not merely read the signs, which are the inner technologies of the methodology of the oppressed as discussed in Chapter 2, they also do the work of the outer technologies of Barthes’s mythologist which is meta-ideology, where they empty the form of an ATM of its expected use as a tool for electronic banking and endow it with new meaning as a meditation on financial scams. This skill of meta-ideology put in the context of differential cognitive mapping is the manipulation of ideology or ideology as masquerade.

While some collaborations are project-based, the collaboration between Mendi and Keith Obadike emerged from their friendship and has become integrated within and through them with lines blurring between their collaborative projects and individual projects. They explain their process in an interview with Laura Wetherington: “Well, first of all, the two of us collaborate

because we value each other's work, and we value being together. Our craft is a part of the life we make together, and our personal history is a part of the art we make.” They explain the arc of their collaborating together as, “Find your soulmate, gain familiarity and trust over a decade, and start working” (“The Friction, the Mixing, the Weaving”). They began sharing their ideas as early as the seventh grade when they took a computer class together in Nashville, Tennessee where they both grew up. In an interview with Jason Huff they date their “first collaborative self consciously ‘new media’ work” as a ‘telnet action’ in 1996 when they used the internet to ask “participants to send... their favorite everyday sounds.” (“Rhizome Artist Profile,” 39). The sounds they gathered they used to create the sonic drawing *Uli Suite* (1998-1999).

Individually, they both have impressive academic careers. Mendi Lewis Obadike is a poet and scholar with a B.A. from Spellman and a Ph.D. from Duke University and is currently an Assistant Professor of Humanities and Media Studies at the Pratt Institute. Her first book of poetry, *Armor Flesh* (2004) won the Naomi Long Madget Prize. Keith Obadike is a musician and sound artist with an M.F.A. from Yale University. He is an Assistant Professor of Communication at William Paterson University.

Their work as collaborators is equally impressive and moves between well-respected academic institutions and avant-garde venues. For instance, the opera-masquerade “Four Electric Ghosts” (2009) they developed at Toni Morrison’s atelier at Princeton University. It premiered at the Kitchen, an established venue for experimental performance in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan and since has been performed at the Carolina Performing Arts Center. They have had performances at the Stone, a performance space dedicated to the experimental and avant-garde, in the East Village, NYC. Northwestern University commissioned the intermedia suite *Big House/ Disclosure* (2007) “for the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British Slave Trade”

(Peffer, 52). In 2012, the intermedia suite “American Cypher: Stereo Helix for Sally Hemings” was “co-commissioned by the Bucknell University Griot Institute for Africana Studies and the Samek Art Gallery” (blackart.net), and in 2013 “American Cypher” was adapted for an installation at the Studio Museum of Harlem. Ramapo College and Rhizome.org co-commissioned the intermedia suite “African Metropole: Sonic City Lagos” which included *Phonotype*, a publication of their writings about their sound art projects. Additionally, they have two books forthcoming from 1913 Press: *Four Electric Ghosts* and *Big House / Disclosure*. Their CD *Crosstalk* (2008) was released by Bridge Records.

In his introduction to *Phonotype*, art historian John Peffer explains the importance of the work of M+K Obadike lies in how they intervene in the social:

They use electronic media and audio structures in the place of visual/spatial ones in order to call attention to the interstices and create new metaphors for experience and human relation. They are interested in uncovering the lost history of alternative experiences of modernity: the black experience, the African experience, and the avant-garde experience where it has intersected with these two... Their medium is less the technological support used in art making, and more the social and experiential worlds in which their art intervenes. (1-2)

Peffer positions M+K’s intervention as based in technology—not technology for the sake of technology, but technology where it meets social forces surrounding geography, identity, and aesthetic praxis. For instance, the exhibit “African Metropole: Sonic City Lagos” that Peffer curated for the Gallery at Ramapo College experiments with audio technology to create a portal to Lagos as a means to challenge stereotypical representations of Africa. The visual and material aspects of the installation were technological—the machines that transmitted the sound which

was the primary content of the installation which turned the Gallery into a soundscape of recorded sounds from the streets and homes in Lagos over which Mendi slowly recited a poem. The exhibit works to demystify Africa as the dark unknowable continent, a representation that still has power in contemporary United States. The demystification occurs through the reproduction of concrete daily sounds—the honks of cars in Lagos traffic loops throughout the sound installation. The technology consists of speakers mounted on the wall and a more complex speaker system that used infrared to direct sound to specific bodies within the room. The bodies of the students at Ramapo College, which is a primarily white middle-class public liberal arts school in Bergen County, New Jersey, literally activated the exhibit through their presence thusly uncovering the “lost history of alternative experiences of modernity.”

The processes that “call attention to the interstices and create new metaphors for experience and human relation” are the processes of differential cognitive mapping. To call attention, is a way to make visible, a mapping activity for navigating the terrain of what Jameson calls postmodernism: “this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and horror” (“Postmodernism,” 57). The problem for the first world subject is the inability to perceive historical forces. As Sandoval elaborates Jameson: “Perceiving the present as random difference leads to ethical, moral, geographic, and situation undecidability. Such undecidability dangerously short-circuits the switch points through which egalitarian and democratic social, political, economic, cultural, and individual powers can be routed” (17). If we see difference without understanding the historical factors that create and shape difference then our ability to make decisions to create an ethical world is undercut. If it’s just random that one

person in the United States is white and one is black then we are disavowing the processes that created those differences which hampers our ability to create a world in which differences do not operate as technologies of hierarchy and oppression. The solution that Jameson proposes is cognitive mapping, “a pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system” (92). Jameson imagines a cultural practice of making sense of our places in the world through building additional political and cultural structures and teaching how to build those structures as we build them.

While for Jameson postmodernism is new, Sandoval reminds us that what Jameson perceives as a new terrain, is only a new subject position for the formerly dominant culture. For Jameson, the postmodern subject position is new and fearful. For Sandoval the postmodern subject position is and has been the subject position of those identities that have been oppressed by the dominant structures: “Under conditions of colonization, poverty, racism, gender, or sexual subordination, dominated populations are often held away from the comforts of dominant ideology, or ripped out of legitimized social narratives, in a process of power that places constituencies in a very different position from which to view objects-in-reality than other kinds of citizen-subjects” (105). By pulling from the praxis of the U.S. third world feminists, Sandoval adds the differential power to Jameson’s cognitive mapping. As developed in Chapter 2, the differential power is that ability to exist within, yet beyond the demands of dominant ideology.

Differential cognitive mapping offers the ability to oppose oppressive power systems that have fragmented the sense of subjectivity. By charting an experience of multiple identities, which is a type of fragmentation, a monolithic version of experience is fragmented—in Lorde’s example above what has been fragmented in exploration of joy are normative approaches to sexual relationships, and in M+K what is being fragmented in exploration of lost history are

normative approaches to blackness. To fragment normative constructions of identity through charting our own experiences that lie outside of the dominant narratives is a survival skill, is a “step to developing an effective form of resistance to neocolonizing postmodernism” (*Methodology of the Oppressed*, 29). It is the work of navigating the postmodern terrain, the margins, the centers, and the various openings. Jameson calls this skill “cartographic proficiency.” To chart and map as you live within the hegemonic structures allows you to see where you fit in. As Sandoval explains:

Empowerment occurs when the citizen-subject coordinates its existential data “(the empirical position of the subject),” with “unlived abstract conceptions of the geographic totality” (90), comes to a decision, and moves from there. But coordinating these two dimensions (existential, everyday experiences, on the one side, with abstract conceptions or scientific knowledge, on the other) requires the inventiveness of ideology. (29)

The problem for the first world subject is an inability to do that mapping “between lived experience and the larger world.” Without the ability to distinguish between individual experiences and the diversity of experiences in the world, the experiences of the self are taken as the whole: a specific imagination with specific histories is taken as the collective real.

Sandoval solves the problem posed by Jameson by adding differential power to Jameson’s cognitive mapping. A differential consciousness has the skills to manipulate ideology, burst the self, and write trickster histories among other skills for fragmenting abstract totalities: “These skills juggle, transgress, differ, buy, and sell ideologies in a system of production and exchange bent on ensuring survival” (30). To read signs is an activity for creating meaning. Manipulating ideology entails emptying a sign of its meaning and putting in new meaning. This

is the action of meta-ideology in the methodology of the oppressed—the skill of manipulating ideology. To read the signs is mapping the terrain; to empty the signs and place new meaning is creating new terrain. Sandoval calls this skill “ideology as masquerade.” When the skill of ideology as masquerade, which consists of reading signs and manipulating ideology, is performed as a praxis then it becomes one of the strategies of differential cognitive mapping.

Throughout their oeuvre M+K make a praxis of ideology as masquerade. For instance, in their well-known piece, “Blackness for Sale” (2001) they play with the terrain of eBay, an online marketplace. The masquerade is a skill that maps the locations of dominant ideology through the process of meta-ideology. In “Blackness for Sale” M+K chart how eBay is part of producing and reproducing dominant representations of blackness the site sells. They did this by creating an eBay post that sells Keith’s blackness. After four days, eBay took the post down without explanation. At that point it had received 12 bids with the highest at \$152.50. In an interview with interdisciplinary artist Coco Fusco, Keith explains “Blackness for Sale” as an exploration of “commerce and race” on the internet: “I really wanted to comment on this odd Euro colonialist narrative that exists on the web and black peoples’ position within that narrative. I mean, there are browsers called Explorer and Navigator that take you to explore the Amazon or trade in the ebay. It’s all just too blatant to ignore.”⁴¹ Keith is pointing out how master narratives are being formed on the internet based on the names of the programs that enable access and the names for popular commerce sights. Within these choices of names is a colonizing ideology that forms a particular type of subjectivity that sees encounter as opportunity for ownership. “Blackness for Sale” manipulates that ideology and a citizen-subject’s comfort within that subject position by calling up a particular instance of colonizing commerce by using the title to allude to the slave

41. Obadike interview with Coco Fusco, 10.

market. In the interview Keith explains one of the contexts as “ceramic coons and mummies, African exotica and Nazi paraphernalia” that are sold on ebay (9). They decided to do an intervention and sell Keith’s blackness. The language of the post written by M+K describes the blackness being sold as a contemporary blackness that has access to making black art, “affirmative action,” and “gaining access to exclusive, ‘high risk’ neighborhoods” and limits such as “voting in the United States or Florida.” In the imaginations of Mendi + Keith Obadike, the form of an eBay ad is emptied of a dominant colonizing ideology and becomes a vehicle for defining blackness in a particular time and location. They use the masquerade to disrupt the narratives of blackness as object from which the company profits.

Another skill of the cartographer is the bursting of self and finding the “zero degree of language” to develop “a method by which the limits of the social order can be spoken, named, and made translucent” (36). Sandoval gets the term “zero degree of language” from Barthes; and the term “bursting of self” from Fanon. Zero degree of language is the place where language loses conventional meaning. Meaning is not fixed. Fanon’s “bursting of self” is the activity of breaking psychological oppressions to join a cadre of revolutionary community. According to Sandoval:

Fanon exhorts every enslaved consciousness (those who have become dominant image) to “bust apart” all they have become—an eruption that will fragment the self, he warns. But these fragments can be put together again when another kind of transformative self arises (ibid.). This new self can liberate citizensubjects from any “archetype,” free them from the dominant poses and figures that comprise the rhetoric of “civilized” consciousness. (129)

Mendi and Keith Obadike “burst apart” their selves and through their busting they create art that “can liberate citizensubjects” from dominant and oppressive modes of being. For instance, in “Blackness for Sale” through fragmenting Keith’s blackness into a sellable set of parts, M+K fragment Keith’s identity as a black man, they also attempt to fragment the category of blackness. However, in the interview with Fusco, Keith questions the transformative aspects of “Blackness for Sale” because the piece itself has become a fetish, “[it] was able to be fetishized in the way that the Diallo memorial and other projects couldn’t be. It seems to be functioning like some kind of net.art version of an African mask, uprooted from its performative context and observed by many who aren’t interested in how it is supposed to resonate” (11). An African mask is not just an art object, it has particular social functions—it is part of creating reality and is worn in the context of performances in which “art slides into life.”⁴² When removed from the cultural context of which a mask is part—both emerges from while also creates—it loses its creative power—its subjectivity—and becomes object—something to be consumed. Keith feels that through the reproduction of “Blackness for Sale” the project itself is becoming a fetish and loses its power as mythologist to intervene and reshape our narratives. On eBay, “Blackness for Sale” can operate as a punctum and disrupt racist narratives being consumed on the web. For situations in which “Blackness for Sale” is designated as art, its power to intervene in shaping and transforming reality is contained. It loses what Sandoval, drawing from Barthes, Derrida, and White calls the middle voice of the verb in which subject and object are doing.

In contrast, Keith offers “My Hands/Wishful Thinking,” a lesser known internet piece that they made in response to the death of unarmed Amadou Diallo by forty-one bullets shot at his body by the New York City Police Department. In “My Hands/Wishful Thinking,” M+K

42. McNaughton, *Bird Dance*, 4.

build the website which includes a description of the piece and the social conversation of which it is part. The actual piece is quiet and of muted greys and browns with a center image showing a .gif of a hand grabbing a wallet. A second screen showing images of the open hand and images of the hand holding the wallet has a slide show of text in white font: “one thought to counteract each bullet fired” (“M+K: My Hands/Wishful Thinking”). “My Hands/Wishful Thinking” is able to resist becoming a fetish because they see the context as digital space which has more freedom than the specific digital context of eBay. The content of eBay is controlled by eBay. When M+K create art for that specific context, the artists have little control over the piece being able to remain in that context. In contrast “My Hands/Wishful Thinking” was built for a larger context—that of the internet—that does not have a singular owner or manager, and thus M+K have more control over the piece remaining part of the context for which it was imagined.

One of the ways their subsequent projects resist fetishization is through building projects with multiple genres including experimental sound work. In their soundart they use mathematical and formal experimentation as compositional strategies. The experimentation bursts language and semantic expectations for music into the realm of what Sandoval calls via Barthes, zero degree of meaning. As explained in Chapter 1, it is in the place of zero degree of meaning that liberation from dominant archetypes can be found. Communication occurs without normative expectations of meaning. Zero degree of language and the bursting of self operate in the sound works of M+K where they use mathematical processes to organize sound rather than focusing on traditions of melodic narrative to approach the limits of the social narrative. An experimental approach to music composition occurs in several of their pieces including “Big House / Disclosure” (2007) and “The Earth Will Hear (for Audre Lorde and Marlon Riggs)” (2008). In *Big House / Disclosure* M+K use street interviews of Chicago residents to create a 200-hour

house song originally played in real time in a gallery at Northwestern University. “The Earth” is part of a larger project called *Document* that was released at a benefit at Denniston Hill in Woodridge, NY on August 23, 2008. *Document* is two-track song-cycle presented in the form of an album with an A-side and a B-side, even though there is no vinyl record or cassette tape. The tracks can be found on the internet through YouTube, on the project’s Blogspot blog, and for download via MediaFire. Side A is titled “If the Heavens Don’t Hear (a rollerskating jam for Marion Anderson).” Side B is titled “The Earth Will Hear (for Audre Lorde and Marlon Riggs).” In the interview with Laura Wetherington for “One Pause Poetry” M+K explain that they are writing praise songs as they think about the different approaches to resistance as represented by Marion Anderson on the one hand and Audre Lorde and Marlon Riggs on the other. Anderson’s approach was to maintain the status quo; Lorde and Riggs sought to disrupt the status quo. M+K value both approaches to resistance. “If the Heavens Don’t Hear” is a roller skating jam in popular form. “The Earth Will Hear” is an ambient work that uses an equation based on the names of the writers that are the topic of their work. As M+K explain the process for composing “The Earth”:

The process for creating the sounds for “The Earth Will Hear” started with a score derived from triad and diad letter groupings taken from the names of each artist as a dedication. We wrote the phrases, "FOR AUDRE" and "FOR MARLON." We displaced the first letter of the phrase to the end, so that triad one would be the letters ORA, and the second UDR, and the last diad would be EF, and repeated the process, displacing the second letter in "FOR," giving us RAU, and so on. We would take the letter O from ORA and give it a number based on its alphabetic position and convert that into a frequency that we could derive an audible pitch

from. For example, the letter *o* would be 15th in the alphabet, so we add two zeros giving us 1500hz, a pitch in between a G and G-flat. So the phrase ORA contained 1500hz, 1800hz, and 100hz. Each triad or diad was generated using sine tones in the studio. Working this way gave us many beautiful and surprising microtone combinations, or notes in between the white and black keys on a piano. Once we gathered all of our chords we recorded Mendi singing each sine tone, in effect doubling the chords. We made a custom piece of software that would slowly cycle through and playback each sine tone chord and each vocal harmony sample randomly, sometimes playing two or three harmonies against each other. We then improvised over this cycle, with Mendi on vocals pulling from her text, and Keith on guitar and bass.

This is a praise song for artists who confront oppression head-on for whom transformation is bursting, a process that charts the limits of the social order. M+K burst the names as letters and program them as sounds. While for Anderson M+K use the popular format of a roller skating jam, their praise song for Lorde and Riggs uses experimental and avant-garde forms that rely on concept for form rather than a predetermined received form which does not formally challenge the social order.

The limits of the social order that are being transformed in “The Earth” are the limits between life and death. The project of *Document* is an ancestral project. “The Earth” concludes with the line “a portal to our dead” which works as a description of the project which is to understand and access the resistance strategies of our recent ancestors—the song literally becomes the portal it describes through the compositional strategies that burst the names of Lorde and Riggs into song. It is through the bursting and zero degree of meaning that new terrain

is created. In “The Earth” the terrain that is created is a portal. There are many layers occurring with the sounds created from the different triads of letters that are sounded through pulsings and Mendi’s vocals singing. Over this dense landscape of sounds Mendi recites a poem whose last line is “a portal to our dead.” The praise song works as that portal where the strategies of our dead, in this case specifically Lorde and Riggs, are preserved and transmitted through the processes of composition.

In addition to the masquerade and bursting of self, the third skill of the cartographer is trickster consciousness. Sandoval explains that the methodology of the oppressed creates trickster consciousness: “These figures and technologies are what enable narrative to transform the moment, to change the world with new stories. Utilized together, these technologies create trickster histories: stratagems of magic, deception, and truth for healing the world, like rap or cybercinema, which work through the reapportionment of dominant powers” (209n1). The concept of trickster histories brings us into the realm of fact and fiction. As elaborated in Chapter 1, Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba argue that the world is created from a “flow of fiction” (253). The trickster is a figure of fun as it works to transform. Humor is one of the skills of the trickster as is disguise, which is where trickster consciousness overlaps with the masquerade, and playing the lines of fiction and truth. To return to the discussion of “Blackness for Sale,” trickster consciousness operates in the complicated lines of performance and reality where while M+K are literally selling Keith’s blackness, there is a level of self-conscious performance beyond the demands of the eBay marketplace. They take a social construct (i.e. race) that dominant ideology has formed into an object—blackness—and try to sell that social construct as the object it is not. Trickster consciousness also comes in in the dry humor of their work. In “Sonic City Lagos” the exaggerated slowness with which Mendi recites the poem shows the “sharp sense of

humor” through her deadpan delivery.⁴³ Along with the manipulation of ideology and zero degree of language, trickster consciousness is among the skills used in the activity of differential cognitive mapping.

In the title of “4-1-9, Or You Can’t View a Masquerade by Standing in One Place” is an argument for differential cognitive mapping: “you can’t view a masquerade by standing in one place.” The goal of differential cognitive mapping is to create a new terrain and countrypeople that can survive in freedom. Here we are back to Sandoval’s reading of Althusser who says that we need to build a world within, yet beyond. I argue that M+K are building a world within the realm of dominant ideology while also building access points in the realm of dominant ideology to their alternate world that exists within yet beyond. The conceptual suite “4-1-9” is born of reading signs, but then does the work of meta-ideology. They empty the signs of meaning and put in new meaning, which builds new terrain. In “4-1-9” M+K manipulate ideology by taking a variety of forms (signs), empty the forms of their received meaning and fill them with new meaning. The forms that they manipulate include the automatic teller machine, the video game Pong, the low-tech website, the high-tech website, and the 4-1-9 scam letter. Zero degree of language and bursting of self occur in the “Withdrawal” module of “4-1-9.” M+K use a mathematical approach to composition similar to the compositional strategies of *Big House / Disclosure* and “The Earth.” Trickster consciousness is woven throughout the modules of “4-1-9.”

“4-1-9, Or You Can’t View a Masquerade by Standing in One Place” (2005) is an intermedia suite with three components. It is on the internet at the website <http://blacknetart.com/fouronenine.html>; it is a gallery installation at the New Museum of

43. Peffer, “Introduction,” 2.

Contemporary Art; and it is a live performance which was first commissioned by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Center and the New Museum of Contemporary Art. “4-1-9” is a non-narrative meditation on the scam letters that are sent to email inboxes requesting help in moving funds from out of a country. They are fascinating letters and have spawned research projects, proposed laws, spam filter programs, composition exercises, and websites.⁴⁴ M+K use their meditation on these letters to investigate and transform the power structure between the U.S. and Africa on the computer. “4-1-9” continues the investigation of these narratives by addressing the representations of Africans invoked by dominant ideology which include: Africa as a nation of impoverished children; Africa as a war-torn country; Africa as a country; Africa as primitive and tribal; Africa as rich in resources without the skills and knowledge to extract and manage them. While some of these representations may be based in historical and geographical truths, when specifics represent the whole then that which does not fit in to the lens is rendered invisible, which makes it more difficult for that which is rendered invisible to be part of shaping reality. For what has become invisible to be part of shaping reality, the dominant narratives need to be fragmented. The skills individuals use to survive oppressive dominant narratives are those same skills that can be used to change the narratives. The stakes of M+K’s project do not remain

44. The website Quatloos has several pages dedicated to listing examples of 4-1-9 scams (http://www.quatloos.com/cm-niger/nigerian_scam_letter_museum.htm). The website, Snopes, which is a popular site dedicated to debunking scams and frauds has characteristically useful information on the 4-1-9 letters (<http://www.snopes.com/fraud/advancefee/nigeria.asp>). There is a bizarre website dedicated to celebrating 4-1-9 scams (<http://www.419eater.com/index.php>). Dyrud, Marilyn A. “‘I Brought You a Good News’: An Analysis of Nigerian 419 Letters.” Proceedings of the 2005 Association for Business Communication Annual Convention: 2005. Web. 6 Feb. 2012 discusses ways to use the 4-1-9 letters in the college writing classroom. Airoidi, Edoardo and Bradley Malin. “Data Mining Challenges for Electronic Safety: the Case of Fraudulent Intent Detection in E-Mails.” Data Privacy Laboratory, School of Computer Science, Carnegie Mellon University. Web. 4 February 2012 discusses how to create filters to protect inboxes from these scam letters. Glickman, Harvey. “The Nigerian ‘419’ Advance Fee Scams: Prank or Peril?” *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines* 39.3 (2005): 460-489. JSTOR. Web. 4 Feb. 2012 discusses the impact these scams have had on laws in Nigeria and the proposed, but not passed, Nigerian Advance Fee Fraud Prevention Bill in the United States.

limited to representations of race but also try to hit at the history of these representations as related to the economic system. They take the signifier and reconnect it to the signified. While exploring the intersection of race, economics, and the internet “4-1-9” breaks the hypnotic quality of dominant ideology by constructing multiple ways for a reader to be a player who can start doing the work of the mythologist.

The intermedia project “4-1-9” is modeled after an ATM. On the internet component, the home page is a menu with links to the four modules of the website: “Statement” “Deposit” “Withdrawal,” and “Balance.” The first module, “Statement” is primarily didactic and explains the project while the other three are interactive. In “Deposit” the reader is invited to write their own 4-1-9 letter. This module is no longer active and the link goes to a white screen in the process of loading, but never actually loads. In “Withdrawal” the reader is invited to listen to songs made from the 4-1-9 letters, and in “Balance” the reader is invited to play a video game. Sandoval’s hermeneutics of love is enabling for analyzing “4-1-9” for the project decolonizes geography by the activity of differential cognitive mapping which includes manipulation of ideology, zero degree of language, and trickster consciousness.

Masquerade is a common term between Sandoval’s differential cognitive mapping and M+K’s “4-1-9.” Sandoval’s definition of masquerade is a useful lens for understanding what M+K mean by masquerade. For Sandoval the masquerade can operate as ideology; there are the “dominant forms of masquerade that history can take” (105). The title of “4-1-9, Or You Can’t View a Masquerade by Standing in One Place” encourages the reader to see the myths surrounding 4-1-9 letters. These include the locations from where these letters are actually written. As they explain in “Statement”: “4-1-9 letters are actually created around the world, however these letters often use names and locations that are particular to Nigeria or other parts of

Africa” (“4-1-9”). The masquerade also means the myths that are created about Nigerians and Africans in these letters.

In addition to the masquerade of dominant ideology, to “see the masquerade” is an invitation to see the terrain of differential cognitive mapping—a “common border culture” or “common grounds on which to make coalitions across... profound cultural, racial, class, sex, gender, and power differences” (*Methodology of the Oppressed*, 53). It is an invitation to see a fragmented, mobile identity and world as a transformative power. We are invited into the masquerade by being able to write our own 4-1-9 letter and hear it recomposed as a song. The reader is invited into the masquerade as a player in “Balance.” In “Statement” the masquerade happens in the visual aspects of design. The masquerade is in the form of the ATM that houses this project.

The form of an automatic teller machine is an appropriate form for a project on scam letters because both rely on a masquerade of wealth. The ATM is a machine that obscures the processes of money. The 4-1-9 scam letter capitalizes on the obscurity surrounding wealth. In “Nigerian Scams and the Charms of Capital,” Andrew Smith argues that the appeal of 4-1-9 letters is that they seemingly expose the origins of wealth: “part of the appeal of these e-mails lies in the fact that they appear to reveal the processes by which wealth is created and distributed in the global economy. They thus speak to their readers’ attempts to map or conceptualize the otherwise inscrutable processes of that economy.”⁴⁵ The 4-1-9 letters as scams appeal to the desires to understand the creation of wealth in a global economy and desires to participate. According to Smith, the appeal of the letters is that spectators are presented the illusion of being players.

45. Smith, “Charms of Capital,” 27.

Where the 4-1-9 scams seemingly reveal, the ATM is a technology that obscures. The ATM is a machine about that masquerade of wealth. It is a form that allows for money to seem like it just appears without a material history. Sandoval explains that the dominant forms of masquerade that history can take are maintained by a turnstile that keeps a sign seem as a signified rather than a historical form that has a capricious connection to a signified. Thus our constructed processes end up appearing as natural. It seems natural to just be able to get money at any moment in time, and the fact that the money is part of complicated processes and housed in banks, which have complicated processes, is mostly hidden. One of the ways to interrupt the turnstile is to denaturalize the form of the ATM as a form that provides money. M+K do that in “4-1-9” where the ATM is emptied of its function of providing cash and is endowed with new meaning, which is as a vehicle for seeing the masquerade. Where the 4-1-9 scam capitalizes on the illusion, M+K create something that can actually help “map or conceptualize” the processes of the global economy.

The main menu for “4-1-9” website foregrounds mapping and navigation as a geographical skill and as a tool for navigating hyperspace. The background screen is black. The major image is an electric blue earth positioned with a perspective on the continent of Africa. There are no national borders drawn. From the place that would mark a spot on the coast of Nigeria radiates out ten lines in a pale electric sea green. The angle that the lines furthest from each other make is approximately 140 degrees with varying angles between the different lines. The top first two lines lead to the title of the project which is written in a white font: “4-1-9, Or You Can’t View a Masquerade by Standing in One Place.” The “4-1-9” is in a large computeresque font. The “or you can’t view a masquerade by standing in one place” is all in capitals in a small sans serif font. To the left of the title and a little lower down is the menu. The

menu is a vertical list with each of the four sections presented in an oblong text box in a slate grey that looks like the shape of buttons on an ATM.

M+K use “Statement” to state the intentions of the project and explain how to interact with it. The voice of the text is clear and articulate commanding authority by the use of multi-syllable words like “unsolicited” and by communicating complex ideas including structural similarities and “the modern African tragedy.” The voice of the visual display however is stylistically in tension with the style of the rest of the website. This is trickster consciousness: the visual performance of the page belies the authority of the text.

When you click on “Statement” you are taken to a page in a bright cobalt blue. The movement is jarring because the Main Menu has a sophisticated design. The design of statement has the feel of an old school web page as if it were designed on a basic Word processing program. There are only two links on this page and both lead back to the Main Menu. These links are in red and of a brightness that makes them hard to read. The text is in black. The aesthetic on this page makes it feel like an old-school design but also heightens a sense of distrust. This is the trickster: a visual performance of one thing that it is not but through the performance becomes that which it is not. While being the trickster, “Statement” is also the guide that explains their project. The voice of the text establishes the authority of the speaker even as the visual aspects of the page belie its authority.

The deposit section of 4-1-9 no longer functions as they describe in “Statement.” In “Statement” they explain that in deposit the reader has the opportunity to write their own 4-1-9 letter. To have a dead link is the trickster consciousness which prepares the reader for seeing the masquerade and decolonizing geography. It trains the reader to be comfortable with change and lies and to navigate space when it does not look like its descriptions.

This openness and fragmentation in terms of feeling like the project is incomplete not through design but unintentionally while not a central characteristic of their work does run through their pieces. They relinquish a certain amount of control of the final result through their choices of processes and technologies. We see this in “African Metropole” on the last day of the exhibit when the complicated speaker that responds to movement in the room stopped working. In *Big House / Disclosure* links on the website to documents regarding the City Ordinance and companies that complied are no longer functional. Even “Blackness for Sale” was stopped and taken down by ebay. These breakages and stops are one way that a trickster consciousness is evidenced and taught.

Like “Deposit” the experience of “Withdrawal” differs from the verbal description of the module. The link to “Withdrawal” brings you to a page that is in the same style of the “Main Menu.” The background is black and their central design piece is a blue globe. Instead of the globe showing continents, the center is a black rectangle with text that reads:

The audio featured in this section was created by using software to process images of 419 letters and translate them into soundscapes. The letters were then divided into sections (apologies, intros, troubles, solutions & secrets) and performed against the soundscape. Additional pieces will be created as participants create new 419 letters in the deposit area of the website. Use the menu to the left to select an mp3.

There is only one Audio featured in the menu on the left. Of the other tabs, the one on the top is a hyperlink back to the main menu and the other three tabs read “Coming Soon,” where soon may mean never since the “Deposit” section of this website which is what they explain will be used to make the audio no longer functions as a tool for producing new letters. There is no need to read

this as a flaw of the website; it is a characteristic of the website, which creates a disconnect between what is said will be there and what is actually there. In the logic of “4-1-9” being a training ground of sorts for “seeing the masquerade” there is the masquerade of their piece. As Sandoval explains drawing on Fanonian metaphor: “Thus practitioners of the differential mode of social movement develop and mobilize identity as political tactic in order to renegotiate power: identity is thus both disguised and not disguised in a form of differential consciousness that thrives on oscillation. The positional subject is not living a lie, then, but rather in disguise, but a real disguise, as in the example *Black Skin, White Masks*, a disguise that enables survival” (145). The gaps created by a changing functionality of the website from its stated intentions are enabling for developing skills for surviving in systems where there is only disguise.

While the disconnect between the description of the form and the actual processes of the form can be understood as trickster consciousness, a type of masquerade, the content of “Withdrawal” operates as zero degree of language and bursting the self. The whole of the letter is fragmented into a collage of its parts. There is one Audio file in “Withdrawal” that starts to play when the page is loaded. It has long low tones and then the speaking voice is hard to hear and moves between very slow and very fast rhythms. This is a location of zero degree of language, where language moves out of the social narrative to fragmented sound. On M+K’s website there is a link to the live performance component of “4-1-9.” The composition consists of two aspects: instrumental and voice. The instrumental consists of outerspacey-type sounds of electronic music. There is a whirl. There are high-pitched long notes a little softer than the screech of a microphone. The second aspect is the lyrics performed by Mendi. The first set of lyrics contains the salutations of the letters, and Mendi reads them as spoken text. In the second movement Mendi sings the lyrics which are another part of the letters, and the music also

becomes more melodic harmonizing with the melody of Mendi's vocals. In these fragmentations where meaning is ruptured is "the place from which the obtuse, third meaning emerges to haunt all we think we know" (*Methodology of the Oppressed*, 141). Through the place of third meaning emerges the creation of new terrain.

The first section of the audio file of the performance is a collage of a variety of the salutations of the letters. The stereotypical representations of Nigeria and Nigerians take on poetic meanings where, through repetition, we are able to see the strategies for creating these representations as rhetorical moves. The addition of the music provides another perspective that bursts the word; the music composed is a translation of the texts of the letters. Mendi+Keith call their intermedia suites meditations. In a meditation meaning is a concrete goal. The root of meditation, is *mederi*, which means to heal. If there is a wound that 419 letters signify as well as cause—this intermedia suite is a balm. Through a variety of media, technology, and modules M+K burst, translate, and invite us to play with these caustic representations of Nigerians as a way to decolonize our representations of Nigerians.

The second section of the song is more lyrical and narrative where Mendi sings the plea from one specific letter. Here the music underneath changes and the melody of the music matches the melody that Mendi sings, which is similar to the melody of "Boy for Sale" from the musical *Oliver*. Here we have their dry humor: to be alluding to popular musical in an avant-garde intermedia suite is funny. But if we look beyond the surface surprise, there are striking similarities between the two songs which are about economics. In this melodic allusion, M+K bring a class conversation to bear on the economics of race. "Boy for Sale" is about the practice of selling orphans into apprenticeships in nineteenth century England. The title of the song, "Boy

for Sale” is also similar to a previous work by M+K titled “Blackness for Sale.” The meditation on the scam letters opens up to histories of the exchange of humans for cash.

In “Balance,” a meditation on the middle passage emerges as a mercy ball passes across a screen that becomes an ocean between the United States and Africa. While the historical references—work and orphans in nineteenth century England and the transatlantic slave trade—refer to the exploitation of humans, the 4-1-9 scam letters are the exploitation of representations of humans. The work of the mythologist is to denaturalize our signs, and here M+K denaturalize the representations of Nigerians that 4-1-9 scams perpetuate. M+K burst the texts, bring the words to zero degree of language, play the trickster and bring historical contexts. The new terrain that emerges is full of stops and gaps. The work of “4-1-9” is about bursting representations but not necessarily building new terrain. It is the punctum that enables movement between the realms. “4-1-9” is about mapping the terrain as it is and teaching the skills to map the terrain and show where the holes in the terrain are even as it may appear smooth, glossy, and shiny. As Jameson describes the postmodern landscape there is an “emergence of a new kind of flatness or depthlessness” represented in “glossy advertising images” or the glitter of Andy Warhol’s *Diamond Dust Shoes* (60). Sandoval positions the praxis of the U.S. third world feminists, a praxis continued through this contemporary community of artists, as being able to pierce the “schizophrenic, metonymic psychic and material conditions around them” (26).

What Barthes describes as zero degree of language, Fanon calls the bursting of self. M+K burst the texts of individual letters by reorganizing them into groups according to their parts and by creating music from the rewriting of the letters and turning text in to sound. Here M+K reprocess language as sound. It is in this space that transformation can happen. These letters

have been normalized as “spam;” an excess that is ignored. M+K burst the normative social narrative surrounding these letters by giving them sustained attention. This is similar to the techniques of Dada who look at found objects as art and what Pënz does which is intervening in the social with the tiles that they leave about for people to find and create art on. These interventions do not fit into the capitalist system and do not have a capitalist value, at least for the moment of creation. They exist beyond, and by existing beyond they can reenter and transform, disrupt the social narrative of what has value and what does not have value. While the scam letters do not have a capitalist value for the reader of the letter, the values of the letters can be found by bursting them. *What is the sonic value of these letters?* the website asks. It works as a meditation on what is seen as surplus, as disposable. To be able to map the surplus is a skill of the new countrypeople-warriors. M+K do the mapping through bursting.

In “Balance” M+K remix the video game pong as a meditation on the power relationships between race, geography, identity, and digital space creating a masquerade in which the reader becomes participant. This module has a different graphic design than the menu page. The screen is black and the text is agreen and in a font reminiscent of the days of DOS. The first page explains the rules of the game:

1. You are the computer & this is a masquerade.
2. When the game starts click on the screen and press the space bar to serve the mercy ball.
3. Use your mouse to navigate as you play against America.
4. Whenever one side misses the ball the other side gains a point. 10 points will win the game.

6. Remember this is a masquerade. Whenever you hit the mercy ball, you are playing your part.

The first line explains the character: “You are the computer & this is a masquerade.” The reader is a player and in a narrative twist, the player, “you” is the computer. Traditionally the player plays against other players or a computer. In this game, the player is the player playing against the computer but the player is disguised as the computer—this is the masquerade. The player, “you,” who is the computer plays against the computer who is disguised as “America.” The game is based on the volley of the “mercy ball” between “you” the computer and “America.” There is an additional masquerade at work that is alluded to in the rules but is only experienced through playing “Balance.” In the rules to the game it seems as if the characters are you, the computer, and America. When the game is played a fourth character emerges. Every time you, “the computer,” hits the mercy ball, the image of the computer transforms into a visual representation of the continent Africa. The lens that emerges for understanding the power dynamics at play in the 4-1-9 letters is a differential lens built on a masquerade in which one thing becomes another.

Given the United States, the computer, the mercy ball, and movement, the hypnotics of play are the histories of these signs. The first time the computer is hit, the computer turns into Africa which raises the question, why does the computer turn into Africa? There is the one level of the scam. The scam is about the power moving between the U.S. and Africa. But then as “you” are thinking about that movement the digital space that the mercy ball travels across becomes an ocean, then there is also the economic reality of the middle passage. An origin of the wealth of the United States is the trafficking of West Africans and their subsequent enslavement. “Big House/Disclosure” explores the historical memories of our origins of wealth. M+K

document the erasure of slavery from our cultural memory through interviewing people in Chicago in response to a city ordinance that all companies who work with the city must make transparent if they profited from chattel slavery. In the three interviews featured on the project's website (<http://bighouse.northwestern.edu/>), none of the interviewees had heard of the ordinance; all of them thought it was a good idea.

A theme throughout M+K's oeuvre is identifying, analyzing, and playing with systems of racism. The specific systems of who is human and thus has rights and can participate in the shaping of the dominant political, social, and economic spheres were created around trying to balance the reality of racial slavery and the middle passage with a democratic humanism. One of the strategies that developed was to construct a racist system that argued white European superiority over black Africans. This myth of superiority is held in place using the rhetoric of supremacy. The work of M+K burst these myths by mapping the terrain of the contemporary decolonizing globalization.

Sandoval adds the differential power to Jameson's cognitive mapping to develop the activity of the new countrypeople-warriors. For Sandoval's apparatus there are two parts: the methodology of the oppressed and the oppositional social movements. In order to transform dominant ideology both parts work in reciprocal relationships to each other. While M+K are doing the work of differential cognitive mapping, to what extent are their relationships to the social movements visible in their work? The relationship between this artist community and the social movements is a question I will return to in the conclusion of the dissertation: to what extent is this community of twenty-first century artists involved with social movements? To what extent should they be? Is Sandoval's methodology sufficient for exploring those questions?

4.0 ARCHITECTURE OF FREEDOM III: HOW THE ENCYCLOPEDIA PROJECT DECOLONIZES KNOWLEDGE

The collaborative world under formation in the Encyclopedia Project, a five-volume encyclopedia edited by Tisa Bryant, Miranda Mellis, and Kate Schatz, is a realm in which knowledge is created through the processes of fiction. The three editors met while they were students in the MFA in creative writing program at Brown University. Inspired by a course they took with Montréal-based writer Gail Scott who challenged them to apply for grants to fund their ideas for a project that explores the power of fiction as a tool of truth-making,⁴⁶ the editors created Encyclomedia, a not-for-profit organization, to publish *Encyclopedia* a literary journal in the form of an alphabetical encyclopedia. At the time of writing, only the first two volumes have been published and what started as a five-year collaboration in which a volume would be published each year has become a collaboration without a clear temporal limit. *Encyclopedia Vol. 1, A-E* was published in 2006; *Encyclopedia Vol. 2 F-K* was published in 2010; and in the summer of 2012, the submission period for the third volume (L-P) of *Encyclopedia* closed. By compiling the work of a generation of writers and artists, Bryant, Mellis, and Schatz are mapping and creating terrain of the contemporary moment through the processes of fiction. The volumes of their collaborative project map the movements of dominant ideology and compiles strategies for resistance and transformation.

46. Schwartzapfel, “Hey, *Britannica!*”

The preceding chapters applied Sandoval's vocabulary for the methodology of the oppressed and differential cognitive mapping to analyze the way *Pënz (It's Pronounced Pants)* and M+K Obadike decolonize globalization, respectively. Pënz decolonizes time by existing within, yet beyond the Gregorian calendar. M+K decolonize space by teaching the skills of differential cognitive mapping which are the skills of the new countrypeople warriors. This chapter will use the vocabulary developed in the previous chapters to analyze how the Encyclopedia Project decolonizes knowledge. This chapter works as a synthesis of the previous two chapters to demonstrate the interrelatedness of the methodological approaches of the methodology of the oppressed and differential cognitive mapping.

According to Sandoval, disciplined knowledge reenacts "colonial geographic, sexual, gender, and economic power relations" (71). In *Encyclopedia* knowledge is decolonized in several ways including using the technique of cross-referencing to connect people and ideas that traditionally are held away from each other and by challenging the idea of objective truth by having all truth emergent from the meaning-maker and emergent from the cross-referenced contexts.

The technologies and skills that the Encyclopedia Project documents and produces are the skills needed to create the realm that Chela Sandoval calls prophetic love. As with much of her methodology of the oppressed, Sandoval derives the term prophetic love from Roland Barthes and contextualizes the term "prophetic love" with terms from a variety of thinkers including Gloria Anzaldúa, Jacques Derrida, and Hayden White. Prophetic love is a consciousness that does not use power to create suffering: "In its realm, consciousness, life, aesthetics, and knowledge become something other than what we now live, and power becomes aesthetic, a decoration" (174). The skills of prophetic love are the skills of the new countrypeople warriors

“who fight for egalitarian social relations under neocolonial postmodernism welcome citizenry to a new polity, a new homeland” (184). As new countrypeople warriors, the Encyclopedists are emerging from, creating the terrain for, and calling up new countrypeople warriors by having “knowledge becomes something other than what we now live.”

Reality is always complicated because the realm of dominant ideology and the realm of the methodology of the oppressed exist in dialogic relationships as well as hierarchical relationships. In their hierarchical relationships the realm of dominant ideology has hegemonic influence. In his essay “The Irrational and the Problem of Historical Knowledge in the Enlightenment” (1972), Hayden White argues that the “modern scientific histories of culture produced by our own age” emerge from a tradition that distinguishes between “mythical thinking” and “scientific thinking.” According to White this tradition is “as old as Greek philosophy and was a mainstay even of Christian theology during the Patristic period,” but White focuses on the failure of the enlightenment “to see that fabulation itself could serve as a means to the apprehension of the truth about reality.”⁴⁷ In this Enlightenment construction, truth is associated with the real, and fable is associated with the unreal. Thus, cultures that do not make as strong a distinction between truth and fable become inaccessible to the Enlightenment mind, which is the approach that still operates hegemonically today in the formation of academic disciplines.

While the tradition of opposing fact and fiction might operate hegemonically, there are also traditions of thought that present a reality formed through an interplay between truth and fable. In her chapter on Zora Neale Hurston, “‘Lyin’ Up a Nation’: Zora Neale Hurston and the Literary Uses of the Folk,” María Eugenia Cotera shows how Hurston as an anthropologist

47. White, “The Irrational,” 142-143.

worked in the interstices between truth and fable as she collected the folk stories of Negroes in her home of Florida. The data that Hurston gathered was published in *Of Mules and Men* which generically straddles folklore and ethnographic study. We can see the material results of the hegemonic epistemological approach to truth and reality in the painful details of Hurston's biography. She died poor, unknown and was buried in an unmarked grave in Florida.

White's essay, "The Irrational and Historical Knowledge" does not merely point out the failure of Enlighteners; White offers Vico's *New Science* (first edition, 1725; definitive edition, 1744) as outlining a "third order of knowledge" in which, as Hurston and Cotera argue in their respective works, "knowledge.. is a species of what we would call the *fictive* in a precise sense." As White continues his explication of Vico, "Instead of setting the imagination over against the reason as an *opposed* way of apprehending reality, and poetry over against prose as an *opposed* way of representing it, Vico argues for a *continuity* between them."⁴⁸ This tradition of epistemology—which exists dialogically with the hegemonic tradition of opposing truth and fiction—is the tradition in which the Encyclopedia Project is situated.

Through reconstituting structures of knowledge, the Encyclopedia Project decolonizes globalization: rather than truth being objective, to know is a "flow of fiction" from many perspectives⁴⁹. A colonizing consciousness contains difference within a hierarchical system in

48. Ibid, 144.

49. As discussed in Chapter 1, the term "flow of fiction" is from the essay "Scenes from a Collaboration." Juba offers the term to describe herself as a being that exists outside of what we know as possible. She is saying that she does exist, and received corroboration from Elbrecht, Fakundiny, *Tulsa Review of Women's Literature*, the editor, and María Eugenia Cotera, that Juba exists in a reality and that fiction is not only mimesis but can also be cosmogonic. That cosmogonic motion is called a "flow of fiction." Truth emerges from fiction not the other way around. The self is a fictive construct but becomes a type of truth when those fictions are lived out. Thus truth-making becomes a process and it is through a dual (or multiple view) that those fictions can become lived-out truths. This is one of the ways that the fabric of reality is created that allows intervention and disruption in the creation of reality. The creations of reality that this dissertation analyzes are decolonizing realities.

which one reality is more real and legitimate than alternate realities. In the Encyclopedia Project, there is no hierarchy of reality. Additionally, there is no possibility of objective truth for this encyclopedia does not separate meaning from meaning-maker. So even moments that could correspond to expectations of objective truth, the very processes of putting together the encyclopedia make what in other structures we know as objective truth to be experiential.

In an interview about experimental writing, Miranda Mellis explains the project at Encyclopedia Project as “re-conceptualizing a cultural practice or social institution... We decided when we started that wanted to do something with our publication that wasn’t already being done. One approach was to appropriate the gorgeous architecture of the canonical encyclopedia and to turn it inside out, privileging art and literature as expressions of expertise and knowledge” [sic]. What Mellis is describing here is what Sandoval calls meta-ideology, which is one of the tools for decolonizing our worlds. They take the form of the encyclopedia, empty it of its meaning and fill it with alternate meaning thus denaturalizing the canonical encyclopedia.

Mellis situates the project as responding to the colonization of knowledge that manifests in two overlapping crises: the crisis of an under-representation of people of color in government and academe and the crisis of money in a capitalist economy. To pragmatically address these crises, the Encyclopedia Project commits to publishing at least fifty percent writers of color and has taken itself out of the mainstream publishing marketplace by creating the not-for-profit organization Encyclomedia to publish the project. The choice to turn a non-fictional form into a form for fiction (as well as to house fiction in a non-narrative form), while challenging the racism of government and academia, while existing outside the control of the literary marketplace, and while privileging art and literature as expert knowledge is another way that

they address the nexus of the two crises. If we return to a consideration of White, he argues that the opposition of truth and fable in which it is only truth that creates reality. Like Hurston and Vico, the Encyclopedists create a praxis of meaning-making for which reality is formed through processes of truth and fiction.

The event description for “An Evening with *The Encyclopedia Project*” to celebrate the launch of *Encyclopedia Vol. 2 F-K* at the Kitchen, an experimental performance space in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan, calls the book an “anti-canon.” The anti-canon responds to the relationship of representation to the crisis of money. There are certain identities that have more power in creating and maintaining canons—a process which supports a capitalist approach to the literary marketplace. As an “anti-canon,” the Encyclopedia works in a manner called for by Cornel West: “cultural critics should promote types of canon formation that serve as strategic weapons in the contemporary battle over how to best to respond to the current crisis in one’s society and culture.”⁵⁰ The two volumes work as a map of the current crisis. They also work as a response to the current crisis as well as a tool for teaching how to respond to the crisis.

Canonization is a type of colonization as the processes of who is canonized work in support of the marketplace. We know which writers have value (and the lines between aesthetic value and monetary value are slippery slim) based on which writers are canonized which feeds a marketplace that thrives on limited choice. The marketplace operates based on an idea of what the world is rather than on the idea of creating the world. This is what Sandoval via Barthes describes as the difference between the maxim and the proverb. The maxim is a rhetorical figure that presents the world as it is in order to contain it while the proverb is a rhetorical figure that describes the world in order to create the world. The difference between the maxim and the

50. West, “Minority Discourse,” 200.

proverb can be understood by the statement, “*the weather is fine.*” When that statement is spoken by an employee to another employee in a building in which the windows do not open, reference to the weather operates as a maxim “the statement is no longer directed towards a world to be made; it must overlay one which is already made.” In this case, the world already made is a world in which regardless of the weather outside, the weather inside remains the same. The statement when spoken by a farmer “keeps a real link with the usefulness of fine weather.” The static maxim is a colonization of the “active speech” of the proverb.⁵¹

To discuss the problem of colonized knowledge Sandoval puts Barthes and Fanon in conversation. Both theorists argue that consciousness is barred from reality by dominant ideology, which is a colonizing reality that creates a gap between lived experience and dominant ideology. They differ in their approach to the fragmentation. Barthes as a first-world subject yearns for a whole subject while Fanon finds the fragmentation liberating. As Sandoval writes, “Barthes predicts that connections will eventually be reestablished (though not in his own lifetime) ‘between reality and men, between description and explanation, between object and knowledge’: his desire and his nostalgia are for the reconciliation of a broken, decolonizing first world” (134).

According to Sandoval, Fanon in his works including *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), deals with the same problems as Barthes but Fanon deals with them from the perspective of those who have been locked out of the comforts of dominant ideology. Now famously, W.E.B. DuBois described the phenomenon of being locked out of dominant ideology as double consciousness using the experience of the Negro in the United States as a concrete example. In double consciousness there is no possibility of comfortably existing within dominant ideology,

51. Barthes, “Myth Today,” 154.

as there is always an awareness of the fiction of that comfort and knowledge of the possibility of the comfort being ripped away. Fanon explains that we can burst the enslaved consciousness and by doing so, unlike Barthes's lone alienated mythologist, we access a revolutionary community. And that is what we desire: to burst in order to join another terrain that exists—it is a reality but operates differently, alternately from dominant ideology. Barthes couldn't see it which is why he longs for wholeness. But the fragmented world is what allows us to change. It is the differential movement where one site does not become *the* privileged site, rather different locations become possible places for creating change and meaning. For Fanon according to Sandoval, "One who 'takes a stand against' the 'death' of being in supremacism...joins a new, original, revolutionary cadre that is cross-racial, cross-class, and cross-nation: an alliance of countrypeople of the same psychic terrain" (139-140). The Encyclopedia Project creates and documents that "revolutionary cadre that is cross-racial, cross-class, and cross-nation" who establish new connections between knowledge and object.

The cover and the front matter of *Encyclopedia Vol. 2 F-K* contain a visual representation of that crossing of race, class, and nation that establishes new connections between knowledge and object.⁵² The visual motif on the outer front and back cover and the inner front cover is the criss-crossed matching list. On the front cover, in miniscule font there is a list of all the names of the entries in *Vol. 2 F-K*. On the back cover, in matching miniscule font is an alphabetical list of the names of the contributors. Thin straight lines connect the name of the contributor to the entry the contributor wrote. In theory the lines are straight, but because the lines travel along the outside of the book, the lines bend and shift directions with the shape of the spine. On the outer cover, it is very difficult to follow the lines between the contributor and the entry. In the inner

52. It is important to remember that their doing this is not new, but the connections that they are creating are new connections.

front cover it is easier to match the contributor to the entry by using a straight edge to follow along the lines. However, without the use of a tool, there is the visual representation of two-hundred nine intersecting lines. These criss-crossed lines connect different races, classes, and nations and represent the revolutionary terrain of Encyclopedia and the community of new countrypeople that Encyclopedia makes visible and calls up. While the majority of the writers are based in the United States, the majority of the writers also have ties to other nations and geographies. For instance, according to her bio, Sun Yung Shin won the Asian American Literary Award for poetry, edited a book on transracial adoption, and is author of a Korean/English children's book. Shin has two lines moving out from her name: one to "Grandparents" and one to "Korean Cinema." The line connecting Shin to "Korean Cinema" crosses many lines including the line running between Jean Wyllys and "Hell." Wyllys is a Brazilian author and journalist. Both these lines intersect with the line connecting "Kuti, Fela" with Brent Hayes Edwards a diaspora scholar who teaches comparative literature at Columbia University. These three intersecting lines are a small sample of the many connections made in Encyclopedia and an accurate representation of the types of connections the editors seek to make. The criss-crossing lines represent a community of cross-nationalities, cross-races, and cross-classes working to decolonize knowledge.

From chapter two of the dissertation, which discusses how the collaboration *Pënz (It's Pronounced Pants)* exists within, yet beyond the Gregorian calendar, we know that Sandoval develops her approach to transforming dominant ideology through the theories of French Marxist Louis Althusser. According to Sandoval, Althusser posits that a "citizensubject can learn to identify, develop, and control the means of ideology, that is, marshal the knowledge necessary to 'break with ideology' while at the same time also speaking in, and from within, ideology" (44).

In *Pënz*, the Gregorian calendar is a form of dominant ideology, and it is the structuring principle of their collaboration, what Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba call the jail that is the jell. In *Encyclopedia*, the form of their jail that is a jell is the five volumes of *Encyclopedia*. Originally, they planned to also use the Gregorian calendar as a structuring principle for their collaboration. In their first descriptions of the project they say that it was going to be a five-year project in which they publish a volume annually. However, there were four years between the first and second volume. The back matter for *Vol. 2* abandons the logic of the Gregorian calendar and instead of being an annual publication it is now “published on a semi-regular basis.”

Where the Gregorian calendar is more obviously a colonizing form (it was created and is still used to globally standardize time-keeping), the encyclopedia is more complicated as a form. The encyclopedia is analogous to the category of calendar. The form that the encyclopedia takes reflects ideology but is not necessarily dominant ideology. For instance, the French *Encyclopédie* of the eighteenth century was used to challenge the dominant structures. As describe in the entry to “Encyclopedia” in the 11th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, it was “a war machine: as it progressed, its attacks both on church and the still more despotic government, as well as on Christianity itself, became bolder and more undisguised, and it was met by opposition and persecution unparalleled in the history of encyclopedias.”⁵³ Here is an instance where the form of the encyclopedia is being used to challenge dominant ideology. This French encyclopedia project coincided with the revolutionary ideals in France.

It is not the French *Encyclopédie* that became the standard form for encyclopedias. Rather it is the *Encyclopedia Britannica* that became the standard. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* compiles knowledge in a more systematic way and becomes one of the standards of the form

53. “Encyclopedia,” 376.

which values “exact and precise facts” and “systematic regularity.”⁵⁴ It is the *Encyclopedia Britannica* which introduced a “new plan” that became a standard for the genre that has come to present the standards of knowledge in the service of dominant ideology.

While certainly in opposition to valuing “exact and precise facts,” in “A Statement by the Editors” that opens *Vol. I, A-E*, the Encyclopedists do not present their project as an oppositional project; they present their project as fitting within the tradition of encyclopedists to compile and organize knowledge. Rather than existing within the limits of the contemporary generic alphabetical encyclopedia, they place their conversation with the etymological root of the term. The rich history of encyclopedias includes a diversity of approaches to compiling and organizing knowledge. Thus, the Encyclopedists are transforming the encyclopedia from within its tradition. This is the Althusserian citizensubject and what Sandoval says is the consciousness of the U.S. third world feminists to exist within, yet beyond. Or, to apply Barthes’s lens this is meta-ideology—to enter forms to transform the form—to reconnect the signified with the signifier, as elaborated below.

The editorial statement situates their project within a larger tradition of the impulse to build encyclopedic knowledge. The statement begins with an epigraph from Morgan Adamson, which explains the desire of the encyclopedia “which was a manifestation of the drive to both know the world as near-infinite and at the same time contain it within a set of volumes.” In the closing paragraph they explain that the encyclopedia “form is available for all manner of researches and investigations, intuitive, scientific, literary and otherwise.” In their opening paragraph, the Encyclopedists explain their relationship to the encyclopedia. While they are

54. Ibid, 377.

within the tradition of encyclopedists, they are also building something beyond. They have their specific intervention:

The word encyclopedia, from the Greek *enkyklopaideia*, refers to widening circles of knowledge. Navigating by this etymology, then we worked circuitously, spiraling forward, circling back, seeking to open up rather than over-determine the terrain. Early encyclopedias did not separate education, knowledge and philosophy: the Encyclopedia does not separate meaning from meaning-maker.⁵⁵

The last sentence of the above quote refers to the debates around disciplinary separation. As L.M. De Rijk argues in a thorough study into the etymology of the Greek term: “the controversy on the question of which disciplines belong to the ‘circuit of disciplines’ appears to date from as late as Late Antiquity.”⁵⁶ The Encyclopedists are intervening in the debate around how meaning is created. As discussed further below, in the Encyclopedia meaning does not exist a priori; meaning is created by the specific experiences of the meaning-maker. It is an avant-garde approach to compiling knowledge because the chance of experience governs meaning rather than a predetermined hierarchal system. This intervention is not presented as oppositional to the form or process of encyclopedias. Rather the encyclopedia becomes a terrain where debates around knowledge and meaning can be played out. By focusing on a diverse tradition of encyclopedias, the Encyclopedists are able to place themselves within the tradition without being contained by a singular approach to creating an encyclopedia. They are working within the tradition of organizing knowledge in the same way that Pēnz was working within the tradition of organizing time. They figure out their own path from within the long tradition.

55. Bryant, Mellis and Schatz, “Statement by the Editors,” 7.

56. Rijk, “Εγκύχλις παιδεία,” 30.

Their specific intervention is to tie meaning to meaning-maker which is an intervention in the contemporary popular genre of the encyclopedia but not an intervention in the tradition which has a history of valuing meaning-maker including the eleventh edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*. However, for the 11th edition, the meaning maker is supposed to be an institutionally recognized “authority” who can be cited as such. Additionally, Wikipedia ties meaning to meaning maker but in a different way. Wikipedia uses web 2.0 platforms to create a community of meaning makers. However, the authority is gained from the community which also can edit, challenge, and rewrite entries that are deemed suspect or wrong. Both the 11th edition and Wikipedia value “exact and precise facts.” Encyclopedia Project ties meaning to meaning maker to challenge dominant perceptions of truth. How they are able to do that is through asking submitters to answer the question “what occurs under the sign of fiction?” This moves encyclopedic knowledge into the realm of what Sandoval calls via Barthes “‘revolutionary truth’ of knowledge and power (154)” (124). Knowledge is taken from the realm of the maxim into the realm of the proverb.

In “Myth Today” Barthes offers the proverb as “the speech of a humanity which is making itself, not one which is” (154). Unlike the rhetoric of supremacy which seeks to present the world as it is, the proverb creates the world as it is becoming. The Encyclopedia Project uses language to create the world as it is becoming. The production of meaning is not hidden nor presented as inevitable because meaning is tied to the specific experiences of the meaning-maker. Meaning in the Encyclopedia is emergent, and not the seemingly self-evident knowledge of dominant ideology—what Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba call a cosmogonic motion in which reality is created from a “flow of fiction.”

There is not a singular encyclopedia of dominant ideology like the Gregorian calendar is for measuring time. However there is a genre of encyclopedia that includes encyclopedias like *Britannica* and *World Book*. The current entry for “Encyclopedia” in *Britannica* refers to that dominant understanding of the encyclopedia:

Today most people think of an encyclopaedia as a multivolume compendium of all available knowledge, complete with maps and a detailed index, as well as numerous adjuncts such as bibliographies, illustrations, lists of abbreviations and foreign expressions, gazetteers, and so on. They expect it to include biographies of the significant men and women of the present as well as those of the past, and they take it for granted that the alphabetically arranged contents will have been written in their own language by many people and will have been edited by a highly skilled and scholarly staff; nevertheless, not one of these ingredients has remained the same throughout the age.

This conception of the encyclopedia is what the Encyclopedists build on as their form. Their book is a multivolume compendium with visual aspects, bibliographies, and arranged alphabetically and edited by “a highly skilled and scholarly staff.” That which is not stated in the *Britannica* entry is the assumption of objective truth, that the world is described as it is. When discussing the reader’s need, the *Britannica* entry explains, “People look to encyclopaedias to give them an adequate introduction to a topic that interests them.” This statement frames the relationship between reader and encyclopedia as a relationship in which the encyclopedia fulfils the expectations of the reader. According to Barthes this is one of the moves that allows for a mobile world to appear static. Additionally, *Britannica* uses statement of fact to make a specific genre of encyclopedias appear as the only genre of encyclopedias. When the *Britannica* entry

discusses the authority of compilers, the entry states “Pliny’s vast *Historia naturalis* has survived intact because for so many centuries it symbolized human knowledge, and even the ‘old wives’ tales’ it injudiciously included were unquestioningly copied into many later encyclopaedias.” Here there is the assumption of what is legitimate knowledge in *Historia naturalis* and what is illegitimate. By describing the inclusion of old wives’ tales as injudicious, Britannica denies the legitimacy of the province of the proverb: old wives tales do not describe the world as it is to contain and order the world—they provide knowledge in order to create the world. To deny the legitimacy of old wives tales as a form for knowledge is statement of fact and privation of history in the rhetoric of supremacy.

The entry for “Encyclopedia” in *Vol 1, A-E* is fundamentally different from the entry in *Britannica*. The entry in *Vol 1, A-E* has two images and one of the longer text entries. The text entry for “Encyclopedia” is James E. Irby’s translation of the short story “Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” by Jorge Luis Borges and reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp. Both the images are by Rikki Ducornet who illustrated Borges’s story published by The Porcupine’s Quill (1983 or 1982). Borges’s story narrates the history of an encyclopedia project for a fictional planet with a fictional language based only in verbs. In the Borges story millionaire Ezra Buckley funds this encyclopedia project. The character Buckley was a defender of slavery in 1824 and tellingly the encyclopedia is an anti-materialist project in which slavery is only metaphor. Buckley as funder of the encyclopedia represents the relationships between philosophical theories and real-world oppressions. Within the logic of Borges’s story, anti-materialist theories serve the creation of wealth through exploitation and trafficking of human bodies.

This analysis of “Tlon...” diverges radically from the optimistic analysis by Sheldon Brivic in his article “Borges’ ‘Orbis Tertius.’” Brivic argues that Borges is offering Tlon as a positive cosmology and focuses in on it as a representation of the Third World which is a non-Western and non-Marxist perspective. Brivic builds on Benjamin Lee Whorf’s writings on the Hopi as non-Indo European language to argue that the language of Tlon shares characteristics of the Hopi thus elevating Tlon as Borges’ answer to the problems of European materialism. While Brivic does not contend with the assumption implicit in his argument that just because it is Third World means that it is better than a Western ideology, Brivic does briefly address the fact that the funder of the project is pro-slavery:

But the major propagator of Tlon is Ezra Buckley, a millionaire from Memphis, Tennessee. It may be that the reason Borges uses Buckley, a “defender of slavery,” is that extreme racists have done the most of any group to preserve the culture of the Third World. They prevent the non-European native from being assimilated into Western culture by insisting that he stay in his place. (397-398)

Here, Brivic puts forth the conjecture that the reason that Borges uses Buckley is “that extreme racists have done the most of any group to preserve the culture of the Third World.” Besides being a statement that disavows the Third World from being the primary preservers of the Third World, Brivic is unable to imagine that Borges might have made the “major propagator of Tlon” a “defender of slavery” to critique the cosmology of Tlon, rather than simply revere it.

However, if we take a dialogical approach to the two arguments—that Borges is arguing for materialism and that Borges is arguing against materialism—we arrive at a third world, differential, and dialogic perspective which is that “Tlon...” is formed from the debates surrounding theories of language, cosmology—both Western and Third World—and rather than

offering a single position in response to the debate, the short story provides an affective pull to both the energy of Tlon as represented by the excitement of our first-person narrator who discovers the encyclopedia, and our repulsion of the planet Tlon as represented in the financier being a defender of slavery. This attraction and repulsion is perhaps that intensity of coalition consciousness as described by Bernice Johnson Reagon where she says that to transform the system we actually have to ally ourselves with those that would kill us. Thus, the solution is not one or the other, is not a merely Third World consciousness as opposed to a Western consciousness as Brivic argues, but rather the solution is a dialogic understanding of the ways the Third World consciousness and the Western consciousness are forming in relation to each other. By claiming Borges's multi-valent fiction that pulls and repulses anti-materialist cosmologies as a defining aspect of their project, the Encyclopedists ground their project in an already fragmented terrain.

In the entry for "Encyclopedia" in *Vol. 1, A-E*, encyclopedic knowledge emerges from tensions around language and philosophy and is steeped in multiple levels of fiction. There is nothing "adequate" about this introduction to the term "encyclopedia." To construct meaning requires work of the reader of the type described by Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba in their autocriticism on their collaboration. Their novel which is constructed using the structure of a "parallactic sequence" gaps the reader into silence from which the reader must create meaning that is not provided in a concrete way or adequate manner.⁵⁷ The gaps created by having the Borges story as the entry for Encyclopedia throw the ethics and economics of the project into question. Where dominant ideology might always be traced with the means for liberation, the methodology of the oppressed is always traced with the means of our oppression. The

57. Elbrecht and Fakundiny, "Scenes from a Collaboration," 247.

Encyclopedia Project is a materialist project funded by state grants in a country that acquires its wealth through economic exploitation.

The world created through compiling knowledge in *Encyclopedia* is a world still in creation. Currently there are two volumes. Both volumes are 10.25” x 8.75” and were printed and bound by Tien Wah Press in editions of 1500. *Vol. 1, A-E* is in the typeset Futura and Bembo; *Vol. 2 F-K* is in the typeset Adobe Garamond Pro. As with the typeset, the covers for the two volumes are different. *Vol. 1* is a cloth hardcover. The front cover is a pastel sea green and the back cover is pink. *Vol. 2* is a shiny black hardcover. The front is a photograph of fire and the back is a photograph of kale—which represents the alphabetical limits of the letters “F” through “K.” Both books include alphabetical entries and at the back a color art portfolio. Additionally many entries have black and white images. There is not always a literal relationship between the title of the entry, the visual image, and the text. Sometimes the image is created by the writer of the entry and other times it is a separate artist. In *Vol. 1* the entries in the color art portfolio are cross-referenced in the text section. In *Vol. 2* the color art portfolio is not cross-referenced.

There are some movements between the visual and text entries that are easier to explain. The entry for “Encyclopedia” contains visual art by Rikki Ducornet who illustrated a previous publication of the Borges short story that serves as the textual entry. The representation of Ducornet’s oil on canvas, “Buz: Bee philosopher on his swarm; the bee works, inside and out; flotilla flies,” adds an organic mystical and spiritual aspect to Borges’s scientific prose. Similarly, the movement between the visual and text entries for biographical entry for visual artist “Ali, Laylah” are fairly straight-forward. The art in the portfolio are representations of Ali’s gouache and color pencils superheroes with amputated limbs described in the entry written

by contributor and editor Tisa Bryant. The relationship between these text and visual entries are close.

There are other entries in which the relationship is more difficult to connect. One example is the entry for “Hair.” The relationship for the entries for “Hair” are more challenging to describe. There is a larger gap. As explained by Elbrecht, Fakundiny, and Juba the creation of gaps opens up the process of meaning making—in the silence is the space for the reader to join the collaboration becoming cocreator of the fictional world. Amanda Ackerman’s text for “Hair” is an entry about Saint Barbara written in first person that explores the disjunction between how people perceive her and how she perceives herself. Additionally, the entry explores the relationship between knowledge, sexuality, and physical torture. By putting this entry under “Hair” parallels between the hagiography of Saint Barbara and the fairy tale Rapunzel are drawn. What starts off as a story about Rapunzel turns out to be the narrative of Saint Barbara. Hair emerges as a symbol of gender and sexuality and the means of abuse when she is dragged through the street by the ends of her hair.

Krista Franklin’s entry for “Hair” in the color portfolio exists in a different landscape from the tower and torture of Saint Barbara. The entry is a representation of a mixed-media collage titled “La Rosa.” The collage is based in pinks and blues and the black and white of newspaper. The primary image is a cut-out profile in black-and-white of a black woman who has a complex hair-do of folds and curls. The hair-do is contextualized with an image of the pink titular rose, an ad for synthetic hair and the ticket stub for the film *Idlewild* (2006) a conventional tale of family, love, and friendship set in prohibition Georgia and spun with the afrofuturist aesthetic of Outkast.

The meaning that happens through the juxtaposition of these two entries expands possible meanings for hair. There is the hair that cannot be contained and the brutality that is inflicted on a body for defiance. The pink and blue rectangles of Franklin's landscape signal the success of the containment as does the well-coifed hair of the woman. The meanings created through the gaps between the two entries challenge our contemporary myths of progress and raises the question of whether women are martyred when they accept their containment. Hair is a symbol of that containment, and in the entry there is an explicit correlation between hair and sexual power. The entry also challenges racial myths. In "Hair" the black woman is in pinks and demure, and the white European woman is the defiant rebel. There also becomes the juxtaposition between the Bible which is the outside text that Saint Barbara reads and the Hollywood film *Idlewild* as places of freedom and producers of our master narratives. This is the cross national, cross-race, cross-class revolutionary cadre Fanon says we can access by bursting consciousness.

Through the gaps between the color art entry and the textual entry, "Hair" takes on a cross-cultural meaning as symbol of the spectrum of types of containment and the torture inflicted when a woman attempts to break the containment. Here, encyclopedic knowledge is revolutionary truth that is creating a world and not representing the world as it already is. The editors of the encyclopedia are existing within a form that has popularly become a tool of dominant ideology but through the structures that they build within the form of a multi-volume alphabetical compendium, they build a world that exist within, yet beyond the demands of dominant ideology.

The existing within yet, beyond the demands of dominant ideology is an Althusserian position. In the methodology of the oppressed that Sandoval develops from Barthes's

Mythologies existing within, yet beyond is what Barthes calls revolutionary exnomination and Sandoval renames meta-ideologizing: “the operation of appropriating dominant ideological forms, and using them whole in order to transform them” (83). Ideology robs a thing of its specific histories, and meta-ideology ideologizes ideology. Thusly meta-ideology robs ideology of its naturalness. For instance, when the Pënz calendar uses Google calendar to occupy the Gregorian calendar, it denaturalizes the Gregorian calendar as the only possible way to organize time.

By taking the form of the multivolume alphabetical encyclopedia as a fictional form (rather than fiction being relegated to narrative forms like the novel, the short story, and film), the Encyclopedists denaturalize the idea of objective truth and that it is possible to catalogue and contain it all. As Sandoval explains meta-ideologizing: “It comprises another technology of the oppressed (or, perhaps we should specify another name, for this is in effect a technology for emancipation) that works by grafting a *third level* ideological system onto a dominant second-level system, and by using this resignification process as a tactic for challenging the dominant order of power” (109). Encyclopedia grafts a praxis of knowledge as gaps and based in the experiences of the meaning-maker onto the ideological system of objective truth and clear and systematic organization.

To a certain extent all the entries in *Encyclopedia* practice meta-ideologizing through participating in the project which decolonizes knowledge through meta-ideologizing the encyclopedia. The specific entries discussed below interrupt the meta-ideologizing of the encyclopedia by inhabiting forms in addition to the form of an encyclopedia entry. As Barthes explains the myths created by revolutionary exnomination (what Sandoval calls meta-ideologizing) are flimsy:

The speech of the oppressed is real, like that of the woodcutter; it is a transitive type of speech: it is quasi-unable to lie; lying is a richness, a lie presupposes property, truths and forms to spare. This essential barrenness produces rare, threadbare myths: either transient, or clumsily indiscreet; by their very being, they label themselves as myths, and point to their masks. (“Myth Today,” 148)

The different levels of meta-ideologizing in encyclopedia belie any real coherency of the ideology of the project. The stability of the inhabited form is undercut by the contributors who use the form of an encyclopedia entry to inhabit an additional form. The terrain called up and created by the new countrypeople warriors is fragmented and unstable. It is the terrain of the masquerade where the disguise is not meant to deceive; disguise is meant for transformation and creation of reality. Meta-ideology, which is a type of masquerade, transforms and creates reality through denaturalizing singular perceptions that have become understood as the only possible perception.

There is the meta-ideology of the form, how the encyclopedia exists within, yet beyond the dominant form for encyclopedias which denaturalizes our expectations of the relationship between object and knowledge. Their specific intervention is the relationship between meaning and meaning-maker. This means that the fact that Amanda Ackmerman wrote the entry for “Hair” and Krista Franklin made the visual entry for “Hair” shapes the meaning that is created. The meaning for “Hair” in encyclopedia is not independent of the specific histories of the two contributors. Ackerman will have had knowledge about Saint Barbara, and Franklin would have held the ticket stub to *Idlewilde*. Somebody who never learned of Saint Barbara could never have written that specific entry for “Hair,” and somebody who did not have access to the ticket stub could not have used it in the college. These are the entries for “Hair” because the contributors

were Ackerman and Franklin, respectively. Additionally, the choice of meaning-maker is related to the fact that these writers and visual artists are using art practices to burst their consciousness. The contributor's name is provided at the end of each entry, and at the back of the book is an alphabetical by last name list of the contributors with a brief biographical statement. Ackerman's bio promotes her editorial work at eohippus labs, a small independent publisher; Franklin's bio positions her collages in the intersection of the poetry and visual art world. If there were alternate contributors for that entry then there would be different meanings created. "Hair" would not necessarily work as a meditation on gender, sexuality, and knowledge. This is how Encyclopedia creates a world that is becoming and not merely representing the world as it already is.

In addition to the meta-ideologizing of the form of the encyclopedia there are the ways that the individual entries are meta-ideologizing. While the entries discussed thus far do not occupy forms that have become denaturalized—with the exception of Franklin whose collages denaturalize the everyday objects by putting them in new and fresh contexts and Ali whose watercolors denaturalize the idea of superhero by representing them with amputated limbs—there are several entries that use the technology of meta-ideology including the entries for "Assimilation," "Fireworks," and "Acker, Kathy."

The entries for both "Assimilation" and "Fireworks" use the form of a table with columns. In "Assimilation" Deb Richards analyzes relationships between revolution and stereotypes turning the form of a table into a strategy for organizing narrative, poetic, and philosophical approaches to the term "assimilation." The table consists of fourteen two-column rows. The information in the columns and rows varies between expository and poetic language. For instance, in the first column of row five is a poetic description of resistant energy: "You will

see a French man, collar up, fly into the face of name-calling. His name is Catona” (45). The second column provides biographical information on Gil Scott Heron’s father, Gil Heron who was one of the first professional black football (soccer) players in Europe and raises questions of how the racial stereotypes inflicted on Gil Heron might have affected the son.

In “Fireworks” Lohren Green uses the form of a table to build an argument about the differences between display fireworks and consumer fireworks including their names and their visual and sonic differences. What emerges from this table is a complex argument about aesthetic differences between display and consumer firework. Both tables have a row for “Aftermath.” For the table “Fireworks: Display” the entries in the row read with descriptions of aesthetically rich experiences; “fast fade,” “that hang, lit, drooping to slowly fade...,” “fade, fast fade,” “slowly quiet down and slowly fade...” “gone,” “loud boom report,” “smoke fade, black of space, stars.” For the table “Fireworks: Consumer” the entries in the row labeled “Aftermath” are descriptions of aesthetically thin experiences: “OK?,” “frayed confetti,” “spent.” To compare the last cell of each table—“smoke fade, black of space, stars” and “spent”—display fireworks transport to the cosmos while consumer fireworks do not have much of an aftermath at all. By ending with the word “spent,” Green focuses on the role of the consumer which is to spend money. As a consumer who buys fireworks, to then create a home-made display, the options of fireworks, as presented in the table by Green, are limited and aesthetically thin. The consumer can experience an aesthetically rich fireworks display but only as spectator not as actor. Green meta-ideologizes the form of the table where the table not only organizes information but through poetic use of the form and language within the form, Green communicates a complex understanding of the different types of fireworks as a symbol for the limited creative capacities we have as consumers.

In “Acker, Kathy” Anna Joy Springer meta-ideologizes the pictogram for a teaching narrative. The entry for “Acker, Kathy” is titled “Kathy Acker’s Mystickle Snail & Bone Pedagogy; or, My Cannible Entreaty Dear: A Picture Puzzle for the Monstrous Child Who Delights in Shame & Love.” The entry describes Acker, a writer and teacher, from the point of view of a devoted student. In a pictogram meaning is constructed using word and image. A popular example of the pictogram are the stories in the children’s magazine *Highlights* where an image is substituted for a word. In *Highlights* it is a simple relationship between word and image where an image of an apple represents an apple and all the images are in the same style. In “Kathy Acker’s Mystickle Snail & Bone Pedagogy” the images do not always have an equivalent word in English and are drawn in a variety of styles including an apple in the style of a *Highlight*’s apple.

On the third page of this entry for “Acker, Kathy,” the image of a Greek comedy-tragedy mask represents how the narrator perceives Acker felt about teaching. The narrator explains that Acker “always told us she” and then there is an image of a hand holding a dagger followed by “—ed teaching, but I think she” and then there is an image of the Greek comedy/tragedy mask followed by “—ed it” (12). The two images in this sentence represent emotions, affectual responses to a role, teaching, and Springer sidesteps the difficulty of putting emotional responses in those containers we call words. The dagger represents violence while the masks represent a range of emotion and performance. The entry for “Acker, Kathy” is a teaching narrative about the positive impact a teacher can have. The narrator explains that Acker didn’t read her students’ writing, where read is represented by an image of a mohawked Acker sitting on an airplane with papers, and the narrator explains that Acker’s teaching and writing “often romantically recodif[ied]... the racism and classism her work ostensibly sought to expose and explode” (12).

The entry ends however with a verbal comment that Acker gives to the narrator after the narrator had read one of her pieces aloud in class. It is a different type of comment than the written ones most teachers are expected to give to their students. This comment begins with gesture and then touch and proximity of ear to lips and culminates in whisper, “Don’t you EVER EVER stop” and then there is an image of a woman in what might be a kimono or maybe a bathrobe scribbling words on a piece of large paper propped up by a drafting table followed by “...you are so” and then an image of a sparrow with halo (13). While the word writing can easily be substituted for the first image (although by doing so we miss the visual arts understanding of the term as represented by the drafting table) the second image of a halo-ed sparrow does not have a corresponding word in English. In the entry for “Acker, Kathy” Springer, by meta-ideologizing the pictogram for a complex essay about a writing teacher, represents and bursts the limits of the written word.

While I contextualize the entry with *Highlights* as a primary formal influence for this pictogram—the spacing of “Acker, Kathy” is similar to the spacing of the stories in *Highlights* also several of the images are drawn in a similar style to *Highlights*—*Highlights* is not the only stylistic influence of the entry. The font of the entry’s long title looks like a label from a turn of the twentieth century medicine bottle. Also, Springer draws a frame for each page: a drawing of interlocking twigs with elaborate corners similar to Celtic design. The different traditions of images become a visual heteroglossia. Through the different allusions that the visual elements of this entry make (Celtic, *Highlights*, mainstream symbolism—for instance, the bathroom is represented by the sign for a women’s restroom) a multiplicity of traditions for communicating is engaged. The visual heteroglossia is how Springer is meta-ideologizing the pictogram because

there is a not a singular visual tradition engaged. The pictograms range from the style of a *Highlights* pictogram to an obscure drawing of an avant-garde theater performance.

The title pages for the second volume visually represent the fragmented terrain in the process of change and creates a praxis of seeing a fragmented terrain as liberatory. *Vol. 2 F-K* opens in black. The title page spans four pages with a black background and white font. The text is the word “Encyclopedia” in a large font which spans the four pages in length and the bottom two thirds of the page in height. The first page has the letters “Enc” with the end curls of the “c” spreading across the binding to the second page which contain the letters “yclo” although most of the “o” is on the next page. The volume opens into a visual bursting of language. To burst that which has been naturalized is one way to enter the realm of the methodology of the oppressed.

On the top of the second page is a quote from contributor Robin Coste Lewis: “Let’s re-think our classifications” and the instructions “SEE: FABLE.” The entry for “Fable,” which happens to be the first entry in *Vol. 2* is written by Robin Coste Lewis and is a nine-page Buddhist meditation on Aesop’s fables that travels through time and space including Napoleonic conquest in the Caribbean, the founding of Rome, Aesop’s Greece, antebellum North America, and imperialist United States of America. Less a manual on how to break cycles of slavery, the entry does work as a guide to surviving the suffering of slavery:

Inside the story, there is a map.

The map contains no roads. No lines or marks, no signs or names, no north, no south, no directions, no scales.

The map shows the way

To get you home. (15)

The map of a terrain without boundaries is a map of a terrain without classifications. From this terrain Lewis argues to build new classifications based on class rather than nation, gender, and race:

How might our experience of art change?

All the pyramids would be considered slave art.

The great Blue Mosque would be an exceptional example of slave architecture.

(11)

To rethink classifications is a project of the Encyclopedia. Sandoval, building on Fredric Jameson's theorization of postmodernism, argues that when we cannot challenge ideology from the outside, we work within; we take the classifications provided by dominant ideology and remix them. The major classification that the encyclopedists challenge is the separation of meaning from meaning-maker. They erase the line between fiction and nonfiction by using the skills of the new countryside warriors as they create terrain by building links between people who would otherwise not be connected. By creating the terrain through their guidelines for submissions, the encyclopedists create the conditions for people inhabiting and creating the terrain. It is similar to what Mendi+Keith Obadike do in interactive modules and collaborative projects. By creating the terrain they teach the skills of the new countryside warriors. Within

the different entries of *Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2* is an education on the skills of the new countrypeople warriors as well as direct calls to action that call up the new countrypeople warriors.

M. Nourbese Philip's entry for "Carnival" narrates the history of Carnival in Trinidad and Canada by locating its traditions in Africa and France. Philip documents the ways that Carnival has resisted co-opting dominant structures. The relationship between people who use power to oppress, represented by beka, and the people who use power to challenge oppression, represented by Totoben and Maisie, demonstrate the differential consciousness needed to adjust to co-opting power. For instance, Philip narrates the origins of pan as coming out of the shifting that is a survival skill:

When the English beka banning the drum, Totoben and Maisie moving around that and using bamboo and making the tamboo bamboo bands (27) and when beka banning tamboo bamboo Totoben and Maisie using biscuit tins and making biscuit tin bands; they using pieces of iron, parts of cars, metal boxes, dustbins and even piss pots, and all the time they moving towards pan (28) and making their music through their moving. (119-120)

First, the drum is banned and so a new way of making music is found and when that is banned yet another way is found. This third way of banging music is created from the discards of the dominant society. To end the list with "piss pots" focuses on the transformative power of utilizing trash. A piss pot which collects human excrement becomes a means for making music that challenges oppressive structures. The survival skill here is being able to adjust as the oppression adjusts against the adjustment—what Philip calls "making their music through their moving." It is a skill of differential cognitive mapping where the warrior is able to maneuver shifting power structures.

To utilize the objects that would be considered trash to make music and musical instruments is the technology of meta-ideologizing in the methodology of the oppressed. The oppositional citizen-subject uses dominant ideology whole in order to transform it. Philip makes the link between the objects and dominant ideology clear when she provides a temporal context for utilizing the World War II oil drum as a musical instrument: “Totoben and his friends like Winston ‘Spree’ Simon (33) using gasoline oil drums and they turning their pain in steel and they turning the steel pans into instruments—turning the weapons of war—old oil drums that leaving over from the World War II—into music and they making another art form for carnival” (120).

The entry closes in contemporary Canada and the economic cooptation and geographical displacement of Caribana. In 1991 the Canadian authorities move the location of Carnival from University Avenue where Totoben and Maisie moving past the United States embassy, past the police station, past the courts, past the hospitals where Totoben and Maisie working in the kitchens and cleaning the floors, past statues glorifying wars between one beka country and another which having so much meaning for Totoben and Maisie who living up there in the cold, and they putting it down on the Lakeshore (54) where is only into lake people can be running if any ruckshun breaking out. (121)

The entry’s conclusion demonstrates the power that governments have in controlling citizen-subjects’ movement on the streets. There are geographical locations that have power and geographical locations where carnival is taken out of a political context. The Canadian government uses geography to remove Caribana from its political context.

Philip cites examples of how Caribana is economically successful for corporations and Canada; it is a large festival. Philip here makes a distinction between the Caribana organized by the black beka and the Carnival of Totoben and Maisie. The black beka makes money from Caribana with sponsors including Kiss FM and Cockspur Rum while “Totoben and Maisie are still scrunting” (122). In this history of Carnival, the oppressors, the beka, shift from outside laws dictating what can happen to the cooptation of Caribana where the organizers are creating a Caribana that oppresses the people. In Carnival the movement between performer and spectator is fluid but how it has been contained is that police barricades separate the spectators from the bands.

Philip educates the reader as a new countrypeople warrior through content and style of the entry. She is mapping the terrain of a shifting power. This is the terrain that Jameson calls postmodernism (where the power shifts all the time) and that Sandoval places within a longer history of the oppressed. Philip tracks the way Carnival has transformed itself in relation to different oppressions and a shifting dominant authority. Philip’s timeline starts in 1833 and continues through the present. She explores the effects of the containment of Totoben and Maisie’s carnival. The containment causes violence and crime which is another response to the “humiliation and anger” of oppression (122).

Philip maps the terrain and teaches survival skills. It is ambiguous as to whether she directly calls up the new countrypeople warriors. The poetic nature of the last sentences which are a series of imperatives with no space between the different verbs push at the limit between didacticism and direct calls to action: “In Time.And space.And just so the war over for one more year—is sweatandbeatandjostleandpulseandmoveandmoveandjostleandpulseandpush...” (123). The series of words without spaces reads as instructions for how to reclaim Carnival. It is

important to move and to move in the crowds. The type of movement for the spectator is not dancing but the pulse and beat and the jostle. These are the movements to nurture, according to Philip, as dancers who have been locked into the role of spectator by the literal barricades of governmental authority in service of capitalist wealth. Philip's entry for "Carnival" is one of the entries in Encyclopedia that charts the co-opting power structures of capitalism and documents specific ways of resisting and transforming oppression. They make profit off of our need to release.

As described above, Deb Richards's entry on "Assimilation" includes a direct call to action that parallels the call of the Encyclopedists. The Encyclopedists call up the new countrypeople warriors by inviting contributions to their project. Richards calls up the new countrypeople warriors by inviting readers to expand particular entries in Wikipeda.

Richards's entry for "Assimilation" is an experimental annotated bibliography in the form a table. In the section "I.4 i: ASSIMILATION—playing by the rules" Richards introduces the term "stub":

"Stub" is described by Wikipedia as an entry that needs further information.

Black presence or achievement is often reduced to stub or "substub" thumbnails.

Please contact: debinbarkin@yahoo.co.uk to extend any stubs or substubs. (45)

Richards's argument in "Assimilation" is there is a loss in assimilation, what Barthes would call a privation of history, and Richards describes as "hiding the previous connections" (47). One of the ways that this operates is through which experiences are disavowed by dominant ideology. By focusing on expanding the stubs in Wikipedia, Richards uses the Encyclopedia Project to invite the reader to do the work of making visible the Black presence and achievement on a popular collaborative encyclopedia. To chart the visible absence of a black presence on

Wikipedia is the work of the cartographer. The stubs in Wikipedia are an unmapped space. To invite new countrypeople warriors into that terrain to change it is the work of new countrypeople warriors.

As with the other two collaborations discussed there is no deficit of the skills of the methodology of the oppressed in this contemporary cohort of writers who are building communities around artistic practices that challenge dominant ideology. Within Sandoval's study is the argument that in order for these art practices to transform the world there needs to be engagement with the oppositional social movements. To what extent is this cohort of writers engaged with oppositional social movements? To what extent should they be engaged with oppositional social movements? In the final chapter, I will examine what Sandoval means by the oppositional social movements. After developing a lens, I will reexamine this new cohort of writers to analyze the extent they are engaged with the oppositional social movements and to what extent they should be.

5.0 OPPOSITIONAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

In *The Methodology of the Oppressed*, Chela Sandoval identifies five modes of oppositional social movement that work in conjunction with the methodology of the oppressed to transform dominant ideology by building a world within, yet beyond the oppressive colonial structures of globalizing capitalism. Sandoval builds the methodology of the oppressed which includes the oppositional social movements from an array of twentieth century thinkers including Barthes, Jameson, and Fanon while stating that the methodology of the oppressed was the praxis of the U.S. third world feminists including Lorde, Anzaldúa, and Kingston. Central, and essential, to Sandoval's apparatus is the praxis of the U.S. third world feminists who not only theorize the skills of differential consciousness but also made a practice of differential consciousness through involvement with oppositional social movements. The methodology of the oppressed has two parts—the methodology of the oppressed and the differential social movements. The differential power, which through being a dynamic consciousness, has the ability to break and rupture dominant narratives while also using and teaching the skills to survive a fractured terrain by mapping the limits of the social order and by building new terrain. The specific differential consciousness that was the praxis of the U.S. third world feminists is the ability to ally the different approaches to social movements which Sandoval identifies as: equal rights, supremacist, separatist, revolutionary, and differential. Sandoval positions all four approaches as legitimate and necessary ways for decolonizing globalization and resisting and

transforming oppression. The differential is distinct because it is a consciousness and movement that is able to ally the other four.

Thus far, the dissertation has been focused on the technologies for decolonizing consciousness and globalization. The other part to the methodology of the oppressed is the oppositional social movements. Sandoval breaks them into five categories: equal-rights, revolutionary, supremacist, separatist, and differential consciousness. She explains, “These ideological positions are kaleidoscoped into an original, eccentric, and queer sight when the fifth, differential mode is utilized as a theoretical and methodological device for retroactively clarifying and giving new meaning to any other” (44). Differential consciousness is the Althusserian position of existing “within, yet beyond, the demands of dominant ideology.” It is a mobile power that demands “alienation, perversion, and reformation in both spectators and practitioners” (44).

According to Sandoval:

The 1970s-80s social movement called U.S. third world feminism functioned as a central locus that shattered the construction of any one ideology as the single most correct site where truth can be represented. Indeed without making this type of metamove, any “liberation” or social movement eventually becomes destined to repeat the oppressive authoritarianism from which it is attempting to free itself, and become trapped inside a drive for truth that ends up only in producing its own brand of dominations. What U.S. third world feminism thus demanded was a new subjectivity, a political revision that denied any one ideology as the final answer, while instead positing a *tactical subjectivity* with the capacity to de- and recenter, given the form of power to be moved. (59)

Any ideology, fixed and static, that topples another ideology will then be on top; it will be an oppressive force in its own right. Thus, the only alternative is not to occupy a single position but to occupy multiple positions to create a mobile force. The differential consciousness makes this a mobile methodology in which “no enactment is privileged over any other, and the recognition that each site is as potentially effective as any other.” This dissertation has shown that the collaborations discussed enact differential consciousness and use the techniques of the methodology of the oppressed, which is a physics of love and a methodology of emancipation, to occupy the forms of dominant ideology. What I think is missing from their art-making is visible connection to social movements. Certainly, social issues are addressed and with differential consciousness. While there are many instances of differential consciousness, there are not visible relationships to social movements. I am interested in exploring the relationship between the practices of these collaborative literary communities and their contemporaneous social movements.

Sandoval was writing in the late 1990s and discussing the praxis of a cohort of feminists from the 1960s-1990s. One of the questions that I have is whether these categories hold up for the political landscape of our current moment and how. In the previous chapters, I analyzed how a current cohort of writers in the United States continue the praxis of differential consciousness through their open collaborations. They use the skills of Barthes’ mythologists and Fanon’s new countrypeople warriors, which are the skills of differential cognitive mapping to build worlds with alternate architectures for organizing time, space, and knowledge. Additionally, I have argued that these alternate architectures are decolonizing structures that exist within, yet beyond the demands of dominant ideology. I have held off on the question about their engagement with the oppositional social movements. This chapter, will ask to what extent do these collaborations

engage social movements? And, to what extent is it necessary to engage the oppositional social movements in order to decolonize globalization? Are we at a location in time during which the differential social movement can exist independently of the other movements? Do we need to be allied with additional social movements that are not necessarily differential and rely on the respective strategies of revolutionary, separatist, supremacist, and equal rights movements? Or, are we in a setting in which the structures of the social movements are differential?

Sandoval creates a typography for the oppositional social movements in which the differential social movement changes the way the other social movements operate:

The differential practice of U.S. third world feminism undermines this appearance of the mutual exclusivity of oppositional practices of consciousness and social movement, however, and allows their re-cognition on new terms... When enacted in dialectical relation to one another and not as separated ideologies, each oppositional mode of consciousness, each ideology-praxis, is transformed into tactical weaponry for intervening in shifting currents of power. (58).

Instead of approaching social transformation from a single oppositional practice, the differential power animates the practices as tactics to use when needed. According to Sandoval, there are the five categories (above), but U.S. third world feminism, by performing out of all of them resisted a static categorization that dominant ideology has already been able to comprehend. The practices of one position interact with the practices of another position to create something new and differential. For instance, in sexual politics equal rights have become synonymous with marriage equality. An example of revolutionary oppositional social movement is Bash Back which is an organization that argues that the only way to transform physical abuse against LGBTQ people is to radically replace capitalism with a more socially healthy economic system.

An example of a differential oppositional social movement is the Audre Lorde Project (ALP) in New York City; they “work for community wellness and progressive social and economic justice... as an organization seeking social and economic justice for all peoples, ALP is committed to promoting multi-racial coalition-building, advocacy and community organizing activities among LGBTSTGNC people of color, and with allies in struggles for equality and liberation.”⁵⁸ Unlike the right to marriage which argues for equal rights on the grounds of what some see as a problematic institution, and the revolutionary Bash Back which argues for a radical transformation of the economic system, the Audre Lorde Project operates differentially building coalitions with groups to build community health. If we continue to think differentially, these three approaches to sexual politics are not in opposition to each other, they are vectors working towards changing sexual politics. In Sandoval’s typography, no single ideology is the only possible way or the best possible way; instead oppositional ideologies become tactics available for transforming domination.

In one way I am drawn to arguing that the cohort of writers continue the differential consciousness of the oppositional social movements. For instance, R. Erica Doyle and Naomi Jackson created Tongues of Fire, a workshop for queer women based at the Audre Lorde Project. Doyle and Jackson are both published in the Encyclopedia Project, and a photograph of Doyle is on *Pënz (It’s Pronounced Pants)*. They are working differentially but to what extent are they working with movements that are not differential? While participating in *Pënz*, Samiya Bashir worked for an organization promoting marriage equality; however, with already two books of poems published and editor credit for two anthologies, Bashir has since entered academia, earned an MFA from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and is now a visiting professor at Reed

58. “About ALP.”

College, a small predominantly white private school in Portland, Oregon. The question arises about the adequacy of Sandoval's lens: is it sufficient for analyzing this current cohort's engagement with the oppositional social movements? Sandoval's work remains theoretical, and she does not go into specific details about what the praxis of the U.S. third world feminists looked like. Hers is not a materialist history of the U.S. third world feminists; a sociological study of the U.S. third world feminists is work that still needs to be done.

If we look beyond the texts to the lives of the writers, it is easier to see the engagement with oppositional social movements. For instance, writer Dawn Lundy Martin who is a contributor to the Encyclopedia Project is a co-founder of the Third Wave Foundation which provides grants to young feminists for activist work. To a certain extent the Third Wave Foundation is that differential consciousness social movement. Feminist is not an identity category, it is a position of praxis, through which activists use gender as a lens for understanding and changing the contemporary world. The gender of the activist is not a necessary limit. However, in her bios for both volumes of Encyclopedia there is no mention of work with the Third Wave Foundation nor that she co-edited the anthology *The Fire This Time: Young Activists and the New Feminism* (2004).

To create a history from only the textual objects obscures engagement with social movements. Leela Gandhi concludes, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (2006), her book on friendship as a revolutionary force, by focusing on the protests of the Seattle World Trade Organization meeting as one location in the United States that models the type of affective communities that she discusses in fin-de-siècle England. To what extent were the U.S. third world feminists and are the new countrypeople warriors that they call up and that this study examines also creating

affective communities that can positively transform the social fabric? This current cohort of new countrypeople warriors have the skills of creating the terrain; however I wonder about their engagement with the oppositional social movements. Additionally, I share a concern about reducing black poets as primarily political and social actors. Marilyn Nelson and Rita Dove discussed the problems of seeing black poets as primarily political poets in a conversation about the impact and influence of the Black Arts Movement. In a talk at the Andy Warhol Museum where black poets were invited to respond to an exhibit on photographs of torture at Abu Grahib, the poet Terrance Hayes questioned the assumption that black poets would necessarily have something of value to say in response. Hayes raises the question of race being a deciding factor as to why he was invited to respond to the exhibit on Abu Grahib because a black poet is considered to be a political poet. A future project could examine the tensions surrounding who is named political poet and which poets are assumed to also be activists and why.

If I am arguing that this contemporary cohort is not engaged with the oppositional social movements, what does Sandoval mean by that term? U.S. third world feminism was a social movement that was allied with the different contemporaneous social movements. Likewise, this cohort of writers that remains un-named emerges from the U.S. third world movements, but not exclusively. Additional traditions include the traditions Sandoval discusses in her book: semiotics, deconstruction, colonial studies, and postmodernism. This contemporary cohort of writers were called up by the U.S. third world feminists as well as reaching out to learn from them. They are building a world within, yet beyond the demands of dominant ideology, which governs our sense of space, how we think, and our perception of time.

Differential consciousness is not only the terrain of literary communities. The Occupy Wall Street movement is characterized, and often criticized, for a lack of clear mission. To read

the Occupy Movement with the lens of differential consciousness, this criticism becomes a strength of the movement. Without having a singular or fixed position the Occupy Movement was able to shift as quickly as the colonizing ideology that the movement seeks to transform. The movement began with a geographical agenda—to literally occupy and transform the use of public space. The first occupy camp was in Manhattan, but quickly in urban centers throughout the country occupy camps were created. After several months, mayors of the city organized and effectively shut down all the occupy camps through the use of violent force. The movement quickly lost media attention but continued none-the-less. Then, a year later, the movement again gained national attention in the form of Occupy Sandy which became one of the leading organizations to assist in disaster-relief post super storm Sandy. Here, we see the mobility, the lack of a clear, fixed agenda, the differential consciousness, as it were, of the Occupy Movement being a strength which allows it to shift and transform as the world around it shifts and transforms through the wills of government and the chaos of nature.

While it is obvious to see how the Occupy Movement is engaged with oppositional social movements it is more difficult to identify the engagement with the social movements in the collaborations that are the subject of this study. Sandoval identifies three types of differential consciousness. There is the differential of the oppositional social movements. There is the differential movement which enables the orientation of the technologies of the methodology of the oppressed. There is the differential consciousness that is love in a decolonizing world. Pënz has two types of differential consciousness. That which seems to be missing from Pënz is the social movements. But that is not quite true. There is definite and explicit engagement with politics and the construction of the social sphere. There is not direct involvement with additional social movements. This isolation between this artist community and the social movements is key:

to what extent is this community of twenty-first century artists involved with social movements?
To what extent should they be?

I have a sincere critique of the current cohort. Sandoval is very optimistic about what the feminists of the third millennium will be able to accomplish. I am not saying that the cohort should be doing other than what they are doing, I am critiquing the fact that they are not necessarily engaging the social movements enough for the type of transformation that Sandoval imagines—at least as represented in reading these three literary collaborations. I wonder then if it is also a limit of my methodological approach because focusing on the texts produced from the collaboration doesn't necessarily allow for the larger historical contexts and the additional work that is happening.

Mendi+Keith Obadike explain the impact of the work is not always known or predetermined. If we are working using a lens of a praxis that has been disavowed within the academy then our ability to scientifically chart the impact of collaborations is still a science that needs to be developed. Sandoval has created a lens for analysis, but it does not have a sociological component. To analyze the impact of these decolonial projects requires a science of the avant-garde that can measure chance and that which is invisible.

This is the type of work that Leela Gandhi develops in *Affective Communities* when she analyzes fin-de-siècle radicalism using the lens of friendship. In her conclusion she looks to the WTO protests in Seattle as a similar community of resistance. The protests there were hypervisible as they were surrounding the WTO. The cohort that I discuss are like the writers in Gandhi's section on art. They are focused on aesthetics but in a way that challenges societal norms. Further work needs to be done in developing a science for reading and measuring the impact of their work on social movements and dominant structures of oppression.

For instance, *Pënz (It's Pronounced Pants)* is a blog that comes up in internet searches. The Blogspot page has a Feedjit gadget that tracks the visitors to the website. The majority of visitors come via a search for Russian lolitas. On August 21, 2008 Senalka posted information on a retrospective of the work of Ukrainian-Russian photographer Sergey Bratkov at Fotomuseum Winterthur in Switzerland. The blurb on his work, written by Marylene Sahakian, describes his portraits of child actors as “young lolitas.” By just that one phrase, the blog has a high percentage of viewers that visit through searching for “lolita.” The current Feedjit feed documents a visitor from Paris, Il-de-France to the August 21st post by Senalka that arrived from a search of lolitas on gensun.org a website of images. Additional visitors that arrived on Pënz via Senalka’s August 21st post on the Sergey Bratkov retrospective include a visitor from Hamburg who arrived via a google.de search for “russian lolitas;” a visitor from Cheltenham, Gloucestershire from a bing.com search for “art-lolitas;” a visitor from Poissy, Il-de-France arrived from fr.images.search.yahoo.com; and a visitor from Maceió, Alagos arrived from a br.bing.com search for “fucking lolitas.” These visitors who all arrived within approximately a day of each other account for about half the visitors to the site in that time. This points to real problems of exploitation of young girls as sexual objects and the real problems of global trafficking in young girls for prostitution. There is no indication that Senalka had any such intention for this post, and thus their collaborative blog, to end up an intervention within the search for images representing the sexuality of young girls. There is also no way to track the effect of this website on those who arrive. But, there it is. And the context for the image of Sergey Bratkov’s photograph becomes the art blog *Pënz* with a sidebar that introduces the art year with a set of instructions that asks the reader to create art and to love.

While there is no way to tell if Senalka had predicted the impact of this specific post on who ended up visiting the site through internet searches, *Pënz* is aware of the idea of intervention. On August 30, the Linguist writes the posts titled “It’s time for an Intervention (part. 2)” which cut and pastes the Wikipedia entry for “Art Intervention.” The entry explains that an intervention “is an interaction with a previously existing artwork, audience or venue/space.” Senalka’s post works as an interaction with a previously existing audience on the internet for images of Russian lolitas.

Similarly, 4-1-9 is an intervention in the conversations around the scam letters. Again, there is no way to tell if there is an intentionality there but if to compare the work of Mendi+Keith Obadike on the letters to the websites that come up on the first page of an internet search show the racist and imperialist approaches to describing the letters. For instance, the website Quataloos which is dedicated to educating on fraud lists as one of the indications of a 4-1-9 scam letter: “Travel to Nigeria or some other loathesome country is requested of the dupe (although this is not necessary if the dupe is dumb enough to wire-transfer the money).” The characterization of Nigeria as a “loathesome country” is a historically racist, imperialist, colonizing depiction of Nigeria that is steeped in the rhetoric of supremacy rather than experiential knowledge of a place. M+K’s complex meditation on these scams that engages the reader to participate in the construction of the scams and the power games between continents intervenes in a simple hierarchical understanding of the west as place of good and Africa as “loathesome.” The relationship between Africa and the United States is more complicated than a simple binary in M+K’s “4-1-9 Or You Can’t View a Masquerade by Standing in One Place.” Nigeria is figured as a container of fictional representations in “Statement” when M+K explain that the letters are not necessarily even written from Nigeria. In “Balance” when the reader

becomes player questions about whether Africa might have dominance over the United States emerges along with questions about what an international practice of mercy would be. To raise questions about race and the construction of identity are stated goals of M+K; there is no way to tell the intentionality of the intervention of “4-1-9” with other websites on the scam letters. Additionally, there is no visibly direct alliance with social movements to transform western perceptions of Africa.

To leave the specific project of “4-1-9” and to think about their work as a duo within the world, their connection to social movements becomes more visible particularly around their collaborations with Angela’s Pulse, a home for interdisciplinary collaboration, founded by sisters Paloma McGregor, a dancer and choreographer, and Patricia McGregor, a director. M+K collaborated with Angela’s Pulse on *Four Electric Ghosts* together. Additionally, Angela’s Pulse adapted for the theater Patricia Smith’s poem *Blood Dazzler*, a poem about Hurricane Katrina. One of the events associated with the performance was a Story Circle that Mendi Obadike helped in collaboration with the Junebug Theatre which was part of SNCC’s Free Southern Theater. The results of the story circle and the community outreach that Mendi organized around the production of *Blood Dazzler* again are difficult to quantify. Perhaps here is a place that interview could be beneficial including interviews of Obadike, the McGregor sisters, and the people involved in the story circle.

The Encyclopedia Project is perhaps the most interesting to analyze in relationship to the oppositional social movements as well as a social movement because of the size of the project and the expressed goal of making visible a community through a practice of opposition to the way knowledge has been codified. Miranda Mellis situates this project as in response to a monetary crisis in which literature is valued for its ability to be absorbed quickly. The

Encyclopedia Project is most overtly an anti-capitalist project as they state so much in a sale that they had for Christmas 2011 in which buyers could buy *Vol. 2* for whatever price they wanted plus shipping and handling. Additionally, through reading the entries and the author/contributor bios a map of the different social movements become more visible. *Encyclopedia* can work as a lens for reading *Pënz*. For instance, the entry in “Exchange Value” is a series of illustrations about bartering food. This definition of exchange value becomes a way for understanding the focus on growing food in *Pënz* including the Linguist’s post, “Where does your garden grow” on the beauty of growing your own potatoes. To grow your own food is not just beautiful though; the lens that *Encyclopedia* provides in “Exchange Value” situates growing food as a way to exist outside the capitalist economy.

In addition to a conversation about anti-capitalism, the Encyclopedia Project is allied with AIDS Awareness activism. On February 3, 2011, the DC Center of the LGBT Community hosted an AWP (Associated Writing Programs) Conference Off-Site Event for *Encyclopedia Vol. 2 F-K* and *War Diaries* an anthology of writing and art about black men with AIDS from the AIDS Project Los Angeles. The article promoting the event explains:

The Encyclopedia Project and *War Diaries* defy boundaries and expectations, share editors, contributors and allies, and make space for other kinds of saying and different ways of knowing.

This is an example of how the Encyclopedia Project is allied with AIDS Awareness and LGBT activism.

Examples of social movements can be found within individual entries. Jamie Cortez’s entry for “Graphic Novel” discusses the homophobia of the Communist revolution in Cuba. That entry is a demonstration of what Sandoval calls differential consciousness because even as a

person is exiled from a country as a result of sexual and gender deviation, the goals of the economic revolution are not discounted. The social movement discussed is a historical movement and not a current social movement.

In their meditation of different types of activists, Mendi+Keith Obadike compare the oppositional strategies of Marlon Riggs and Audre Lorde to Marion Anderson. Riggs and Lorde have an overt style were they directly confronted the systems of oppression. Anderson, a singer of classical music, opposition was more subtle. M+K value both approaches as transformative—they don't create a hierarchy between these approaches to social transformation.

In all three collaborations, we see different ideological systems enacted and in conversation with each other. Thus no single ideology is the sole place of meaning-making. Sandoval created a physics for describing how the terrain is created; the science for analyzing the impact of this terrain, past and present, of the new countrypeople warriors still needs to be developed.

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