

by BRENDA IJIMA

*Theory for me is a way to move additionally out of the sometimes clogged and claustrophobic notions that identity and the self can pose—so I embrace theoretical readings in my thinking/writing practice of being. Theory chases after the substantiated self (as articulated with the body) and selves chase after theory to ground experience in language. It is vital to remember that theory chases after the substantiated self. Theory relies on vicarious molecular charge from living tissue. Poetry is intense language potential. The norms of grammar can be discounted. Theory thrives on poetry's flexible openness*

#### **METAMORPHIC MORPHOLOGY MEETING IN LANGUAGE:**

#### **P as in Poetry, Poetry Rhetorical for the Election Season**

Input output—economic imperialism surges networks with zeros and ones. Industrial production paradigms infiltrate and totalize ecologies which makes for one compressed top-down world saturated of itself—in the process of poisoning both internally and externally, razing to the point of no return, gutting diversity. Life is converted into abstractions of zeros and ones with decimal points to signal gross and net value. This architecture creates myopia: blind when confronted with the intricacies beyond direct outcomes like profit margins and bottom lines. “official estimates of toll/have been suppressed for purposes of piece/by piece attention to belief./authorization to the area/is given as is birth to myriads.”—Ed Roberson, *from news continued release*. There's a teeming micro level that hasn't been reaped for profit—bits and particulates but also the mini systems that are the building blocks for larger entities and conditions—worlds within worlds might exist here, syntaxes, poetics—language opening and interrelating additionally. Tonya Foster, *from (In) Somnilogy*: “This hive of sound:base-buzz, engine-crank, voices laugh/seal the sonic cracks.” The basis of animate substances is the miniscule writhing sub particle, the string—perpetually in flux, operative; it agitates (for the present) at an imperceptible level—in motion-filled conjunction with the more evident forces shaping the environment. This is a way in which I see language operating—the way thinking operates, at micro-levels, in the semi-autonomous body-brain (contained in a helmet of skull but filtering in, linking up, agitating outwardly)—creative, aware, proactive—changeable —

attuned to the surrounding environment where it submerges, with the political, the social field, the emotional, the local. It is liberatory to conjure the numerosity of the subatomic, as Michio Kaku's book, *Hyperspace: A Scientific Odyssey Through Parallel Universes, Time Warps, and the 10<sup>th</sup> Dimension* points out, "The deeper we probe into the nature of subatomic particles, the more particles we find." (153) There is no scarcity of particulate matter! Reads M Nourbese Philip:

the smallest cell  
remembers  
a sound  
(sliding two semitones to return  
home)  
a secret order  
among syllables  
Leg/ba  
O/shun  
Shan/go  
heart races  
blood pounds  
remembers  
speech

There are strides being made to work with micro particles to clean up environmental damage. Scientists are studying algae that consume heavy metal waste, for instance. Fuel alternatives are being realized, for example, using nanotubes to break apart water molecules to liberate hydrogen, according to an article by Eric Smalley in *Scientific American*, May, 2006. Poems can ooze like sludge, suck—syntax dangling thickly in clumps, slimy, greasy—hungry. Green up verbs to be. Lyrical Is (plural of I) join rocks in igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic processes. Contentious histories heat the fortified walls of denial's antechambers. Language intermingles. Diction can express the health of earthworms, microbes, intestinal flora, etc., (additional meanings of culture grow). Landfills belching methane offer us a cross-section of the sublimated quotidian—the consumer burial mounds where the discarded nouns of our lives lie wasting. Refuse lingual—new processes for poems to undergo. Words, dirt, filtration—rich, moist soil in the works. O dirt, expansive erogenous depth!

Language is a matrix. Nothing is excluded from its pertinence to language and it is the impetus of language to pertain to the environment in interchange. Beyond being merely mimetic of an outside reality language is a conduit for bodies to articulate explicitly—meanings travel and transit in every conceivable spatial direction. Language enacts. Biorhythms and metabolic functions coincide with language, as it is rendered, conveyed and received. The brain (which is body), simultaneous to all other responses encompasses language, engages with multifaceted simultaneous ability. Language takes this cue and act like bodies—is to be the body. Language expands beyond representation as an initiating and responding energy. The recombinant aspects of sounds and syntax—they enter consciousness and have altering effects on the material body much the same way as matter does when it is digested, experienced. Thoughts and utterances become bodily substance as encoded matter that receives and sheds itself in worlds. Sueyeun Juliette Lee, from *Perfect Strangers*:

“imagination can be secreted. sweat makes an outline around the body when we dance. many instances converge slowly on the minute, and through hand bashes mouth or strikes a face down, we rise without repenting, stand tersely for the cue.”

& Juliana Sphar, from *this connection of everyone with lungs*:

How connected we are with everyone.

The space of everyone that has just been inside of everyone mixing inside of everyone with nitrogen and oxygen and water vapor and argon and carbon dioxide and suspended dust spores and bacteria mixing inside of everyone with sulfur and sulfuric acid and titanium and nickel and minute silicon particles from pulverized glass and concrete.

How lovely and how doomed this connection of everyone with lungs.

Julia Kristeva writes, "John Paul Sartre chooses nausea as an emblem of existence. Nausea and not grace is the metaphor of the unfulfilled and the open, of the negative and the impossible, of being and the other." (160) Sartre is on to something when he suggests the mental impacts the physical through and through. If only one could cough up the toxicity! The endless breakdown of other into other others (or is it others *unothering* others), the wars, genocides, racism, poverty, pollution and psychic duress obscure the life pulse, (yet, it must be noted, since 1965 the human population has managed to double itself while, simultaneously, the environment is well along in its 6<sup>th</sup> total extinction according to zoologists and others who track and study the biodiversity crisis). Gilles Deleuze makes the case that the formation of the instinct is inseparable from historical and social conditions. To quote Deleuze, "Our words reach us only as far as the instincts, but it is from the other agency, that is, from the Death Instinct, that they receive their sense." (326) I don't find much concordance with Freud's Death Drive per say, for one, because of its built-in idea of limited reflexivity: tension does not automatically signal aggression or a kind of abject, relaxed calm, the so-called Nirvana state, these states don't necessarily mean system failure, I submit the contrary is often the case. Freud continued to adjust his take until he claimed destrudo energy was the desire to return to an inanimate state—devoid of instinct. Everything molecular is animate—earth and all it consists of is molecular, therefore it is animate, in transition! On earth one could say, "vegetative state" or "catatonic" but this is not the same as being inanimate—even when the body dies the material substance is still pulsating with energy. The Death Drive as a psychoanalytical troupe has been written too staunchly on the body (or projected at bodies). My desire is to override it with flows of energy that don't have a polarity—at the subatomic level the string is simply flickering—neither positively nor negatively. It's a utopian fantasy to imagine that the Furies might come along and compost or recycle the Death Drive. To make it a psychosocial prerequisite only exacerbates the situation. This then forces forward an eschatological attitude, a negativized plentitude championed, for instance by those in office now and by their supporters, the Evangelical Right. Then again, this doomsday outlook that spells inevitability is scripted into the Western consciousness. The Judeo-Christian concept that there is a savior (divine individual male figure) who miraculously comes along to rectify the injustice and turmoil returning life to a state of grace isn't all that feasible, from my point of view.

Poetry can actively engage blind spots—where conditioning, denaturalization and denial for instance, have buttressed the status quo, politically, socially, spiritual and environmentally leading to a degraded ecosystem that places terrestrial well-being in jeopardy—everyone's: all plants, all animals, living organisms, all water systems, oceans, etc. This is a challenge of a magnitude where every subtle gesture could support holism. Joan Copjec's essay, *The Tomb of Perseverance: On Antigone* reminds me firstly that Freud also proposed a concept of perseverance, *Haftbarkeit*—and emblematic of such perseverance is Antigone, "Antigone's perseverance is not indicated by her remaining rigidly the same, but by her metamorphosis at the moment of her encounter with the event of her brother's death and Creon's refusal to allow his burial". (258) Death can bring forth empathy through grief—a provocative, generative state. Simon Critchley quotes Judith Butler in his book, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*: "In grief, we are held in thrall by the other:", he continues by paraphrasing Butler, "In grief and mourning we undergo an experience of affective self-dispossession or self-undoing that can provide the motivational force to enter into a political sequence. It is this meta-political moment that propels one into facing and facing down a wrong or confronting a situation of injustice, not through sovereign legal norms backed up with the threat of violence, but through an ethical responsiveness to the sheer precariousness of the other's face, of their injurability and our own." (120) Political awakening and social action involves coming out of quietude, out of waiting, shedding latency—Antigone voices. This, from Kamau Brathwaite's shimmering book, *Middle Passage*:

to be blown into fragments. your death  
like the islands that you loved  
like the seawall that you wished to heal

bringing equal rights & justice to the bredren  
that the children above all others would be like the sun.  
rise.

any where or word where there is love there is the sky & its blue  
free

where past means present struggle  
towards vliissengens where it may some day end

Seated prominently on the upper food chain are the language user human primates and in this country, systems of commerce, government and communication cloak the extremity of the ecological situation—obfuscation is the norm via a lulling stream of commercialized media din and the reassuring cheer from the ideology of progress. “Perhaps there’s nothing/worse than ‘mere murmur of dissent.’ Unable to sing the pure and/expressive note, we fall visibly shaken by it all—in fact we become/quite ill—performing full body spasms, merely hinting at the rictus.”—Rob Halpern, from *Reports on Ground Conditions*. Language that engages these pressing realities can be viewed as extreme, sensational—or sanctimonious—spear the messenger fervor. Poetry, because of its compression and condensed energy is a vital form of expressiveness. Because poetry inclines language to its most agile and expressive potential it could be effective as a means to create and articulate alternative strategies for living. Cognition and language involves the body’s participation, the very body subjected to an increasingly hazardous set of environmental circumstances.

Pores in a sprained body  
are relief  
of standing water.  
I speak for the trees, for shade  
zones out the mixed-use tract.  
from *To Be Low-Density Fieldwork*, by Taylor Brady

In its National Water Quality Assessment, the U.S. Geological Survey found that a sampling of the nation’s streams contained two or more pesticides 90 percent of the time. The distressing effects of these industrial effluents entering the ecology are almost entirely unmonitored yet are starting to be discussed in magazines like *Scientific American* and *On Earth*. Since WW11 it is estimated that 200 new synthetic compounds have been introduced into the environment with unknown effect (and thus, the addition of 200 additional potent words enter the language stream). It is troubling that each chemical compound on its own has adverse effects but even more alarming is how these agents mix to form an even

more toxic brew. The hazardous effects of agrochemicals (only one aspect of the chemical contamination—cosmetics, medical waste, solvents, etc.,—it's an egregious mistake to add these substances into ecosystem without scrutiny) on non-target organisms (plants, animals and humans) have only begun to be a concern for study—a risk assessment for use of these compounds has yet to be thoroughly executed. The only way I have of sharing this provocative information with you is through language! Images alone would not suffice.

Rachel Carson warned us 30 years ago in her eloquent book, *Silent Spring* about the poisoning effects of pesticides, insecticides and herbicides. Chemicals designed as weapons of war fare in WW11 are now being used as insecticides, consider for example DDVP! The toxic herbicide Atrazine is one of the nation's most common and widely used weed killers. A study by Dr. Tyrone Hayes in 2002 showed that Atrazine causes sexual abnormalities in frogs and another study showed that workers at an Atrazine manufacturing plant had elevated incidence of prostate cancer.

Language unifies us as human animals—other species use language as well but we are not able to communicate mutually. Consciousness imbeds in language and language consciousness would become more nuanced and interactive by perceiving and acknowledging the polyrhythms that exist in combination within social bodies, environmental social bodies, political environmental social bodies—the string can be extended as long as there are combinations to be recognized. “the whole earth together/dirt/controls/clouds/holding up air/water flows/a surface bent in/as made...to smash the/head/on out/on the tree for you/years turn stone/it's geology”—Larry Eigner, from *Things Stirring Together or Far Away*. The impossibility of a solitary body, also... “: unfamiliarity with the edges of one's body”, Eileen R. Tabios, from *The Secret Lives of Punctuations, Vol. 1*. It is false to see writing as a solitary act. Language acts along generative routes toward, away and into, as: language is involved, so are you. *All there is* bound up into the concept of environment. This is the juncture where it is moot to conceptualize a separation. Nothing can sequester itself from the environment—environment is all. Survival entails mutual agreements based on body consensus which is ultimately health—all organs in play (where death does not equate with annihilation).

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## THIS IS THIS

Allegorical forms this symbolism this twisting fate of this that is  
ostensibly is that this versus this  
Is us was us is

Vary profoundly in regards to this

Their inclinations distancing this There, bone in the path  
one lone bone marrow dried in its core bone separated from beast  
bone ringing out actuality

What was this is this  
When this is as this  
Before I was upright  
Before I was swinging

In canopied vegetation  
Jawbone shaped like this

Theses all glass  
Theses with eyes  
Sing this tune again  
Little is known of this  
I wanted to hear into the trees  
I wanted to see without names  
Believe in this that is your defect  
Was said about this  
Believe in this makes you perfect  
That is your defect perfection this  
Neurons in the throat where song emits  
Transparence this but baffling

This is a star  
This these are clusters  
Nebulae and neutrons  
Protons and electrons  
But equally space

Embossed central focus  
Finally fesses myriad tendencies tensions  
Numerous porosities without image  
With eyes doesn't go tubular intestinal  
Intestine isn't this eye isn't this lyrical eye  
Thyroid isn't this ocular entrance of the upside down  
Yet inside out within this

So that when you procreate and babies you finally see  
but before meeting gesticulating atomic You mother are outside  
and these eyes are inside seeing inside

Seeing inside this focus of liquid is flesh her that is  
mother Liquid that is thinking and feeling Viscous liquid that is  
being and bones Bones are this inside

Eyes see outward at a height Eyes for the purposes

Why wasn't your painting this cell cluster Why the  
docile domestic sitting pose with scissor legs Furniture where  
trees were denied Digestion never looked so serene

In horror (films) vomit is highlight Projectile as rejection  
Body spews vile material energies Something this body can't  
digest Expel beyond lingual Source is minute and growing  
Chuck snakes chuck worms vivid green slime Dispel the  
unformed incomplete chewed decaying This is the way many  
animals feed their offspring

Mooncalves lick up nebulae spit on the lawns  
Wearing two tails she snakes her way into the coiled continuum  
This she is dull eyes because tails hurl She spawns blind mice  
This she is agile strong flaring within a hot summer abyss She is  
the choice diet of amphisbaena who grew out of splattered blood  
from Medusa's head Pregnant women wear necklaces of  
amphisbaena around their necks to protect their inner fetuses  
How to protect the cells from toxic sludge coughed up from  
gentile machines Machines make the life glimmer Sublime  
spewing there of this we do not know Unknown

Bodies not properly buried revel in your kindness Edimmu  
Froth about the midnight air  
Lingers zoomorphia I trust you as this animal  
You as animal I say as human I distrust because  
Because she said Monohuman  
Only us on the asphalt and our attendant bacterial compatriots

This is what you can do with a sickness leaking song  
Go down to the river submerge limbs torso face  
Contact slippery rocks with buttocks  
Everything known enters these stones  
Water a torrent is possession and dismissal  
After you die escaping water will gauge how you suffered  
Eddies of water wear long blue gloves  
This is how you appear in trouble

This rallying with wind  
These particles passing in

I'm thinking back to the time  
I climbed over a razor wire fence  
In order to reach a family of seamstresses  
They asked I smuggle contentious documents  
Across borders dissidents to prove revolution  
With a slip of my foot I fell into pooling oil

We spoke freely amongst roses  
Fertilized by girls working on their knees  
Peach trees breezy sleepy socialist nap time  
Here in the West bodies rage  
Idiosyncratic to walk alone where she's from  
This isn't loneliness I say