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**Poetic Investments: Public Finance and Anglophone Poetry After 1945**

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Poetic Investments: Public Finance and Anglophone Poetry After 1945

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M.A., University of Chicago, 2010

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
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# Abstract

Poetic Investments: Public Finance and Anglophone Poetry After 1945
By Bryan C. Chitwood

This dissertation aims to contribute to scholarly conversations regarding relationships between creative and fiscal economies, taking as its object of study the history of post-World War II Anglophone poetry and the ways we evaluate it. During the years since World War II, circuits of public funding fundamentally altered the field of Anglophone poetry. As this dissertation shows, English-language poetry around the world has been deeply connected to public money and has a much closer, and much more dynamic, relationship to monetary concerns than the prevailing approaches to poetry would suggest. In this analysis, close attention to public funds and the structures that disseminate them reveals powerful hidden forces that influence cultural processes, social structures, and institutional values.

Nigeria, Jamaica, and Ireland form sites of special interest because of the interconnected ways in which their poets have navigated both transoceanic channels and channels of funding that link them to the United States and United Kingdom. Using an interdisciplinary method that bridges literary studies and sociology, the project situates post-1945 Anglophone poetry within the international flux of public money and cultural administrative structures in order to show how the poetic field was impacted by public funds, as well as to illuminate poetry's influence, as an imaginative force, within those international processes and flows.

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# Introduction: Poetry and Public Money

State spending symptomatizes social relationships; it also constitutes them. During the years since World War II, circuits of public funding fundamentally altered the field of Anglophone poetry. To a much greater extent than scholars have acknowledged, or likely feel comfortable acknowledging, the field of post-World War II Anglophone poetry was enabled by public finance and responded to it.

At first blush, taxes—our fiscal responsibility to the state—would seem to have little bearing on poetry. However, close attention to taxes and the structures that enforce and disseminate them reveals powerful hidden forces that influence cultural processes, social structures, and institutional values. As Joseph Schumpeter notes,

> The spirit of a people, its cultural level, its social structure, the deeds its policy may prepare—all this and more is written in its fiscal history, stripped of all phrases. He who knows how to listen to its message here discerns the thunder of world history more clearly than anywhere else…The public finances are one of the best starting points for an investigation of society…"[1]

As scholars of public finance recognize, state finances are both symptomatic and causal. They reveal concrete relations among constituents of imagined communities (i.e. nations), but they also constitute those communities in meaningful ways—ways that tend to leave paper trails. Funding institutions such as the Arts Council of Great Britain, the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, the Nigerian federal Arts Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland were formed to inspire social and political solidarity by enabling the production of select

[1] Joseph A. Schumpeter, "The Crisis of the Tax State," in *The Economics and Sociology of Capitalism*, ed. Richard Swedberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 101.

cultural objects. As a result, poets and their creative works became subject to cultural repertoires of evaluation that, without being directly linked to political institutions, nonetheless underwrite practices of public spending.[2] Value is the watchword that hovers over this analysis. As Georg Simmel noted in his opus on money, the realm of value *exchange* projects an aura of objectivity, with money, as an "absolute intermediary," serving as the great reifier, the "pure form of exchangeability."[3] But his key insight is not to see in money a pure form, but to see in the use of money a dynamic process of value *generation*. Money mediates value, brings it across. Formally, money is metaphor. Poets get this. Moreover, they understand their implicatedness in monetary and cultural values and try, as agents of both civil and political society, to influence those practices. In simple terms, taxpayer dollars have, in a variety of ways, enabled poems around the world. This leads us to two issues: 1) Public funds helped shape the cultural field of poetry, and 2) poets responded to the influence of public money in a variety of fascinating and creative ways.

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The poet Robert Graves once commented, "If there's no money in poetry neither is there poetry in money."[4] This turn of phrase echoes a familiar mode of thinking about poetry in English. While literary theorists have taken an interest in poetry's ability to engage with the logic of capitalism, critics tend to analyze lyric poetry, especially, as if it were written, disseminated,

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[2] In the sociological literature, the concept of cultural repertoires has emerged as a means of describing "grammars of available cultural positions that are not centered around political institutions." These repertoires are seen as flexible across time and space, and the concept acknowledges the "plurality of criteria of evaluation that individuals use." Importantly, this manner of thinking allows sociologists to describe how, for example, "moral and cultural criteria of evaluation are more readily subsumed to economic criteria in the United States than they are in France." Michèle Lamont and Laurent Thévenot, eds., *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology: Repertoires of Evaluation in France and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 4-5.

[3] Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore, David Frisby, and Kaethe Mengelberg (London: Routledge, 2005), 28, 176.

[4] Robert Graves, *Mammon and the Black Goddess* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 3.

and read, all while safely preserved from the caprice of markets. If critics admit the economic into their interpretations, they tend to view poetry either as a symptom of ideology or, alternatively, as a means of ideological critique that shows how the creative logic of lyric subverts the profit-driven logic of the marketplace.[5] However, as the following pages will show, English-language poetry around the world has been deeply connected to public money and has a much closer, and much more dynamic, relationship to monetary concerns than the prevailing approaches to poetry would suggest.

To unpack these issues around poetry and money, it was necessary to assemble a formidable archive. While this material enriches our collective understanding of Anglophone poetry and its post-World War II history, the archive also grounds interpretation. As one of the editors of *Walter Benjamin's Archive,* Erdmut Wizisla, notes, "Order, efficiency, completeness, and objectivity are the principles of archival work." However, we soon find that the archive under question—Walter Benjamin's personal archive—is a different kettle of fish. His archives "reveal the passions of the collector," and in them we find "reserve funds or something like iron reserves, crucial to life, and which for that reason must be conserved."[6] Note the rhetoric of finance. These passions, these reserve funds, emerge in that case from a private archive. As a highly curated collection, the research archive will always be an overdetermined basket of facts, anecdotes, and other odds and ends that reveal the passions of the collector. The archive I assemble here is no different. At the same time, given my topos—public money, specifically—we do well to transpose the translator's observation onto the public archive, as well. The national archive, while

[5] A notable exception to this rule is Christopher Nealon, *The Matter of Capital: Poetry and Crisis in the American Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011).
[6] Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Signs*, trans. Esther Leslie (London: Verso, 2015), 1.

often humdrum and bureaucratic, also reveals the passions of its collector, the reserves funds that give a nation purchase as a symbol circulating in a symbolic economy that animates material life and is, in turn, animated by those material happenings.[7] In this way, as we will see, there is a poetry not only to money, but also to the "archives of authority," as Andrew Rubin calls them, that scholars draw on to tell the story of a nation and its work to influence culture through selective investment in poets and poetry.[8]

The argument of this dissertation is that for literary history, we should take the figure of archival reserve funds seriously, and sometimes literally. Behind the literary text, as well as behind the figure of the literary text, is a complex of state-sponsored, value-generating systems and institutions which have been underappreciated in literary historiography. Under closer analysis, institutional archives are highly consequential for understanding how literary genres came to be, and an analysis of those archives reveals hidden forces that have helped to shape the ways we came to think about literature in the post-World War II era. A burgeoning body of criticism has already begun to tell this story for literary prose fiction, but somewhat lacking has been a consideration of how authors responded to state-sponsored support for poetic endeavors.[9] Consequently, this study shows how the circulation of cultural, economic, and social

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[7] In the case of England, for instance, the Arts Council of Great Britain didn't take on literature for about a decade, and then only poetry. That sort of judgment call symptomatizes institutional values that we can trace via the national archive at the same time that it constitutes national-level art publics in the sense that Michael Warner gives to text publics—interpretive communities that have in common an experience with a given text. See especially Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 7-10.

[8] See Andrew N. Rubin, *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U Press, 2012), especially pp. 8-10, 15.

[9] Exemplary in this regard, though covering different institutions and geographies, are Mark McGurl, *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009); Rubin, *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War*; John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1995); Evan Kindley, *Poet-Critics and the Administration of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017). In some ways, this work is an updated and expanded variation on work in the vein of Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

capital works in the context of a specific genre—poetry—written in a specific language—English—in a few specific locations—England, Northern Ireland, Jamaica, and Nigeria—over the course of sixty years.

This project aims to contribute to scholarly conversations regarding relationships between creative and fiscal economies, taking as its object of study the history of post-World War II Anglophone poetry and the ways we evaluate it. In engaging with these lines of scholarship, I illuminate patterns of aesthetic, political, and economic significance. To that end, I draw on methods and theories from other disciplines—sociology most notably, but also anthropology and history. The project consequently entails sometimes-uncomfortable collisions between quantitative methods and qualitative analysis, but this collision enables me to navigate between distant and close reading techniques, which in turn helps to tell the story of institutional and monetary intervention in the field of Anglophone poetry. In his analysis of lyric poetry, Adorno avoided swerving too far in the direction of a sociology of poetry. He mimes his potential critics: "Can anyone, you will ask, but a man who is insensitive to the Muse talk about lyric poetry and society?"[10] On his account, the "social element" in poems leads us "not away from the work of art but deeper into it."[11] In this study, I try to accomplish the same goal. And I contend that for the study of culture, and of poetry as an aspect of culture, the thickness of context can often do with a bit of thinning out through the work of summary measures and statistics, even as numbers have a lot to learn from the thickness of context.

One reason for opening up this interdisciplinary space, then, has to do with matters of

[10] Theodor W. Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society," in *Notes to Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 37.
[11] Ibid., 38.

scale and timing. Literary scholars are struggling to find a balance between exploring the deep intricacies of texts and explaining the wide significance of those intricacies to the world at large. How is literature impacted by its cultural surroundings? How might something as seemingly-innocuous as poetry be *doing something* in the world. As Eric Hayot has argued, the study of global literature finds itself at a fascinating and troubling juncture.[12] We acknowledge the presence of an illegibly-large canon of global literature that demands our attention, and, in the worst case, this illegible canon becomes nothing more than a trope and a gesture: "Ah, yes. Global literature!" More insidiously, when confronted with all that great quantity of "global literature," which gives face, as Levinas puts it, in ways that we cannot always immediately recognize, we all too often resort to allegorizing form and history in an attempt to bend familiar structures of thought to unfamiliar forms and contexts.[13] I believe there are better ways to respond, but we are caught, in the first case, in a double bind.[14] As for the first problem: On the one hand, we find ourselves compelled, at the level of the ethics of historiography and interpretation, to address ourselves to the illegibility of a massive body of texts that persistently reminds us of the shortcomings of our default methods of close interpretation. On the other hand, as literary scholars, we often attempt to fully inhabit the texts we study, to explain the worlds that they create, and to concern ourselves with questions of how and why texts continue

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[12] Eric Hayot, *On Literary Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012).

[13] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingus (Dordrecht: Springer-Science + Business Media, B.V., 1991), xiii.

[14] I am aided in this suspicion by several excellent, recent books on the topic. I see this recent work along three connected lines: 1) works that evoke "world literature" as a marker for durably excellent literature (e.g. Damrosch), 2) works that explore the idea of world (or global) literature as an epistemological problem (e.g. Spivak and Apter), and 3) works that articulate the study of world literature as an ontological problem (e.g. Moretti and Hayot). See David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 2; Emily Apter, *Against World Literature* (New York: Verso, 2013); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Planetarity," in *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia UP, 2003); Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," *New Left Review* 1 (2000); Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*; Pheng Cheah, *What Is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

to exert real power in a world that seems often to devalue creative works that do not promise strong economic or material returns. As for the second problem, we are caught in something more like a tetralemma, in which, for example, a Nigerian "sonnet" at the same time a) faces us as an English sonnet, b) does not at all face us as an English sonnet, c) both does and does not face us as an English sonnet, and d) neither does nor does not face us as an English sonnet. The beauty and impossibility of this situation is one that poetry is particularly well suited to handle—a genre intimately attuned to form, history, and the balance of ambiguity and precision in the presentation of imaginative content through the lyric power of language.[15]

My hybrid approach also enables me to more effectively situate Anglophone poetry within the international flux of money and information—its location and history as a product of civil society and a force of imaginative influence within it—as I work to articulate the place of literature, poetry in particular, as an imaginative force within those international processes and flows. Throughout, I resist the dismissal of cultural and national boundaries in the face of their ineluctably crisscrossed and compromised condition.[16] There is an ethical value in demonstrating how compromised the things are which we often assume to be solid; and yet, those objects do signify. State actors use them to start wars, define alliances, and ground discourse in ways that animate new configurations of people and ideas.

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[15] For an excellent, book-length accounting of lyric's powers, social and otherwise, see Robert von Hallberg, *Lyric Powers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[16] Important work, perhaps most visibly Homi Bhabha's *Location of Culture*, has pointed out the necessity of viewing cultural and national boundaries as unstable constructs that are reified in language via ideology, with profound—and profoundly problematic—effects. Bhabha invites us to "return to the present" in order to redescribe our cultural situation, and to "touch the future on its hither side" in attempting to describe an historic commonality. However, on its hither side, this theoretically-useful heuristic can take us away from necessary attempts to understand the recent past and the ways in which one might act strategically within the ideological present. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Jahan Ramazani has noted, in a manner I see linked to my position, here, "A cross-cultural poetics depends on the identitarian paradigms it complicates." Jahan Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 44.

An interdisciplinary approach is warranted by the many ways literature is impacted by financial matters. Additionally, an interdisciplinary approach provides a contact zone between methodologies from the humanities and social sciences that are sometimes treated as opposing forces, but that by comparison to one another can usefully draw attention to the epistemological limitations of each type of method, on its own. In sum, attempt to rewrite elements of the story of Anglophone poetry after 1945 shuttles between levels of analysis that are informed by what I see as the best of social scientific and literary critical methods, and it draws attention to the limitations of those methods by thoughtfully testing the theories and epistemological commitments that underwrite our disciplinary norms.

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On the surface, the world of fiscal policy and the world of arts and letters seem noticeably divided. Even if we grant economic connections among writers, publishers, and others involved in the book trade, literary culture can appear divorced from everyday economic realities. Some scholars of literary culture have gone so far as to argue that poems achieve considerable autonomy from real-world concerns. For instance, Pascale Casanova argues that the prestige apparatus of literature and its support structures constitutes a semi-autonomous, transhistorical realm that she names the World Republic of Letters. Casanova's republic of letters operates according to its own temporality, its own sense of community, and its own network of values. In this semi-autonomous realm, time operates differently, and social meaning becomes self-referential in a space that hovers above the world of everyday life.[17] Casanova's theoretical position largely detaches political history from the history of the text; it also detaches the text

[17] For an overview of this framework, see Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 3-5.

from its material present, as well as, to a large extent, from the sociopolitical rules that govern its reception. Although she acknowledges the impact of social and economic forces, in Casanova's analysis, the self-reflexive logic of the World Republic of Letters becomes more important than the ontology of the text or the connection between texts and political history.

The notion of literary semi-autonomy, as articulated in the work of Casanova and others, owes a significant debt to Pierre Bourdieu's pathbreaking assessment of cultural distinction in France. Bourdieu theorizes that culture is comprised of contending fields. In his model, literary culture exists to the side of the social and in tension with it.[18] Building on Bourdieu's work on literature, cultural sociologists have more recently tested his theories using methods that more directly examine links between the aesthetic and the economic.[19] These studies work to understand the processes by which poetry and other cultural objects achieve legitimacy as art, and they attempt to determine the extent to which market forces factor into the calculus of cultural legitimacy. Poetry provides a useful case for Sébastian Dubois and Vincent François, in particular, because they take it to be the "pure pole" of the literary field—the quintessentially elite literary art form. However, despite poetry's literariness, Dubois and François show closer proximity between poetry and the economic world than Bourdieu would suggest. In his preface to *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu sums up his approach poetically. He asks us to renounce belief in art as a "pure form" in favor of seeing it as "an intentional sign haunted and regulated by

[18] For a good overview, see the introduction to Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984).

[19] Gisele Sapiro, "The Literary Field between the State and the Market," *Poetics* 31 (2003); Sébastien Dubois and Pierre François, "Career Paths and Hierarchies in the Pure Pole of the Literary Field: The Case of Contemporary Poetry," *Poetics* 41 (2013); Ailsa Craig and Sébastien Dubois, "Between Art and Money: The Social Space of Public Readings in Contemporary Poetry Economies and Careers," *Poetics* 38 (2010). An earlier scholar, Becker, might find Dubois and François's results surprising. See Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1984).

something else, of which it is also a symptom."[20] My argument is that public finances, which join cultural repertoires of evaluation to political forms of evaluation through the pure form of money, play a critical part in the story of Anglophone poetry after 1945.

Since public money plays a small part in previous approaches, prior scholarship tends to overlook historical change in the cultural repertoires of evaluation that motivate public expenditure on poetry, as well as in the values that publicly funded poems return. From the perspective of institutional analysis, a bottom-up approach can help to access the nuances that emerge within state institutional structures. As John Levi-Martin notes, "The general indifference of sociological theory to the particularities of small structures leads it to prematurely account for local structural patterns by reference to the larger ones."[21] By providing an example of a method that prioritizes the emergent properties of local structural patterns without ignoring the deep significance of larger structural developments, I will tell the story of evaluative mechanisms from the inside out. For instance, when Jamaican poet Louise Bennett writes in Creole that Jamaicans will soon be "colonizin Englan in reverse," that they will "tun history upside dung" and that while some will work some "will settle fe de dole," she is engaging a complex set of tropes and values that are directly concerned with public finance as well as other types of value.[22] Crossing from Jamaica to England and back, the poem reflects on work, colonization, and welfare. Bennett's playful Creole becomes a biting critique in a poem she addressed the poem over the Jamaican airwaves to an attentive national audience. Today,

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[20] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), xx.
[21] John Levi Martin, *Social Structures* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U Press, 2011).
[22] Strikingly, Bennett at least once omitted the latter phrase during a London reading. Jahan Ramazani, "Louise Bennett: The National Poet as Transnational?," *The Journal of West Indian Literature* 17, no. 2 (2009): 56.

Bennett is herself enshrined in the Jamaican government's official statement on cultural policy.[23] For those interested in how literature comes to be in the world, and which factors influence our reception of it, these circuits of money and influence offer a chance to better understand systems of value that circulate promiscuously through civil and political society, as well as how those systems have impacted literary communities and the circulation of literary works.

In recent years, literary scholars worked at length to rewrite the history of how the English literary canon was formed. In the most influential account of the 1990s, for example, John Guillory argues that we misunderstand the function of literature when we engage in debates that assign social values to literary texts. For Guillory, literature does not provide a representational function. Rather than express values directly, he argues, the literary text embodies a medium of struggle between cultural fields that are mediated by the school. As a result, the literary text cannot convey the values of any particular constituency in any straightforward way. In his words, "Literary works must be seen…as the vector of ideological notions which do not inhere in the works themselves but in the context of their institutional presentation…"[24] In other words, on Guillory's terms, texts symptomatize cultural (not *just* class) struggles rather than convey social values.

Guillory's work on cultural capital helpfully shifted the terms of debate in literary scholarship by exposing the deep entanglement of aesthetics, politics, and economics, a theme that has been continued in more recent literary scholarship. Some literary scholars have undertaken close readings of poems through the lens of poststructuralist and postcolonial

[23] "National Cultural Policy of Jamaica: Towards Jamaica the Cultural Superstate," ed. Culture Division: Ministry of Education Youth and Culture (2003).
[24] Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*, ix.

theories in order to offer nuanced views of how poets engage with the literary marketplace and the matter of capital.[25] However, as far as I have been able to find, no literary scholars have explored public funding at any length. Moreover, defining the cultural struggles that the texts symptomatize, if we choose to read them that way, is not as simple as turning either to *Das Kapital* or to the social power of monolithic institutions. What is missing is the creative and purposeful cultural interventions of the contemporary author, as well as an acknowledgment of lay reading practices that do not conform to the priorities of the syllabus.

If particular types of value come under erasure in the scholarship on post-war literature, so also do innumerable texts themselves remain out of sight even when we refer to global, world, or planetary literature. Taking on this problem, for example, Andrew Rubin notes the post-1945 turn to the category of world literature in comparative literary studies. His book, aptly titled *Archives of Authority*, argues that a vast number of writers "are rendered invisible by the seemingly totalizing circuitry of world literature…Upon closer scrutiny," he says, "it becomes evident that their absences are the very conditions of possibility of world literature."[26] In a familiar logic of repression, the archive of world literature depends for its definition on the suppression of other cultural objects that might have been included. What remains a bit open-ended in Rubin's study is a working definition of what the figure of the world omits. One thing I believe the figure of the world omits, at least for literary studies in its present stance, is a way of looking at the world of literature that does justice to that world's savvy engagement with value

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[25] Sarah Brouillette, *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Nealon, *The Matter of Capital: Poetry and Crisis in the American Century*; Omaar Hena, *Global Anglophone Poetry: Literary Form and Social Critique in Walcott, Muldoon, De Kok, and Nagra* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).
[26] Rubin, *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War*, 3.

formations that bridge the economic and aesthetic, the global and local, the civil and political.

While literary scholars have identified connections between poetry and economic developments in postcolonial and transnational settings, few have attempted to situate them within the dynamics of public finance as it bears on the lives of poets and the institutional networks that provide the poems with a public presence.[27] Instead, literary scholars such as Casanova and Guillory suggest that while literature interfaces with and is impacted by economic matters, it primarily exists in a symbolic realm that maintains its own unique geographies of power and identity that are more proximately involved with the education system than with the IRS.[28] As a result, most studies of poetry's relationship to economics have attempted to prove that poems generate unique perspectives in a symbolic space that remains relatively autonomous from the structuring demands of economic activity.[29] More, in this focus on economic and institutional theory in a broad sense, the most ambitious studies often fail to recognize variation, in some cases multiplicity, in the way literature engages with its fiscal realities and institutional conduits.[30]

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[27] Regarding the postcolonial context, I think most immediately of work by Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said. See, for instance, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Supplementing Marxism," in *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). Fanon is a canonical exception, though his revolutionary, thoroughly Marxian perspective fails to access the possibility latent even in what he terms a bourgeois aesthetic to speak back to structures of power while remaining thoroughly within them—even as products of them. This speaks to a general problem of resistance that sees change emerging along dialogic / dialectical vectors. In reality, resistance is always multiple and networked and cannot be viewed as a monolithic rejection of a monolithic aggressor. See Frantz Fanon, "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," in *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

[28] Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*; Brouillette, *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace*.

[29] Theodor W. Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, vol. I (New York: Columbia U Press, 1991); Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Duke U Press, 1991); Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge Classics, 2002); Robert Kaufman, "Lyric Commodity Critique, Benjamin Adorno Marx, Baudelaire Baudelaire Baudelaire," *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 123, no. 1 (2008).

[30] See, for instance, Jean-Joseph Goux on structural homologies between linguistic and economic systems. See also Marc Shell on language and money as analogous mediums of value-producing exchange. Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies after Marx and Freud*, trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Marc Shell, *Money, Language, Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

As a cultural object, poetry's principal power is its ability to compress and synthesize other discourses and to rediscover them within formal, linguistic structures. Poems link discourses that might not otherwise fit together, and they do so in a manner that speaks with linguistic power to a wide variety of audiences.[31] Further, poetry gives us a powerful site of analysis on which to assess processes of social construction and rhetorical influence. The twentieth century entailed a radical compression of time and space as people gained the ability to travel and communicate more quickly. During the second half of the century, entire populations were also forcibly displaced as a result of violent conflict. Consequently, the imagination has come to occupy a constitutive position in peoples' sense of cultural and national belonging.[32] The imagination influences and is influenced by, among other things, global flows of ideas and capital—what Arjun Appadurai refers to as ideoscapes and financescapes. Ideoscapes and financescapes work alongside geography, technology, and media to influence one's sense of cultural belonging. In this global context, poetry begins to take on extraordinary significance.[33]

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Nigeria, Jamaica, and Ireland are of special interest because of the interconnected ways in which their poets have navigated both transoceanic channels and channels of funding that link them to the United States and United Kingdom.[34] While literary scholars have drawn historical

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[31] For an extended version of this argument, from a literary scholar, see Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others: News, Prayer, Song, and the Dialogue of Genres* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2013).

[32] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U Press, 1997); Charles Taylor, book *Modern Social Imaginaries* (London: Duke U Press, 2004); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

[33] *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 33.

[34] Excellent studies that bridge some or all of these geographies include Nathan Suhr-Sytsma, *Poetry, Print, and the Making of Postcolonial Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Michael G. Malouf, *Transatlantic Solidarities: Irish Nationalism and Caribbean Poetics* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009); Rubin, *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War*; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf,

and aesthetic connections among these sites, the impact of state investment in the literary arts has been largely overlooked. Though this study is intentionally time- and context-bound, my inductive method has yielded insights about connections among these places and their histories vis-a-vis cultural policy and literary culture. In all these contexts, both poets and their state sponsors evince an acute awareness of issues around aesthetic autonomy, for example, from the side of both poets and their state sponsors.[35]

But before and beyond that question of autonomy is the question of representation of self as a vector for national expression. That is, for the writers I engaged, and in many of the texts I examine, form and content enact a pushing and pulling against the bonds of social and cultural affiliation. The texts and cultural initiatives often strain against the impulse to read postcolonial texts as allegories of national being or, put differently, for the body of the text, and of the author, to be viewed as proxies for the body of the nation. This core tension has erupted profound creativity in poetic expression in both the global North and the global South, and much of the work contained in this dissertation is an attempt to account for that creativity, the conditions that enabled it, and how those conditions have inflected the circulation of prestige and power in literary communities that range from small coteries to the world republic of letters.

The public funds I examine fall into two general categories: direct and indirect. Direct funding includes grants, bursaries, and pensions awarded directly to poets. Indirect funding covers a variety of cases, including payment contingent on the fulfillment of certain conditions,

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1993); Jahan Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[35] This question of aesthetic autonomy is currently a hotly contested topic in the criticism on post-war Anglophone literature. Peter Kalliney offers an excellent gloss on some of the most contentious of these matters in the introduction to his *Commonwealth of Letters*. Peter Kalliney, *Commonwealth of Letters: British Literary Culture and the Emergence of Postcolonial Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6.

such as when the Arts Council of Great Britain hired poets to speak at schools or when the Arts Council of Northern Ireland hired poets for reading tours. Indirect funding also occurs via publishers, as when funding organizations subsidize select books and advances, or funding might travel through an additional organization before reaching the poet, as when the National Endowment for the Arts channels funds through state arts organizations. Finally, as a special subtype of indirect funding, taxpayer dollars sometimes travel through covert channels, as when the Congress for Cultural Freedom supplied CIA funds to African poets and artists through the Mbari organization. These routes represent some of the variety of ways public funds were mobilized to influence cultural output during this period, and they also provide critical context for analyzing the circulation of literary value.

The research material for this project arrived in a variety of forms, most notably in the forms of original interviews, papers from public and private archives, large-scale surveys, anthologies, magazines, and volumes of poetry. The archives represented here include records such as account books and personal letters, in addition to minutes from meetings of committees and subcommittees responsible for awarding grants (direct and indirect) to poets, their publishers, and other forms of indirect support have enabled the reconstruction of institutional histories and allow us to situate writers within those histories. As a small example of what these records show, we can say with certainty that, per its annual reports, the Arts Council of Great Britain over time deployed multiple logics of value to secure government support for poetry and to justify particular expenditures. The logic employed evolved in concert with the evolution of political and civil society. And that particular feature of the organizations I studied—their navigation of political exigency—is perhaps the most fascinating thing about them—their situation, at the intersection of political and civil society, as translators of value. And the aspect

of poets and their poems, seen through that same lens, that most interests me, here, is the metamorphoses of value that the poets and their poems enact—sometimes in active response to movements in civil or political society, and sometimes implicitly in a refusal to engage.

The relevant organizations include the Arts Council of Great Britain, the British Council, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Culture and Tourism portfolios of Jamaica's federal government, the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, the Institute of Jamaica, the Culture and Education portfolios of the Nigerian federal government, the Nigerian Arts Council and Endowment for the Arts, the Cold War-era Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States. All of these institutions come with rich historical context that, sometimes unexpectedly, helps to tell the story of Anglophone poetry during the latter half of the last century.

Finally, Wendy Griswold's work on the Nigerian novel inspired much of this project's method, and her book provides a model for incorporating sociological methods into literary study.[36] I also extend her method by returning us insistently to the literary imagination as a site of generative and often ambivalent creation and re-creation with the aim to explain the relative weaknesses of empirical approaches to interpretation—especially those approaches that attempt to arrest the movement of text and context in order to arrive at a scientific outcome. In sum, I am attempting to mobilize the very best of cultural and institutional research in the social sciences in order to work at multiple levels of analysis. By better understanding institutions that have impacted readers and writers of poetry, I am able to get some purchase on the conditions

[36] Wendy Griswold, *Bearing Witness : Readers, Writers, and the Novel in Nigeria* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U Press, 2000). Andrew Apter's work on Nigerian culture was also extremely valuable to me as I was designing the research methodology. See Andrew Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2005).

that influenced textual production and reception. And just as importantly, the poets herein show us time and again that history is not destiny, and while a material context determines a horizon of possibility, and institutions generate powerful structures of value and thought, powerful works of imagination show us that even for the things we value most, there is always an opportunity to value things anew.

# Chapter 1: Valuing Nigerian Poetry

## Nigerian Cultural Administration, A Short History

As of 2015, most aspiring poets in Nigeria had no viable route to publishing a book of poetry—an ink-and-paper volume of their own—barring access to a patron and a vanity press.[37] When a poet *did* find a publisher, the resulting book might have found local or regional distribution. National distribution was elusive, and it remains so.[38] In the face of these difficulties, and in the absence of public patronage, local, state, and national organizations often work to fill gaps—to provide publishing opportunities and networks of distribution that open up a horizon of possibility for aspiring writers. Organizations like the Ibadan-based WriteHouse Collective, the Abuja Literary Society, and the Association for Nigerian Authors (ANA), for example, have done remarkable work with often-limited resources. At the same time, the ongoing challenge of fundraising, even for state-sponsored organizations, has in many cases limited the longevity of particular initiatives, and sometimes of the organizations themselves.

In the global North, despite the occasional news article heralding the death of public arts funding, we have come to expect government to provide some semblance of support for the arts through cultural policies implemented by state agencies.[39] In the global South, this relationship to state funding has emerged, when it has emerged, along a much more circuitous historical trajectory. Moreover, the nature and mechanisms of that funding differ widely from nation to

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[37] This was a prevailing theme across numerous interviews I conducted. For a scholarly account from the mid-1990s, see Hans M. Zell, "Publishing in Africa: The Crisis and the Challenge," in *A History of Twentieth-Century African Literatures*, ed. Oyekan Owomoyela (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

[38] For an account of the problem of distribution in the 1990s, see Todd Nyoni, "Taking Africa's Book Distribution Problem Headlong," *Glendora Review* 1, no. 1 (1995).

[39] For a recent periodical example responding to American detractors, see Graham Bowley, "What If Trump Really Does End Money for the Arts?," *The New York Times*, January 30, 2017.

nation, as the following, generic cultural policy illustration from a UNESCO report suggests.[40]

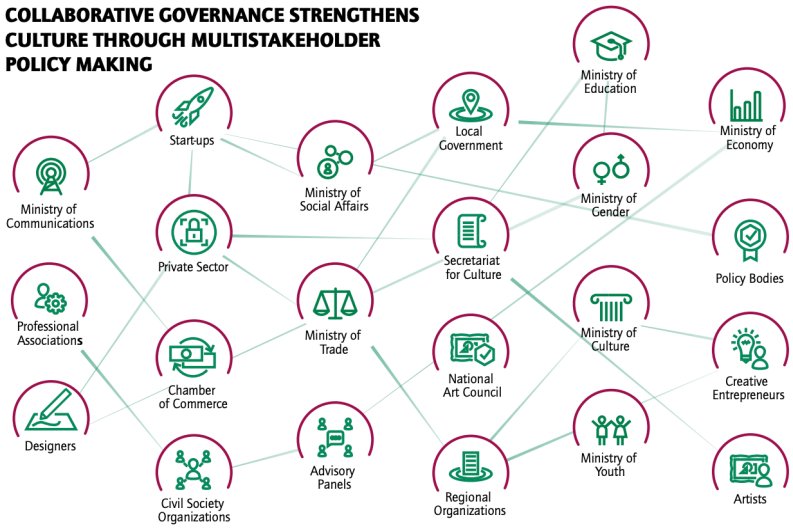


*Figure 1: UNESCO Cultural Policy Network Diagram*

Federal ministries and councils intersect with local governments and panels to engage with policy stakeholders of all stripes. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this type of vision is the extent to which we see items like "start-ups" and the "private sector" linked to "artists" and "creative entrepreneurs.

In Nigeria, a similar level of complexity prevails, but this analysis will focus primarily on efforts that emerged at the federal level. At the federal level, the years before independence saw small investments made by bodies like the Ministry of Education of the federal government. The education portfolio provided minimal subvention for literature, for instance, as well as other causes.[41] An explicit mechanism for arts support in Nigeria was not established until 1959, when the Nigerian Arts Council was established on the cusp of independence by the Minister of

[40] "Re|Shaping Cultural Policies: Advancing Creativity for Development," in *2005 Convention Global Report* (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2017), 36.
[41] The Department of Education provided £500 in 1950 and 1951. T.A. Fasuyi, *Cultural Policy in Nigeria* (Paris: UNESCO, 1973), 32.

Information and Social Services and expatriate stakeholders.[42] Originally active mainly in the South and headquartered in Lagos, the arts council notably did not foreground literature in its organizational structure.[43] Even through the 1970s, it seems, the idea of excellent Nigerian literature was somewhat out of reach for policymakers.[44]

Looking to other areas of federal engagement with the arts, one might be surprised to learn that at various points in time the military leadership in Nigeria provided an embodied vector of creative activity, if not of policy support. Mamman Vatsa, for instance, who was a pivotal military leader during the tumultuous years of coup and counter-coup and civil war through the sixties and seventies, was, in his own way, a very accomplished poet in addition to being an ambitious military leader—a set of qualities reflective of a much older regime of values we might observe in the classical Roman poet, Horace, or, perhaps closer to home, in the social, informational singing of the Yoruba ijala hunting songs.[45] In post-independence Nigeria, we can see the fruit of this sometimes uncomfortable enmeshment of martial leadership and valuation of the arts in the form of a decreed expression of a cultural policy and, continuing this sacralization of specifically Nigerian culture, the enshrinement of culture as a site of basic governmental

[42] While set up as a private organization, the council was provided by Parliament with an annual, federal subvention of £5,000 starting in 1961. Ibid., 37-39.

[43] In the North, the Nigerian Cultural Society, out of Kaduna, picked up slack in the beginning, then eventually merged with the arts council proper. In terms of structure, the organization maintained committees on Art and Gallery, Music, Festival, Dance and Drama, and Research. In terms of funding, the council was approved by Parliament for an annual subvention of £5,000 in 1961. The initial organizational model centralized all activities under one body, whereas in 1964, a revised charter devolved more activities to regional councils, much like the British model. Ibid., 38-39.

[44] Fasuyi flatly suggests a lack of good writers. He writes, "While there are few Nigerian authors (and fewer still on cultural subjects), some of the novels and literature by Nigerian writers succeed in reflecting Nigerian life culture." Ibid., 48.

[45] Vatsa was one of a group of poets who popularized the use of pidgin in Nigerian poetry, facilitating a closer look at everyday problems and social issues using the language in which those transactions took place. Eustace Palmer, "West African Literature in the 1980s," in *African Literatures in the Eighties*, ed. Dieter Riemenschneider and Frank Schulze-Engler (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 101-04.

protections in the 1979 constitution. At the same time, Nigerian writers largely took a back seat. The state-sponsored *Nigeria* magazine, for instance, didn't carry a literature supplement until the 1960s.[46] This situation in many ways simply reflects the stature of writers relative to other types of artists.[47] At the same time, writers were deeply implicated in that history and involved in it, and that story is worth examining at length.

## Culture and the Constitution

To examine the story of Nigeria's cultural policy apparatus, it is necessary to dive beneath the surface of the historical record to better understand the nature and priorities of the government as a whole. If we look closely, the history of Nigeria's federal constitution itself tells a fascinating story about the valuation of culture in Nigeria. In the years after independence, a new constitution was prepared and ratified in 1963. In that document, the preamble reads as follows:

> Having firmly resolve to establish the Federal Republic of Nigeria, With a view to ensuring the unity of our people and faith in our fatherland, For the purpose of promoting inter-African co-operation and solidarity, In order to assure world peace and international understanding, and So as to further the ends of liberty, equality, and justice both in our country and in the world at large, We the people of Nigeria, by our representatives herein Parliament assembled, do hereby declare, enact and give to ourselves the following Constitution…

The preamble emphasizes the unity of a Nigerian people as a primary objective, but it also configures Nigeria more complexly as an implied member of a pan-African nation capable of acting in a corporate interest. Nigeria is to promote "solidarity" while pursuing not less than

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[46] Fasuyi, *Cultural Policy in Nigeria*, 24.

[47] As one observer noted in 1978, "In the field of African literature, the secondary school child is unlikely to come into contact with the work of any Nigerian novelist unless one of his works is a prescribed text." Michael Crowder, "The Contemporary Nigerian Artist: His Patrons, His Audience and His Critics," *Présence Africaine* 105-106 (1978): 144.

"world peace and international understanding." Only after these preambular remarks do we find the enlightenment ideals of liberty, equality, and justice. One might well reflect on what justice might mean in this context and how it sits alongside the proposition of either liberty or equality for Nigerian subjects.[48] This first constitution does not enshrine culture specifically, and the process of the document's creation—specifically the involvement of British advisors—begs questions about the fidelity of the language to specifically Nigerian desires. However, notable in the quotation above is this desired projection of soft power in the service of peace, understanding, equality, and justice.

Fast-forward a decade. In the years preceding ratification of the 1979 constitution, the nation having persisted through the shocks of coup and counter-coup and civil war, the military government of Yakubu Gowon promulgated a decree establishing the National Council for Arts and Culture and, at the same time, dissolved the Nigerian Arts Council that had been established in 1959. In the language of a 1975 decree, the council was established "to be vested with responsibility to assist the Federal Government in the planning, co-ordination and encouragement of Arts and Cultural activities in the country and other related matters. [21st February, 1975]."[49] The new council's remit is broad and its powers poorly defined. Its responsibility is to assist the government in planning, co-ordinating, and encouraging art and culture. The legislation does not impinge on freedom of expression in any way. Of course, this

[48] Even the notion of a Nigerian "subject," in the political sense, cannot be viewed from a single vantage. We might think of the Nigerian subject as counterpoised to his possible status as Commonwealth subject or subjects of the British dominions overseas who have thrown off their colonial chains. Or if we follow the observations of Mahmood Mamdani, we might note more broadly that the historicization of the African subject by analogy to the global North dooms us to a series of extremely faulty assumptions about the relationship between governmentally and civil society, especially during the period of decolonization. See the introduction to Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
[49] "National Council for Arts and Culture Act," *The Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990* XVI, no. Decree 248 (1990).

same Gowon was responsible for the suppression of the Biafran resistance, so it should be held in balance that we find this culturally-engaged military leader looking to federal powers as a way of encouraging cultural and artistic acts as a form of nation building. Perhaps these acts, we could imagine alongside him, might shore up the idea of the nation against revolutionary efforts to fracture it. At the very least, it is contextually fascinating that an ostensibly temporary government would establish such a council.

When we then arrive at the 1979 constitution, the framers have found a new voice, which is thick with the charge of patriotism challenged by live fire—a voice that values culture in new ways. The preamble deploys less of the baggy, bureaucratic language and luxuriates in stylistic panache. But this is a nation which has learned from its struggles, and the baggage of British influence has been somewhat lessened as the document itself gets more quickly down to the business of government. In expressing the purpose of government and articulating its mechanisms, the constitution strikingly includes a clause (number 20), which is a directive on Nigerian culture. The clause reads, "The State shall protect and enhance Nigerian culture." We might well read this alongside clause 22 on the national ethic, which reads, "The National ethic shall be Discipline, Self-reliance and Patriotism." This is a national inwardness that continues to aspire towards projection—to shore up identity and self-sufficiency as a precondition to global stature.

Reflecting on the trajectory of the state in a 1986 speech on the location of literature in Nigerian social and political life, China Achebe turns at one point to poetry to express, with damning mirth, the irony of the attempt to bring the nations of Africa into the domain of "modern life" as defined by the processes of globalization and Western influence. He writes, "There! We have it on the best authority. / Theorists of development cannot agree." In other

words, theorists of development are well aware that their theories are often not much more than untested amalgamations of piety, prejudice, and conjecture when it comes to the African context. Achebe goes on to champion the value of art in a neoliberal manner. After addressing the complexity of the idea of a modern Africa, he turns to a quote by American economist John Kenneth Galbraith to emphasize that the act of creativity sits at the root of capitalist enterprise. He writes, quoting the economist, "The arts are not the poor relation of the economic world. On the contrary they are at the very source of its vitality."[50] There is indeed a kind of poetry in capital, in its ambiguity, as content, with regard to the things it purports to represent, and in the way it brings across value, mediating it from one form to another, causing it to be changed, as Marx suggestively describes, into "something transcendent."[51] But the work of capital is always at its root also oriented to the material, its impact measured in concrete resources, including laboring bodies, which are measured indirectly by fiat. If we are to take Achebe's formulation as any kind of index, literary culture in Nigeria became a self-reflexive term in this explicitly neoliberal equation during the 1970s and early 80s, though of course literary culture had been directly implicated in economic matters from well before the first Europeans arrived to the West African coast.[52]

I do not intend from this overview to suggest that Nigerian literature or culture has been a fundamentally a top-down affair or that all Anglophone Nigerian writing has attempted to

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[50] Chinua Achebe, "What Has Literature Got to Do with It?," in *Radical Essays on Nigerian Literatures*, ed. G.G. Darah (Lagos: Malthouse, 2008), 4.
[51] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, III vols., vol. I (Moscow, USSR: Progress Publishers, 1887), 47.
[52] We might isolate these capitalist- or neoliberal-styled economic formations from other economic configurations that preceded the European slave trade, such as the trans-Saharan slave trade, Yoruba trade routes concentrated on Ife, and the trans-Saharan book trade, for example. For a fascinating assemblage of essays on the trans-Saharan book trade. See Graziano Krätli and Ghislaine Lydon, eds., *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade: Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy, and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

assert something about national being with the implicit backing of the national government. In other words, I am not saying the poetry in Nigeria is necessarily an arm of governmentality, because without having to look very hard at all we find poets like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Femi Osofisan, and Niyi Osundare who illuminate abuses of power, bear witness to suffering, adopt profoundly anti-authoritarian attitudes, and generally work to expose the problems latent in Nigerian society and in the government, as well as to critique the rhetorical structures that help to organize the social and the idea of the nation. At the same time, as we will see, those kinds of attitudes are not entirely divorced from geopolitical forces that would seek to operationalize them in the name of global capital.

What I want to suggest, in fact, is that it is precisely an awareness of their situatedness in a global-administrative context that has led Nigerian poets to adopt strategies and forms that challenge the impulse to allegorize (to tell the story of the nation), as well as the readerly assumption that even writing which is not explicitly allegory nonetheless attempts to accomplish the same ends (to represent or tell the story of the nation). The aesthetic history of Nigerian poetry since 1945 has been, in large part, a story of poets working to collapse allegory's rupture between symbol and referent as a way of opening up the problem of value and reframing it through lyric language. My argument is that the intervention of state cultural formations and their money fueled an insurgency against allegory in the field of Nigerian poetry during the post-1945 period.

## The Poetry of Oil

For Nigeria, a great marker moment of the twentieth century was the discovery of oil in 1958. Oil brought the promise of true self-sufficiency as a nation of global standing, and it

profoundly shifted the idea of the nation and the way culture was seen in Nigeria at the national level. To see this clearly, it can also be useful to consider forms of cultural support in Nigeria that well preceded "arts funding" as we know it. For centuries before any federal organizations arrived on the scene, as T.A. Fasuyi points out, pre-colonial Nigerian kingdoms maintained their own cultural policies, with a division of labor beginning with the traditional leader and running down through chiefs to artisans and experts.[53] Recompense was supplied to artists in various ways. Typical compensation would include cash crops, cattle, clothing, or sometimes cash, but only during the period of service.[54] In other words, the very idea of arts funding as a national effort involving cash exchange for cultural production is both not terribly innovative and also, in its formal dimension, an evolution on forms of exchange for cultural goods that existed well into the past.

So if we look back at that pivot point between a pre-colonial past and the presently globalized situation, we see indexed in yet another way, as so many scholars have already assessed, the profound rupture that colonial rule represented and that the oil boom concentrated into the form of a common desire for empowered Nigerian-ness on a global scale—for national being.[55] We can see a colonial-era cultural policy characterized by repression and indoctrination, then, in the years immediately following the country's 1960 independence, a period of furious

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[53] Fasuyi, *Cultural Policy in Nigeria*, 17.
[54] Ibid., 18.
[55] Frederick Cooper provides a masterful explanation of the situation faced by many new African nations during the period of decolonization, Nigeria included, with his notion of the "gatekeeper state." As inheritors of the colonial state, the newly formed republic had considerable trouble imposing its will either inward or outward. In large part, the power of the state was primarily that of the gatekeeper who could control entry and exit of people, goods, and money. This situation, especially in an environment of such cultural diversity, makes for an interesting task in the attempt to create a national culture. How to cohere these diverse peoples? How to define the greatness of the state? On Cooper's account, a fundamental difficulty across these gatekeeper states was a common trouble with "making the nation-state into a symbol that inspired loyalty." Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 156-7.

organizational activity.[56] That early post-independence activity focused mainly on traditional dance and art, and much of those cultural support activities were enacted at the state and local level rathe than at the federal level. In the oil-boom years of the 1970s, however, the Nigerian military government refocused its attentions on federal cultural policy, as we have already noted, giving an organization established as simply the Arts Council a new lease on life as the Nigerian Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC). As Andrew Apter outlines in *The Pan-African Nation*, this was also a moment during which the oil boom produced "new forms of state-fetishism" in the popular imaginary.[57] Flush with new wealth, Apter notes, the state came to be seen as the source and repository of economic and political power that flowed like blood from the bedrock of the nation—with the result that the state became the guarantor of value.

This evolution whereby the state came to guarantee cultural as well as economic value can be seen clearly in the political rhetoric of the period—even in the official documents. In a transition from military to civilian rule at the end of the decade, for example, as we have already observed, Nigeria's new constitution enshrined culture and guaranteed its furtherance in terse clause: "The State shall protect and enhance Nigerian culture."[58] Culture itself came to be seen as the domain of the state, with the predictable result that, when the economy and civic life fell to pieces under the dictator Babangida, Nigerian culture also came to be viewed by Nigerians as essentially failed.[59] That sense of failure, and the sense that the state could not be relied upon, led to new forms of artistic community and a flourishing of creativity that yielded not only multiple

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[56] Fasuyi, *Cultural Policy in Nigeria*, 21.
[57] Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria*, 23.
[58] Ibid., xx.
[59] Ibid., 23. In terms of political culture, it is in fact precisely the moment of greatest promise for cultural administration in the late 1980s, when a cultural policy was first explicitly articulated, that the state becomes most authoritarian, taking on what Apter describes as the form of a "419" scam.

generations of powerfully creative poets, but also new forms of creative cultural entrepreneurship.

## Supporting Nigerian Culture

What action has the Nigerian state actually taken to support culture, and poetry specifically? Based on field research, work in the archive, and some excellent secondary resources, the following pages will work to unpack the answer to that question by providing context in the form of historical research and in-depth interviews. This mode of analysis will also enable some exploration of the consequences of that support activity, but primarily I want to lay out an argument that the failure of federal support for poets—alongside which we see an implosion of the aspirational aspect of national being—led to more localized efforts at supporting poetry that were more engaged with international literary culture than with Nigeria's geopolitical standing.

At the federal level, Nigeria in 2015 had no standalone ministry of culture. Cultural policy had been historically developed across several ministries, including Information, Education, Trade and Industry, and External Affairs.[60] Despite government investment in activities like theatre, traditional dance, and filmmaking, people I interviewed in the Nigerian poetry world agree that the National Council on Arts and Culture (NCAC), and government more broadly, has not accomplished much when it comes to literature. Even on a longer view, the poets to whom I spoke were not optimistic about the possibility government support for literature. As one poet, Tade Ipadeola commented, matter-of-factly, "Sadly we've been let down by government."[61] This view was echoed by others, speaking on condition of anonymity, who lament lack of interest by Parliament in passing allocations bills for cultural initiatives as well as

[60] Fasuyi, *Cultural Policy in Nigeria*, 26.
[61] Tade Ipadeola, interviewed by Bryan Chitwood at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 2015. On Hanz Zell's scholarly assessment, "The verdict on government involvement in publishing [in Africa] must be that by and large it hasn't worked." Zell, "Publishing in Africa: The Crisis and the Challenge," 371.

corruption whereby NCAC funds end up misappropriated in the service of spurious contracts and bribes.

However, the Council does seem to have had a significant hand in establishing the hugely influential Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). As an interviewee close to the matter noted, "the Council was financially instrumental to the establishment of ANA in 1981 and since then has intermittently supported the Association with funds…"[62] The ANA, which has regional outposts in the various states, stands as one of the significant sacralizing bodies in Nigerian letters. It hosts conventions and awards prizes, providing a space of community while also exalting the chosen of Nigerian letters.

It seems that this level of meaningful support—or at least meaningful intentions around support—peaked in 1988, when the Nigerian parliament passed a formal cultural policy. It is not so much ironic as it is profoundly telling that culture became an item of political focus at a time when, as Apter notes, following Achille Mbembe, Nigerian political life was cast into a state of "semiotic suspension" generated by the collapse of national currencies and of the state as an idea attached to a world of concrete things.[63] And yet, the inexorable efforts of artists and those who would see art flourish persisted, such that the Council in the late 1990s even established what was called the Abuja Poetry Society, though it seems that the organization dissolved after staging three or four public readings due to changes in the composition of the NCAC.[64] It was at this counterintuitive high-water mark—what one interviewee termed the "golden age of cultural policy in Nigeria"—that we can find scholars writing such articles as, "Epistemological Issues in

[62] Anon N-003, email interview by the author, 2015.
[63] Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria*, 283-4.
[64] Anon N-003, email interview by the author, 2015.

the Determination of a National Literature" and "Poetry as a Vehicle for Promoting National Consciousness and Development."[65] Flush with promise, it seems that culture became a symbolic refuge for the idea of the nation where the nation could not actualize itself in more than symbolic terms.

Government support is of course not a categorical good for artists, particularly in a context where social and professional identities are themselves a matter more of symbol than substance.[66] Yoking the value of art to the value of the nation, for instance, cultural policy can also reverse the value equation by cannibalizing the cultural capital writers manage to accrue through their own devices. As someone with extensive knowledge of the NCAC told me,

> The only way government supports writers is through occasional patronage after some writers have been recognized outside the country having won one award or the other. Government then steps in to share in the glamour and accolades and extends official courtesy to the writer in the spotlight.[67]

Patronage geared towards international recognition could be viewed as symbiotic—as judicious support of excellent writers who will boost Nigeria's reputation on the world stage. However, this manner of doing business speaks more vociferously to a cynical estimation of literature's value. Why not search out and fund writers internally? The government's interest in "outside"

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[65] The latter piece fixates on ways that four Nigerian poets, including Okigbo and Soyinka, champion Nigerian tradition against European influence. Isaac I. Elimimian, "Poetry as a Vehicle for Promoting National Consciousness and Development: The Example of Four Nigerian Poets," in *Oral and Written Poetry in African Literature Today*, ed. Eldred Durosimi Jones (London: James Currey, 1989); Damian U. Opata, "Epistemological Issues in the Determination of a National Literature: The Example of African Literature," in *Literature and National Consciousness*, ed. Ebele Eko, Julius Ogu, and Azubuike Iloeje (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1989). In a larger frame, we might consider this "golden age" as part of a global turn to culture as a vector for distinguishing commodities in an overcrowded marketplace. See Sarah Brouillette, "Unesco and the World-Literary System in Crisis," *AMODERN* 2015.

[66] It was during the years of Babangida and Abacha, for instance, fashionable to impersonate state personnel, such as the police, in order to extract wealth from fellow citizens. See Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria*, 283.

[67] Anon N-003, email interview by the author, 2015.

recognition indexes culture's involvement in the workings of a world system in which cultural capital accrues at the metropolitan centers. Why else rely on Western standards for cultural evaluation when government has the means to assert its own forms of valuation? Government's attempts to appropriate cultural capital for itself by association with internationally recognized writers suggests a principally extractive attitude towards creative labor.

## The Literature of Development

If government wishes to extract value from creative labor, to what ends might that labor value be mobilized? Add also to this situation that strategic, structural inequalities have been imposed on Nigeria by global capital only to be strategically reframed as a kind of "failure"—failure of development and failure of modernization. In this context, scholars have at various moments attempted to gauge the impact literature might have had on Africa's development, or how it might be operationalized in the future. In a presentation at the African Literature Association's 1998 conference, for example, Janis Mayes and Anne Adams offered their research on connections between "African Literature and Africa's Development." Or take the example of Ola Balogun writing on "Cultural Policies as an Instrument of External Image-Building." Writing in the mid-1980s in the context of a faltering national economy, Balogun attempts to assert the centrality of Nigerian culture (versus the economy) to the fate of the nation. He writes, "I…believe that the Nigerian crisis is as much a crisis of identity and of internal coherence and mobilization."[68] Even if the nation were to solve its economic woes, he suggests, national identity remains in crisis, its body incoherent and immobile. As a result, he argues, "The key to our future lies in imbuing our people with a true perception of what Nigeria actually is and in

[68] Ola Balogun, "Cultural Policies as an Instrument of External Image-Building: A Blueprint for Nigeria," *Présence Africaine*, no. 133-134 (1985): 87.

mobilizing the citizenry for the tasks of nation-building on the basis of complete identification with the nation's historical and cultural heritage."[69] His focus, however, is also outward looking. Beyond the military, he says, "the prestige and sympathy that a country enjoys and the general perception that world opinion has of it are also of crucial importance in facilitating the achievement of its external policy goals."[70] For this scholar of policy in the 80s, at least, one solution to a national image problem is to support artists as national agents who can forge the image of the nation anew, which should then lead to internal coherence and international admiration.[71]

In the above example, Balogun begins his piece with an observation that Nigeria's "destiny" "intimately linked" to its "considerable economic potential." His rhetorical position on culture begins and, ultimately, ends with consideration of economic promise. The fact that a policy analyst would dare pursue this line of reasoning is itself striking. Implicit in his framing rhetoric is an idea that culture can help to boost the nation's symbolic fortunes, therefore its political fortunes—a perspective that reveals a number of interesting assumptions about the world system and how culture operates within it. Pointedly, it reveals the interpenetration by this stage of two ideas: 1) the neoliberal notion that power in any form—the power to build a nation, for example—can and must begin with capital and, further, 2) that anything, culture included, can be mobilized through the transmutations of capital for purposes of power.[72]

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[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 89-90.
[71] By contrast, John Marx has argued that "failed-state fiction" can be imagined as a reparative to political science discourse by imagining a world in which the "authority to describe atrocities" devolves to local experts rather than bureaucratic administrators John Marx, "Failed-State Fiction," *Contemporary Literature* 49, no. 4 (2008): 599.
[72] Balogun, "Cultural Policies as an Instrument of External Image-Building: A Blueprint for Nigeria," 86.

## Accounting for the Present

In the spring of 2015, in the midst of a heady run-up to a hotly contested federal election, I spent the months of February and March in and around Ibadan, speaking with poets, publishers, and policymakers. I chose Ibadan, specifically, as my primary research location because many of the literary giants of Nigeria took Ibadan as their starting place. Names like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Christopher Okigbo, and Molara Ogundipe will be familiar to many scholars of Anglophone literature. While the literary scene in Nigeria has significantly widened to encompass other university cities and, in particular, the capital city of Abuja, I wanted to see how a site of immense productivity had evolved in the twenty-first century. Ibadan remains a central hub of Nigerian literary activity, with particularly important connections to the literary scene in Lagos, Nigeria's financial and commercial center, and Abeokuta, which is Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka's hometown and hosts a major literary festival.[73] What I found were a number of innovative, ongoing efforts that embody crucial tensions and sites of innovation. In what follows, I draw on interviews with poets, publishers, and literary advocates that I conducted in and around Ibadan during three months of fieldwork during the spring of 2015, supplemented by email and phone follow-up conversations. I offer these accounts alongside historical and critical analysis in an attempt to show how the field of poetry in Nigeria became imbricated in the arrival of neoliberal logic in Nigerian civil society, and also to show how, and why, the resistance to allegory epitomizes that field's responsive poetic creativity and its engagement with the problem of (Nigerian) value.

One young poet to whom I spoke stands out. He is an ambitious young man, passionate about his craft, but uncertain about how best to cultivate it and to obtain an audience. He has

[73] The Ake festival, which was inaugurated in 2013, was held in Abeokuta until 2018, when it moved to Lagos.

written reams of poems that are sensitive, energetic, and suggestive of literary promise. The poems are also angry, fed up, working to find a way to express his disaffection with the social and political status quo in Nigeria. This young man believes unequivocally that poetry can save Nigeria, that it can change the shape of the social. The fact of his situation is this: Even if the poems were quite good, exceptionally good, even, it would be next to impossible for him to publish because he does not have the financial resources to self publish, and publishers tend to shy away from poetry in general because it doesn't make much money. Poets of an unknown quantity are at a special disadvantage and have recourse mostly to prize submissions.

At another moment, sitting across from a young student of philosophy at a University of Ibadan watering hole, I found myself filled with consternation to hear an anthropology graduate student speaking about "African epistemology" as a distinctively African way of knowing, as opposed to the epistemology of the Global North, for example. I balked at the idea, because I had been trained to notice anything resembling an essentialism. But there were two key points I overlooked in that moment. In the first place, my interlocutor was an anthropologist and was thinking of highly localized ways of knowing. And in the second place—this is the more important observation—it turns out that the prejudice against essence, or what we might read as essentialism, cuts against the grain of desire oftentimes in the formation of identity amongst immiserated or otherwise disenfranchised populations. To own one's episteme is to own the basis for asserting power, difference, and, ultimately, value. Moreover, the question of essence is itself a matter of standpoint. To what extent does the African scholar essentialize when speaking of Africa, when that scholar is more specifically an Igbo man living in Yorubaland?

The problem of value, that is to say, thinking from the aspiring poet to the graduate scholar, is a social problem, a problem of power, a problem of standpoint, and a problem of

knowledge and what counts as knowledge. Value is not recognized except by consensus. When it comes to value, even conflict is a form of consensus. Value is necessarily a dialogic function, because the things I hold most valuable to myself are only valuable inasmuch as they admit of being either extinguished or traded away. Even that thing we call intrinsic value is not strictly intrinsic or self-sufficient. Value is, in the end, an action rather than a denotation or description. This is true not only of economic values, but also of social values more generally.

After my fieldwork was complete, and I was starting to assimilate my research, it was brought to my attention at a conference in which I presented preliminary material from this chapter that there might not, in fact, be identifiable "Western regimes of value," or that this way of thinking might not be entirely useful, because even the values operative in Nigerian society, for example, are shot through with Western influences. And even where Western values are most conspicuous, they are shot through with Nigerianness.[74]

A striking amount of the poetry that has emerged from Nigeria the last hundred years works to deal with the problem of Nigerian identity and Nigerian values, and the poems remain strikingly aware of their embeddedness in a complex of values that are thrust upon them. The specific expectations around genre that have emerged strike me as especially salient. Values and genre expectations are thrust upon any art genre, and they intersect with expectations around use value, or lack of it, and around less discernible feelings regarding intrinsic value, which itself takes various forms. In an interview I conducted with a young, aspiring poet, I encountered a desire for poetry to heal ruptured communities and engender common values—an almost

[74] We might also observe, with Sean Meighoo, that even the notion of the "West" as a category that coheres an intellectual tradition is a kind of exercise in ethnocentrism and, in the end, a faulty category shot through with "innumerable points of contact with other intellectual traditions." Sean Meighoo, *The End of the West and Other Cautionary Tales* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), xii.

soteriological expression of purpose attached to the form.[75] From someone a few years older, this desire has become a question, as Dami Ajayi formulates it, "For [poetry] to be used as a social tool, it would mean that it would be accepted by the populace. In a society where you have many people that cannot read or write, how is that possible?"[76] For someone even more seasoned, that awareness has become history that persists in the present as a desire to improve things through the power of the form. As one established poet who wishes to remain anonymous said to me,

> This may sound abstract, but I can't think of any definitive or simple way really of describing what we call poetry. I guess we just recognize it when we see or hear it, without really being able to define it in any accurate way…But it is precisely because of [the] possible impact that it is capable of that poetry is always being exploited for all kinds of ends—religious, political, sexual, commercial, all sorts of ends. […] Advertisers use 'poetry' to drug us to consume things we do not need, to develop habits that serve no other purpose than to drain our wallets. Religious zealots employ it to convert us to some creed and, in Nigeria, to gorge themselves silly and live in wanton opulence at our gullible expense. […] I think therefore, in these circumstances, it would be legitimate to demand of poets who are conscious of the danger of these things to write poetry deliberately to counter them. For me therefore, that is the kind of poetry I love to read and write—the poetry that recognizes and celebrates simple humane values such as love and beauty, courage and compassion; the poetry that responds to the rhythms of nature, to myth and fantasy, to melody, healing and harmony.[77]

So here, from the side of practitioners who are early-career, newly established and well established, we see varying hopes and understandings of what poetry might do. This of course varies considerably from person to person, but there is an extent to which these perspectives do index themes around the form that I observed emerging from my conversations across a spectrum of writers. The differences that emerged had largely to do with the mechanisms for projecting the poetic voice into the world—the expectations around book publishing, online

[75] Anon. N-001, interview by the author at Ibadan, Nigeria, 2015
[76] Dami Ajayi, interview by the author at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 2015.
[77] Anon. N-002, email interview by the author, 2015.

distribution, and community readership, for example.

On the side of government, what kind of a reflection of social values is the policy of a presumably democratic republic, nevermind the matter and rhetoric of corruption so rife within the Nigerian political scene and in everyday life within the country? Or perhaps we should return to this matter of African epistemology. Perhaps, for example, the widely reported issue of official corruption isn't precisely corruption at all. Corruption assumes an uncorrupted standpoint. What does it mean for a nation, for instance, to take rent from multinational oil corporations, then to "disappear" that money under pretenses of aboveboard, Western-style modern political and economic institutions?[78] How are we to understand the (often tribal) networks that enable such "corruption" to take place? This tension of value—between values that arise from local social formations and values imposed from outside by federal and foreign actors—is a microcosm of the postcolonial condition and one key problematic for several generations of Nigerian writers. It is the inheritance into which they and their poems have been born.

## Nigerian Poetry as Creative Venture

Critics of Anglophone Nigerian poetry tend to employ a generational model of literary history. The trajectory begins with the anti-colonial, Euromodernist generation of Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, moves up through the Marxist-populist, independence generation of Niyi Osundare and Tanure Ojaide, then lands on the more aesthetically diverse third generation of Toyin Adewale-Gabriel and Afam Akeh. While critics who employ the generational model

[78] For a scholarly overview of the scale of corruption in the Nigerian oil and gas industry, see P.A. Donwa, C.O. Mgbame, and O.L. Ogbeide, "Corruption in the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry and Implication for Economic Growth," *International Journal of African and Asian Studies* 14 (2015). And for a deeply insightful, multidimensional study of corruption in Nigeria, see Daniel Jordan Smith, *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), especially 224-31.

are often quick to note its limitations, the model has proven broadly attractive because it enables both synchronic and diachronic forms of analysis.[79] More importantly to my assessment, the generational model tacitly joins Nigeria's political and economic history to the complex of Anglophone Nigerian poetry that drives production and reception of the poems.[80]

Though poetry earns little money, it is highly prized as a cultural good. According to the 2013 winner of the Nigeria Prize for Literature, Tade Ipadeola, "You don't have a higher cultural product than poetry."[81] This contradiction between economic and cultural capital introduces a problem of value, because while poetry yields high dividends in the market for cultural prestige—a market that sociologist Pierre Bourdieu calls the field of restricted production—the production and distribution of poems cannot operate on prestige alone.[82] The fact that professional poets must meet basic needs considerably blurs the distinction between art and commerce. Thinking of writers' needs as well as those of publishing corporations and distribution companies, Charles Larson notes, "Issues of language and audience, while major determinants in the ultimate success of African writers, are not nearly as influential as economics."[83] This layered paradox of value, or what I am calling the problem of value for Nigerian poetry, has led poets to explore the relationship between cultural and cash value through their poems as well as to engage pragmatically in what Sarah Brouillette describes as a dialectic between markets dealing in

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[79] Harry Garuba acknowledges the use of generations as a category of convenience, though he ultimately defends its use. Harry Garuba, "The Unbearable Lightness of Being: Re-Figuring Trends in Recent Nigerian Poetry," *English in Africa* 43, no. 1 (2005). For a somewhat more detailed accounting, see Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton, "Nigeria's Third Generation Writing: Historiography and Preliminary Theoretical Considerations," ibid. 32.

[80] I take the term "complex" from Wendy Griswold who uses it define a unit "made up of poorly integrated parts, of markets and organizations that are simultaneously global and parochial, with people entering and exiting all the time. They are not 'a world' but they are subject to a 'world culture'." Griswold, *Bearing Witness : Readers, Writers, and the Novel in Nigeria*, 29.

[81] Tade Ipadeola, interview by the author at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 2015

[82] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (London: Polity Press, 1993), 16-18.

[83] Charles R. Larson, *The Ordeal of the African Writer* (London: Zed Books, 2001), 44.

symbolic capital, on the one hand, and financial capital, on the other.[84]

However, it should be obvious enough that Africa has not arrived late to the table of modernity. On the cultural level, as part of a world system where "literary relations of power are forms of political relations of power," Nigeria has been involved in a global network of capital and prestige managed by a metropolitan center that works assiduously to generate inequality at the periphery and maintain it.[85] Speaking to an African "publishing crisis" in 1995, for example, Malawian historian and novelist Paul Zeleza notes that African dependence on Western publishers "reflects the historical and contemporary relations of domination and dependency between Africa and the West."[86] In this way, the story of poetic generations in Nigeria includes the story of institutional histories and media developments and global capital—histories that have been significantly allied to the financial life of the nation and to processes that produce inequality. We might therefore view the struggle to write and disseminate poetry in Nigeria with a view to the complex of individuals, institutions, and competing value formations that struggle to articulate cultural identity, national being, literary prestige, and civic responsibility as well as with regard to poetic attempts to embody those qualities through aesthetic formations.

My core argument, in this regard, is that Nigerian poets have leveraged their position at the periphery of the world system to develop creative, networked responses to the persistent reproduction of inequality under capitalist domination, responses for which literary scholars and theorists have largely failed to account. These cultural entrepreneurs are, as Fredric Jameson puts

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[84] Brouillette, *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace*, 3-4.

[85] Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 81. This line of thinking has been elaborated with significant theoretical complexity in recent work by scholars of the Warwick Research Collective (WReC). I work here to continue their model into the art world of Nigerian poetry while also attending more closely to the particular individuals and organizations that animate the complex of Nigerian literature. WReC, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015).

[86] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Noma Award Acceptance Speech," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 23, no. 1 (1995): 7.

it, "locked in a life-or-death struggle with first-world cultural imperialism—a cultural struggle that is itself a reflection of the economic situation."[87]

Jameson's often misunderstood essay, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," theorizes the macro-level dynamics of this life-or-death cultural struggle in order to explain how first-world readers are led to interpret third-world texts as national allegories, particularly in the case of the novel. Novels written by third-world writers come before first-world readers, Jameson argues, as though "already-read" by a better-informed Other reader.[88] That reader is Other because he has not gone through the ideological crucible of first-world capitalism, which for Jameson entails the fracturing of identity and economy, poetry and politics, the private and the public. By joining these categories that were latterly riven in the mind of the first-world reader, third-world texts can be made coherent for the first-world reader only through the figure of national allegory. In other words, for the first-world reader, the third-world body can only ever be the body politic.

The lyric has long intertwined the personal and political, and West African poetry only amplifies the political as topos of poetic creativity.[89] Nigerian poets in particular lay claim to civic responsibility with striking regularity, and the figure of the poet in Nigerian criticism and in the popular imaginary often signifies as public and political. The poet, dramatist, novelist, essayist, and Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, for instance, has been actively involved in the political life of the nation through grassroots activism, a post on the Federal Road Safety Corps, and direct

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[87] Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (1986): 68.
[88] Ibid., 66.
[89] In the modern West, for example, consider the political lyrics of Romantic poets like Wordsworth and Shelley, the documentary poems of Muriel Rukeyeser, the poems of the British poetry revival, or more recent interventions by writers such as Solmaz Sharif (*Look*, 2016) and Daljit Nagra (*Look We Have Coming To Dover!*, 2007).

engagement with elected officials. Having suffered imprisonment and then exile, he once asserted, "in the modern African state especially, the position of the writer has been such that he is, in fact, the very prop of state machinery." For Soyinka, the only way to remediate this structural relationship is to bend "every mental resource" towards "unique reflection."[90] The writer props up the state, but he should be savvy enough to tilt the machine in the right direction or, if necessary, allow it to fall.

We might productively acknowledge two literary fields in Nigeria that contribute to the publication of Anglophone poetry. There is the field that gains access to Western media and publishing, but there is also an insurgent and fragmented field that forms the primary mode of production, and perhaps consumption, of poetry within the country. This latter, grassroots, fragmentary field of production remains semi-autonomous from the world literary complex. To illustrate at the most visible level, fiction in English is the commercial king in Nigeria. However, the primacy of the Nigerian novel domestically and on the global stage is particularly interesting in that, as Adesanmi and Dunton note, the early 2000s saw a significant generic shift in Nigerian letters towards poetry rather than away.[91] This shift suggests a hidden desire for poetry—hidden because it is out of view from the perspective of the global North for reasons I will explain in relationship to the readerly insistence on national allegory as a mode of interpretation for African texts. This desire for poetry is a desire for which a centralized world republic of letters cannot account because it circulates in a literary complex where standards for excellence evolve semi-autonomously from the metropolitan center. A prime example of the two-fields model I am

[90] Wole Soyinka, "The Writer in an African State," *Transition* 31 (1967): 11.
[91] Adesanmi and Dunton, "Nigeria's Third Generation Writing: Historiography and Preliminary Theoretical Considerations," 10.

proposing: Relatively few people are aware that the celebrated novelist, Chinua Achebe, was also a poet and that he published poems in his native Igbo. One of those poems, "Okigbo's Funeral House," published in Igbo in 1978, is an elegy for the soldier and poet, Christopher Okigbo, who was killed during the Nigerian civil war.[92]

## CCF Overview[93]

Artists in Nigeria have been negotiating complex, interventionist cultural currents from the arrival of the Europeans onward. In one particular instance, Nigeria found itself very much caught between the United States and USSR during the years of the Cold War. As early as 1950, in response to Soviet efforts at cultural diplomacy, the US government began secretly injecting significant monetary and human resources into an organization that was founded about a decade before, and which was eventually named the Congress for Cultural Freedom.[94] The Congress was funded and administered in its early stages by the US Office of Policy Coordination—a covert agency that was handed to the CIA in 1951. From 1951 to 1970, the CIA channeled roughly $1m per year into the Congress's coffers under the direction of the Office of International Programs, routing the money through front organizations, such as the Farfield Foundation, as well as through more established entities such as the Ford Foundation.[95] Why

[92] Original and translation can be found in Chukwuma Azuonye, "Achebe's Igbo Poems: Oral Traditional Resources and the Process of 'Deschooling' in Modern African Poetics," University of Massachusetts Boston, http://scholarworks.umb.edu/africana_faculty_pubs/4.
[93] In 1939, American intellectuals John Dewey and Sidney Hook founded the Committee for Cultural Freedom as a way to oppose Stalinism and the American Popular Front. The organization's name was changed in 1949 to "Americans for Intellectual Freedom" as it became increasingly involved in the cultural fray that was unfolding on the American political left. Policymakers in Washington eventually took notice of the cultural battleground.
[94] Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The C.I.A. And the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 2013), 1.
[95] Saunders' estimate.

covert funding? According to the CIA's redacted historical documentation, "American occupation authorities in Germany probably knew that the proposed conclave would have little credibility among European intellectuals if it were obviously sponsored by the US Government."[96] What was at stake was cultural legitimacy, which US tax dollars would have sullied in the minds of left-leaning European intellectuals.

The organization had an activist bent from the beginning. At one of the initial meetings, Michael Karpovich—a Russian-American professor of Slavic studies with close ties to American diplomatic circles—asserted, "The defense of cultural freedom is not a purely negative thing...We should not be afraid of propaganda…If it is a propaganda of truth it is something distinct from a propaganda of lies."[97] Later at the same meeting, James Burnham—a radical American intellectual—commented, "Frankly, if we are not in the business of making propaganda I don't know why we are in this organization."[98]

One of the founding members of the CCF, Melvin Lasky, who worked for the American occupation government in Germany and edited the journal *Der Monat*, described the Congress as the work of "poets and scientists, philosophers and journalists, socialists and conservatives, churchmen and trade-unionists, painters and publishers—to join together *freely*, to discuss, to criticize, to formulate an independent program for the defense of their common *democratic*

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[96] CIA, "Origins of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1949-50," https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/95unclass/Warner.html.

[97] International Association for Cultural Freedom. Records, Box 56, Folder 7, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. This history has been well covered by a number of scholars. See Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The C.I.A. And the World of Arts and Letters*; Rubin, *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War*; Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the Cia, and Post-War American Hegemony* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Luc von Dongen, Stéphanie Roulin, and Giles Scott-Smith, eds., *Transnational Anti-Communism and the Cold War: Agents, Activities, and Networks* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[98] International Association for Cultural Freedom. Records, Box 56, Folder 7, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. Burnham was a radical Trotskyist in his early years, but turned to conservative activism in his later years. He is, most famously, the author of *The Managerial Revolution*.

ideal."[99]

Is it possible to square freedom, democracy, and cultural imperialism? How can we imagine freedom alongside the desire to deploy what the CCF describes as "intellectual 'shock troops' of free culture"?[100] During the next decade and a half, the CCF would collaborate with and materially support a staggering number of artists and intellectuals around the world, all unwitting benefactors of the US taxpayer.[101] CCF leaders embarked on these efforts to counter the communist scare, to influence the American left, and to shape international culture using what Frances Stonor Saunders calls "cultural weapons"—little magazines, conferences, community centers, artworks, and scholarly works.[102]

## Mbari and the CIA

So what does this have to do with Nigeria? One of the CCF's more successful ventures involved a cluster of publications and arts collectives in Ibadan called Mbari. CIA funds routed through the Farfield foundation were deeply involved in the development of the Mbari Club, located near Dugbe, as well as Mbari publishing, *Black Orpheus* magazine, and two other satellite arts clubs. Together, Mbari and the CIA co-constitute a complex story in which writers and organizational leaders negotiated issues of autonomy, authenticity, and cultural identity.[103]

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[99] Quoted in Greg Barnhisel, "*Encounter* Magazine and the Twilight of Modernism," *ELH* 81, no. 1 (2014): 388, my emphasis.

[100] International Association for Cultural Freedom. Records, Box 56, Folder 9, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

[101] TS Eliot, WH Auden, Stephen Spender, Kingsley Amis, Archibald Macleish, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Czeslaw Milosz, Joseph Brodsky, Gabriel Okara, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and JP Clark. All are mentioned substantively in the IACF papers.

[102] Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The C.I.A. And the World of Arts and Letters*, 2.

[103] Andrew Rubin's *Archives of Authority* and articles by Peter Kalliney and Nathan Suhr-Sytsma have worked out much of this cultural history and have developed compelling arguments about the stakes of this sort of intervention. See Rubin, *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War*; Peter Kalliney, "Modernism, African Literature, and the Cold War," *Modern Language Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2015); Nathan Suhr-Sytsma, "Ibadan Modernism: Poetry and the Literary Present in Mid-Century Nigeria," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 48, no. 41 (2013). For a thoroughgoing examination of Mbari publications in Ibadan and London that dovetails with this analysis, see

When analyzing institutions, it can be instructive to look at gatekeepers. These figures offer a fascinating way to understand the values that an organization tends to uphold. For instance, Langston Hughes and Chinua Achebe were both judges for CCF-affiliated literary prizes, lending very particular stamps of approval to specific CCF initiatives.

Langston Hughes was involved with Mbari's poetry prize program in 1962.[104] As judge, he was not supported by CIA funds, but he served as an unwitting gatekeeper for those funds, as well as a powerful donor of prestige to the poet who won the prize (the winning poet got cash as well as cultural prestige). The funds were small, but the prestige was significant, highlighting poetry's ability to accomplish much struggle with relatively little money. Such has always been the case. Hughes ended up choosing a poet named Michael Echeruo.[105] In his letter of acceptance, Echeruo says he views the prize as "a double bait." "The cash prize is one," he says, while "[t]he other is the encouragement this recognition gives me to try to say something about myself, to communicate myself to others. What I have to say is, I know, very private to myself. I am also encouraged to know that, in spite of that fact, it is worth saying."[106]

We can connect this sentiment of inwardness and self-expression to Hughes's own poetry, which, though most directly focused on the American context, also leads us to broader, geopolitical concerns. In Hughes's 1949 poem, "Democracy," he writes,

> Democracy will not come
> Today, this year
> Nor ever
> Through compromise and fear.

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*Poetry, Print, and the Making of Postcolonial Literature*, 60-74.

[104] James Baldwin was also considered for the post. International Association for Cultural Freedom. Records, Box 70, Folder 1, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

[105] For his part, Echeruo was a scholar as well as a poet, and, in his acceptance letter, he writes of "a friend of mine" who has just published his *Heavengate*. That friend is Christopher Okigbo. IACF Papers, Echeruo to Mphahlele.

[106] International Association for Cultural Freedom. Records, Box 70, Folder 1, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

[…]

Freedom
Is a strong seed
Planted
In a great need.

I live here, too.
I want freedom
Just as you.[107]

In 1949, the same year as that poem, Chairman Mao came to power, launching the Peoples Republic of China and precipitating the events that would lead to the Cold War. Against this backdrop, Hughes's poem subtly cuts to the core of what would become a national rallying cry and the mission of the CCF—"freedom." Using ballad rhyme and masterful form, Hughes confirms our worst fears: Democracy will not come. But then the second line opens the door slightly. Democracy will not come today, this year. Perhaps, though, democracy will come next year. But no, says the third line, democracy will never come, and then the fourth line offers that crucial qualifier: democracy will never come through compromise and fear. The poem opens a negative space—a space of nonknowledge, if you will—in which certain values must be inferred—values like intransigence, as opposed to compromise, and hope, as opposed to fear. After affirming his rights in the second stanza, Hughes's speaker moves into social commentary. He laments,

I tire so of hearing people say,
Let things take their course.
Tomorrow is another day.
I do not need my freedom when I'm dead.
I cannot live on tomorrow's bread.

[107] Langston Hughes, *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 285.

We understand the flat practicality of hunger and need. Bread tomorrow is of no use if we starve today. But this logic also reflects and critiques fiscal problems that were current at the national level during the late 40s.

As reported in the June 16, 1949 *Chicago Tribune*, the US was deeply in debt, with a fiscal deficit set to double that year. There was a looming threat of a substantial tax increase to keep the government afloat.[108] So the line, "I cannot live on tomorrow's bread," exposes fiscal problems that range from the particular problem of an individual without bread to the fiscal policy of the nation. Emphasizing agency and freedom, Hughes's poem implicitly, in terms of his standing as a man of *American* letters acting in a Nigerian context, invokes the bread of democracy over and against the spectre of American racism, but also, perhaps, against communism and the continued blight of colonial imperialism. From a Nigerian standpoint, he highlights misaligned fiscal values as well as misaligned cultural values, especially those surrounding race. While a despairing poem, in one sense, the poem also opens up new ways of thinking about value by deploying powerful linguistic structures that ask readers to see democracy in a new light. The couplet, "I do not need my freedom when I'm dead. / I cannot live on tomorrow's bread," is blunted at the end by the introduction of an anapestic foot. This startling bluntness enables the poem to forcefully register the precarity of life, and it demonstrates how poetic expression might powerfully embody complex social issues without retreating into a space of aesthetic isolation.

For poets of the Mbari generation, Hughes stood as a champion of blackness, albeit American blackness, in a new era of global communication. We might imagine Mbari selecting

[108] "U.S. Deficit May Reach 1.5 Billions," *Chicago Tribune* 1949.

him as a judge based simply on his standing as a black man of letters with an international reputation—someone with cultural power, sacralized by literary institutions at the metropolitan center in the global North.[109] In Nigeria, Mbari writers would have read his work in the *West African Pilot*, a newspaper that one critic has claimed as an important "link between literature and modernizing nationalism in Nigeria."[110] Hughes's voice and cultural presence, socially aware and formally masterful, conveyed democratic values with cultural power, mediated for the Mbari group by print institutions and the CCF in a complex network of cultural imperialism.

However, Mbari was not a credulous pawn, and it did not always accept explicit direction. The CCF encountered significant resistance at Mbari due to the immense energy and enterprising creativity of Wole Soyinka, JP Clark, and Christopher Okigbo, in particular. For instance, the head of Mbari, Ulli Beier, at one point wrote to the CCF's Michael Josselson, who was principally responsible for the CIA's involvement. Beier says,

> …I persuaded Congress to start [Mbari]...MBARI is a very difficult place to manipulate…To be perfectly honest : sometimes I feel it would be better to drop MBARI as MBARI and support […] Soyinka <u>independently and separately</u> instead.[111]

That letter also characterizes Okigbo and Clark as difficult cases. In this context of such attempts at institutional influence, and partly as a result of them, Okigbo, Clark, and Soyinka, through Mbari, found a wide international readership and negotiated their own senses of creative agency.

Indexing some of this difficulty in an elegy for Okigbo, Chinua Achebe writes,

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[109] Mphahlele referred to him in a letter as a "big name," for example. International Association for Cultural Freedom. Records, Box 70, Folder 1, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
[110] He also appeared in an issue of Black Orpheus. See Nathan Suhr-Sytsma, "Christopher Okigbo, Print, and the Poetry of Postcolonial Modernity," *Research in African Literatures* 43, no. 2 (2012); Sam O. Idemili, "What the *West African Pilot* Did in the Movement for Nigerian Nationalism between 1937 and 1957," *Black American Literature Forum* 12, no. 3 (1978): 45.
[111] International Association for Cultural Freedom. Records, Box 70, Folder 2, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

> Has he gone to the market, then keep from him you
> Tumult of the marketplace!
> […]
> Owner of riches in the dwelling place of spirit
> Okigbo is the one I am calling![112]

While the marketplace for literature was necessary to the dissemination of Okigbo's work, Achebe's elegy locates Okigbo's value in the "dwelling place of spirit" rather than in the market; but the poem also recognizes the ambivalent, compromised position that the poet occupied, crying out against the "tumult of the marketplace," knowing that the marketplace, as well as public institutions, influences readers' sense of the poet's legacy and their exposure to his work. And of course, hovering ever in the background is the spectre of the Biafran war. For Achebe, the fact that Okigbo was killed in battle during the war means that commemoration can never be straightforward. To protect Okigbo from the tumult of the marketplace is to protect him from many of the public forces that drove him to an early grave, while at the same time giving him a foundation of value that transcends the work of everyday exchange.

Notwithstanding these circuits of influence, the Mbari poets did not hesitate to act independently. J.P. Clark, for instance, stirred the pot by doubling up on royalties with UK publishers, publishing in both Ibadan and London. This enterprising creativity suggests an extent to which poets could enact practical agency to obtain financial support, unwittingly benefitting from the support of the CIA while also striking out on their own.

Interestingly, when we look at Clark's poems, we see significant, large-scale meditations on social values that intersect with fiscal concerns. In "The Casualties," writing about the civil war, Clark writes,

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[112] Azuonye, "Achebe's Igbo Poems: Oral Traditional Resources and the Process of 'Deschooling' in Modern African Poetics," unpaginated.

> The drums overwhelm the guns…
> Caught in the clash of counter claims and charges
> When not in the niche others left,
> We fall,
> All casualties of the war,
> Because we cannot hear each other speak,
> Because eyes have ceased to see the face from the crowd.[113]

The poem imagines guns dominated by the talk of the drum and the figure of the poet, but the poet, in the context of the poem, is not a benign figure. Rather, he is "smug in smoke-rooms…abroad" and does not "see the funeral piles / at home." Notably, Clark has dedicated this poem to Chinua Achebe and implicitly indicts him, and those like him, who watch the war unfold from abroad, as "wandering minstrels" who "draw the world / into a dance with rites it does not know." For Clark, the drumming of poets like Achebe, who would ostensibly make the Nigerian experience available to the international community, ultimately mis-represents the facts on the ground; Achebe and his ilk drown out speech, rendering the poem's (Nigerian) subjects unable to express themselves through language. Evoking the trauma of war, the poem suggests that the battle for signification, as well as the actual battles, overwhelms the senses while also turning them to violence. In a double movement, the eyes "ceased to see the face," suggesting an inability to look as well as the violence of killing. I eye you through my sights, the speaker seems to say, and this has changed us. He says,

> …we are characters now other than before
>
> The war began, the stay-at-home unsettled
>
> By taxes and rumours, the looters for office
> And wares, fearful every day the owners may return,
> We are all casualties…

[113] J.P. Clark-Bekederemo, *Collected Poems, 1958-1988* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1991), 57-8.

Before all of this, the speaker suggests, we weren't worried about sudden death. We were unsettled "By taxes and rumours." But now taxation has exceeded itself. The tax is now the threat of death, the ultimate tax and the most extreme repayment of the social debt. And of course, taxes fund wars. So, in a double indictment, Clark chastises looters for office, both the officials who loot the government coffers and the people who loot the officials' offices. And in this sad state, the poem intones, "We are all casualties." Given the present tense, the "we" are walking casualties, already dead.

Elsewhere, in a less somber register, Clark continues similar concerns. His "Ibadan," perhaps his most famous poem, is a local poem that describes Ibadan and surrounds. He writes,

> Ibadan,
> running splash of rust
> and gold – flung and scattered
> among seven hills like broken
> china in the sun.[114]

In a poem of wonderful sonic sensitivity, we see an expression of value via figures of affluence: gold and china. The incorruptible, shiny surface of gold is emphasized through juxtaposition with rust, and it isn't stored safely in a central location; it is flung and scattered / among seven hills. In Ibadan, gold might embody value, but rust colors are primary, characterizing the color of Ibadan's rooftops and the soil. A running splash of rust and gold punctuates the seven hills, retreating away into the distance. These lines also make striking use of enjambment, running rust surprisingly into gold. Then the poem contains the juxtaposition of rust and gold and inspects it with a simile: "like broken / china in the sun." The contrast is aided by the enjambment of "broken" and "china," toying with our sense of what might be broken and why. China evokes

[114] Ibid., 14.

wealth or former wealth. Broken china, thrown outside, suggests looting or violence. These figures of value, closely linked to monetary value, invite us to consider the city as a site of wealth, beauty and precarity. As in the previous poem, in which taxes and war arrive side by side, wealth arrives alongside destruction, suggesting not so much regeneration or the dialectic of capital, but rather the persistence of multiple values that are informed and challenged by the logic of monetary exchange. After all, taxation precedes war, fuels it, and will persist beyond it. Taxes also reflect something of the mundane, everyday reality lived by those, such as Achebe, or even Clark himself, who was not on the front lines in Biafra. Like "The Casualties," then, this is not a poem that seeks or attains aesthetic autonomy, though it does interject new forms of thinking about value into the view that would pit art and commerce against one another. Rather, this is a poem that finds itself deeply and creatively enmeshed in economic as well as cultural capital, and it is responsive to both, from Mbari's CIA dollars to the Nigerian education system that now teaches Clark's poem to children.[115]

# Poetry and Peripheries

## The Failure of Allegory

At the same time that these geopolitical forces were worming their way into Nigerian everyday life and into Mbari's differentiated spaces of aesthetic production, political currents within the country were helping to shape new directions in the critical discourse around poetry. A pivotal moment came with the publication of *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, which assembled a collection of essays, many published in the 1970s, as a riposte to

[115] The poem is, in fact, taught as part of the secondary school curriculum.

the Mbari generation, and those who came before them. These essays accused Mbari and others of aesthetic collusion with the colonizers.[116] In the heady rush of decolonization, these writers would have been tossed out with the bathwater and were, indeed, brushed aside by some in the Nigerian intelligentsia with the rise of other, "alter-native" attempts to reinvigorate an African aesthetics as dialectical foil to the influences of European modernism. However, the fact that Soyinka, in particular, was so thoroughly celebrated by the West meant that his cultural capital was not so easily brushed aside. Who can forget phrases such as, "A tiger does not proclaim his tigritude…"?[117] To a significant extent, Soyinka's stature—part force of personality part savvy marketing and mobilization of social and cultural capital—enabled him to act above the political fray, even during the harrowing years of Sani Abacha's dictatorship, when there was a price on Soyinka's head.

Given Soyinka's international success, the writers who wrote in his wake—younger poets like Femi Osofisan, Niyi Osundare—certainly had cause to aspire to distinction in the world of International and Nigerian letters; but they injected a new political urgency that was less euromodernist-tribalistic and more directly critical of establishment norms. This aesthetic has continued in writers like Remi Raji and Wumi Raji.

Critic and poet Harry Garuba has described the more recent generation of Nigerian poets as embracing an incredible "lightness of being"—a willingness to embrace multiplicity in the realms of identity and being.[118] The poems, he finds, often embody and domesticate ideas of fragmentation, but in a less esoteric fashion than that of Okigbo and Soyinka. This is a literary

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[116] Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie, and Ihechukwu Mabuduike, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1980).
[117] Soyinka recalls this in Wole Soyinka, "On the Trail of Transition," *Transition* (1997): 416.
[118] Garuba, "The Unbearable Lightness of Being: Re-Figuring Trends in Recent Nigerian Poetry," 65-6.

aesthetic with less ambition to direct, political impact or international perception management. That is, these poems and poets, to generalize, are engaged less in the attempt to enter into the republic of Western letters than in an attempt to craft something like African cultural solidarity. They step away from the solidarities of nationalism and towards a solidarity that works to remediate black bodies—reappropriating the figure of the African body through the localized imprint of black ink—and evoke African experiences with the simultaneous attention to the small and to the intimate detail that poetry accomplishes so well.

One of experimental writing's great social strengths is its capacity to interrupt business as usual within dominant social structures and patterns of thought. Thinking through this issue in an essay on lyric poetry and society, Adorno suggests that we might read the genre of lyric as a canary in the gold mine of capital which exposes the bourgeois demand for purely individuated agency as an impossible fiction.[119] In a more recent study, Christopher Nealon argues that if we pay attention to the materiality of form in American poems, we can see a pattern in which poets take up (and take on) the topic of capital.[120] Poets use the materials of language to foreground poetry's ability to interrupt commonplace processes of meaning-making—to engender productive decouplings of form and content. Though they are writing at very different historical moments, both critics find that poems embody the ability to creatively interrupt totalizing social structures by exposing the ideas that preserve those structures.

Creativity also lies at the heart of the capitalist project, as Chinua Achebe and Sarah Brouillette both emphasize.[121] Some of the best Nigerian poetry apprehends this irony and bends

[119] Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society."
[120] Nealon, *The Matter of Capital: Poetry and Crisis in the American Century*, 1-2.
[121] Achebe, "What Has Literature Got to Do with It?."; Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*, 2-4.

it to profound, sometimes sardonic, poetic ends. Consider "Requiem," by Obynna Chylekezi:

> REQUIEM
> (for SAP & Co)
>
> TOMORROW:
> We shall all remember
> Many a thing with wetly laughter
> We shall recall
> The snake's poisonous
> Bite at the monetary forest.
>
> TOMORROW:
> Time shall tell tales of
> Foreign cowries
> Tossing up blinding dust
> Into our eyes
> I know
> We shall recollect
> When questions were without answers
> Why is it that we all are dying
> Before the promised recovery of market laughter
> Time shall tell of promises
> Unfulfilled at the river bank
> Losing our lives to live again
> Yet many have gone the ancestor's way
> And none, none has ever returned.[122]

We can read this "[b]ite at the monetary forest" as an elegiac crack at the Structural Adjustment Program that marched Nigeria's economy to ruin under the military government of Ibrahim Babangida.[123] Rife with images of "foreign cowries," "blinding dust," and "market laughter," the poem toys with the notion of return and the impossibility of redress of land or spirit. The

[122] GMT Emezue, ed. *New Voices: A Collection of Recent Nigerian Poetry* (Handel Books Limited, 2008), 77.
[123] The SAP was implemented beginning in 1986 following the oil boom of the 70s. Implementation focused on monetary and trade policy, agriculture, and manufacturing. When oil prices fell, the naira, which had been unhinged from the dollar, rapidly inflated as domestic agriculture and manufacturing failed to compensate for the loss of oil revenue.following the oil boom of the 70s. Implementation focused on monetary and trade policy, agriculture, and manufacturing. When oil prices fell, the naira, which had been unhinged from the dollar, rapidly inflated as domestic agriculture and manufacturing failed to compensate for the loss of oil revenue. For a general overview of SAP and its impacts, see Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 217-21.

alliterative leap between "monetary forest" and "monetary fund" does not require a great mental leap. Grounded in material and market realities, the poem emphasizes social critique and the history of national development as its interface between the worlds of politics and letters. The literary element is subtle, but very much present. "[M]arket laughter," for instance, alludes to Niyi Osundare's celebrated *Songs of the Marketplace*, and one might therefore view this poem as entering into a value transaction with the marketplace of literary prestige as well.

At this point, we are hardly reading for national allegory in the manner Jameson describes, given that the above poem explicitly engages with economic issues that confront Nigeria as a nation. But what happens when we turn our attention to a text that is less transparently about Nigeria—less engaged with nationness? Returning to Achebe's elegy for Okigbo, for example, one section reads,

> If he goes to fetch wood, may the woods
> not devour him
> If he goes to fetch water, may the stream
> not devour him
> If he goes to the market, may market noises
> not devour him
> If he goes to war, spirit-agemates, spare!
> It is Okigbo we're looking for
> *Nzomalizo*.[124]

As the translator, Azuonye, points out in a commentary, the Igbo oral poem on which this elegy was based includes a more interactive call-and-response structure than Achebe employs. Rather than using the Igbo pattern of strophe-antistrophe, Achebe's poem proceeds through a stanza-refrain pattern typical of the English ballad (though without its characteristic rhyme and meter). The stanzaic pattern enables greater compression, bringing figures like nature, the market, and

[124] Azuonye, "Achebe's Igbo Poems: Oral Traditional Resources and the Process of 'Deschooling' in Modern African Poetics" 3-4.

the battlefield into closer contact than in the original Igbo, exposing multiple sides of the deceased poet's personality through an exploration of the spaces he inhabited. Moreover, this type of Igbo poem would ordinarily be performed in the context of a procession through sites that the deceased had frequented, to root out any remnants of his spirit. In this commemoration of Okigbo, the dead poet's writerly engagement with nature through indigenous tropes comes together with his savvy as a man versed in the marketplace of letters (he was a skilled editor) as well as with his efforts as a soldier fighting and dying on the side of Biafra. Very little of this would be transparent to an uninformed reader of the global North. At the same time, one would be hard pressed to interpret this intimate and deeply situated text as national allegory, in the manner of Jameson. In its density and overdetermined specificity at the level of form and content, the poem forecloses any reasonable attempt to interpret it as allegory.

To echo my opening argument, by collapsing allegory's rupture between symbol and referent and through other creative maneuvers, Nigerian poets persistently open up the problem of value in spectacular ways, sometimes with explicit reference to the literary world system and its administrative dynamics. In 2002, Niyi Osundare published a new poem, "Letter from the Editor," that ventriloquizes newspaper editor:

> What does poetry have to do
> With those who rule us or those we rule
>
> With the whimsical temper of stocks and shares
> The cost of a ream of paper
> Or the price of bread in the marketplace…?
>
> Too strong your feelings; too sharp
> The thrust of your tropes
> We are a people tuned to tamer truths.[125]

[125] Niyi Osundare, *Pages from the Book of the Sun: New and Selected Poems* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002), 23.

The editor activates an idea of poetry that denies the genre's involvement in the world of politics and money. At the same time, his words ironically remind us that producing poetry requires attention to material demands like a ream of paper and bread as well as immaterial financial instruments like stocks and shares. In short, the editor seeks "tamer truths" in response to the failure of allegory that the form of the poem enacts.

## Poverty Poems

Sometimes the demand for allegory takes a specific shape. For a young writer like Dami Ajayi, for example, the matter of violence and precarity has become a problematic source of demand from the reading public—a perceived market niche that a poet can fill if he wishes to sell out. Ajayi calls this genre "poverty poems." He says, "For me I've always looked at, seen myself, as a writer who will not pander to that poverty poem market."[126] On his view, the tendency to dwell on suffering obviates the vast range of experiences that do not take suffering as their starting place. As he put it, "…even when there are problems in Africa, we are here drinking beer and having fun. People are elsewhere in clubs. People are doing well for themselves, raising kids…That's an important narrative—just as important as the suffering." Even though Ajayi perceives a ready market for poverty poems, he wants to speak to a fuller range of experiences, which leads him to speak out against tropes of suffering and to infuse his own poems with tropes of love, sex, and embodiment. The poverty poem market, I want to suggest, is a particular form of a general discursive construct called "afro-pessimism," which had reached a significant enough status within African studies that we can find in 2003 an edited volume entitled *Afro-Optimism.* In other words, afro-pessimism has generated its own reaction formation in scholarly discourse—

[126] Dami Ajayi, interviewed by the author at the University of Ibadan, 2015.

a reaction formation that Ajayi echoed. In the edited volume, for instance, scholar of African literature Abiola Irele notes the "rapid growth of local publishing houses" in Africa and a wealth of ambitious new writing, which leads him to venture, "There is thus a real sense in which it can be said that utopia is back with Africans."[127]

Less utopian than syncretic, in terms of his allusions and symbolic resources, Ajayi is perhaps more attuned to the banality of human suffering and its embodied qualities than many poets because he is a physician. His first book of poems, *Clinical Blues*, engages the reader through close attention to rhythm and by orchestrating a rich range of literary and cultural references. There is something of the blues, but also of the Black-Eyed Peas, T.S. Eliot, and Pablo Neruda. When I spoke with Ajayi after a reading, he mentioned that he wanted to get away from the erotic poems that have come to dominate his reputation as a poet, because he wants to write about "more serious" things. We can see this tension in the poems themselves. In "Meeting Me Halfway," for example, he writes,

> When I return to poetry
> And steady my wiry fingers
> On the stead of old masters,
> My thoughts will be fashioned
> Into love missiles, and like
> America I shall retaliate.[128]

In this instance, poetry marks a site of return—a place where one goes to encounter time-honored craft; and it is in this space of artistic fashioning that Ajayi joins love to violence and the intimate to the political through a metonymic slippage. Employing a classical trope, he equates the craft of poetry to the fashioning of Cupid's missiles, but in the following simile the missiles

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[127] Abiola F. Irele, "Artistic Creation in Post-Independence Africa," in *Afro-Optimism: Perspectives on Africa's Advances*, ed. Ebere Omwudiwe and Minabere Ibelema (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003), 49.
[128] Dami Ajayi, *Clinical Blues* (Ibadan: WriteHouse, 2014), 17.

switch registers. Rather than the bow-shot missiles of sexual desire, these are the rocket-propelled missiles of an international superpower. These are missiles armed with love, or perhaps they are fully armed missiles lovingly crafted. In either case, the stanza dramatizes the enmeshment of political and erotic subjectivities that should properly be understood as singular rather than plural.

At his best, Ajayi uses his life experience to join disparate disciplines and discursive formations as a means to express the difficult location of the poet within Nigerian culture. In the sequence that gives the volume its title, for example, Ajayi writes,

> Sing me a song
> Not from your larynx;
> Probe deep,
> Deeper into lungs
> The recesses of your soul.
>
> I am a lonesome observer,
> The clinical sentinel
> Who sits still to wage
> Wars against infirmities.[129]

The market for poverty poems is a particular expression of a broader desire, on the part of readers in the global North, for poetry of the global South to serve the dual functions of documentation and development. In these stanzas, Ajayi's speaker pushes through the body to access spirit, uses the clinician's diction to recuperate a soul while maintaining the status of "clinical sentinel," recalling the rhetoric of war that characterizes public discourse on medicine and public health.[130] This poem withdraws from documentation as well as development; it sits at the center of a desire for good medicine unalloyed with the expectations of international agencies and NGOs. "Sing

[129] Ibid., 42.
[130] One might be reminded of the effort to "eradicate" Ebola, which had thrown three West African nations into crisis during my fieldwork in 2015.

me a song," the speaker begs—a "lonesome observer," looking to suss out the song that emerges from sickness.

## Anthologies and the Value of Literariness

Poetry has the capacity to address our great social problems, to propose solutions, to engage bravely. But what can we reasonably expect of the genre? What can it do for Nigerians? Once we agree to think of the poem as literary (as worthy of including in an anthology of new Nigerian poetry, for example), the ideology of genre—the figure of poetry—attempts to push the idea of the poem inexorably into a realm of pure literariness. That done, we begin to apply new criteria of judgment and new categories of taste. The figure of poetry in this way arrives in the form of an enthymeme—a form of argument in which the initial term is taken for granted. The subterranean, initial term that helps to constitute the figure of poetry is that poetry's material poverty is a necessary precondition to its primary task, which is to embody intrinsic value. Intrinsic value is the sort of value that disregards, even disdains, any material or financial equivalent. It is simply valuable, in and of and even for itself. If the poem (and poetry) is intrinsically valuable, poetry will always exist, and perhaps the poet *should* be a little hungry. Rather than seek crass capital, he should strive to express truth and to make a lasting name for himself in the circle of tradition. On the one hand, this idea of poetry's autonomy is a powerful thing. However, as a poet once put it to me, you can't eat prestige.

Given this state of affairs, a dialectic emerges between the poet and the market in which poets need resources and see poems as limited forces for social change, while the market, which seeks to exploit labor and increase efficiency, resists overfeeding an art that is good in and of itself and has a habit of rising, phoenix-like, from economic ashes. As a result, poets seek out

other means of financing their art, which means public or private patronage. This can of course take many forms.

Among the older generation of poets who I interviewed, one prevailing concern was that they provide opportunities to advance the causes not only of their own work but of the material being produced by the up-and-coming generation of poets. For one such elder poet, the anthology proved a promising mechanism that did, in fact, make a splash in the prestige economy of Nigerian letters. Specifically, in 1998, poet, critic, and scholar Harry Garuba brought out the important *Voices from the Fringe* anthology. As explained to me by the poet, the volume's publication was made possible by the private largesse of a telecommunications executive. The volume also introduced a number of new voices in Nigerian letters, some of which have gone on to become canonical (e.g. Amu-Nnadi, Remi Raji, Afem Akeh, and others). In the introduction, Garuba writes,

> There is no doubt that there is a significant literary renaissance taking place all over this country, especially in the genre of poetry…The purpose of this anthology, simply stated, is to claim our literature for our own; to make available to the public the tremendous amount of creative activity going on, unrecognized and unclaimed within our borders.[131]

It was in large part Garuba's work with the Association of Nigerian Authors that enabled the project's vision and ambition. However, his vision remained very much unrealized without financial support.

Indeed, poetry nearly always requires some form of patronage. In Nigeria, as in the global North, fiction is the commercial king.[132] This primacy of the Nigerian novel extends to the

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[131] Harry Garuba, ed. *Voices from the Fringe: An Ana Anthology of New Nigerian Poetry* (Lagos: Malthouse Press, 1988), xv.

[132] A particularly successful example, Cassava Republic Press, for example, which was funded by private money, has unprecedentedly opened a U.K. office in recent years. Among their titles, the best-sellers are all fiction. See Bibi

global stage, which is particularly interesting in that, as Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton note, the early 2000s saw a significant generic shift in Nigerian letters *towards* poetry rather than away.[133] We see the massive successes of figures like Chinua Achebe, Helon Habila, Teju Cole, Chimamanda Adichie, and others. These successes are not to be lamented. But compare the international success of these novelists to that of poets such as Niyi Osundare, Femi Osofisan, Tanure Ojaide, Remi Raji, Harry Garuba, Toyin Adewale-Gabriel, Lola Shoneyin, Tade Ipadeola (and the list goes on). We're talking Goliath and David (though we need not be so combative).

Critics have productively problematized the nature of Nigeria's novelistic successes by employing such rich ideas as the extroverted novel—the novel rhetorically aimed at the Western audience rather than the African audience—and the cultural entrepreneur, an artist or artisan who strategizes to gain cultural affluence and, where possible, to transform cultural affluence into material security (this is a very neoliberal concept, but also, ironically, poetry's historic economic condition).[134] In interviewing poets, and in observing the nature of the poetry and the state of the literary field, it seems that this new Nigerian poetry is not written, in the main, to win accolades from the metropolitan arbiters of taste. The facts seem to agree. If we look at the poems, we also see a ranging, sometimes imposing, heteroglossia of African languages or pidgin and English,

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Bakare-Yusuf et al., "A Survey of Fourteen African Publishers," *Wasafiri* 31, no. 4 (2016): 13; Nathan Suhr-Sytsma, "The Extroverted African Novel and Literary Publishing in the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 30, no. 3 (2018).

[133] Adesanmi and Dunton, "Nigeria's Third Generation Writing: Historiography and Preliminary Theoretical Considerations."

[134] The notion of the extroverted African novel has its genesis in Eileen Julien's original formulation of the idea. It has since been critiqued and updated in the Journal of African Cultural Studies most notably by Nathan Suhr-Sytsma and Ashleigh Harris. Suhr-Sytsma, "The Extroverted African Novel and Literary Publishing in the Twenty-First Century."; Ashleigh Harris, "Plastic Form and the Extro- and Emergent Versions of Christopher Mlalazi's *Running with Mother*," ibid. I take the idea of the cultural entrepreneur from Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America," *Media, Culture and Society* 4 (1982).

which enables profound creativity while limiting access for a Western audience. The value of the locally published poetry anthology, therefore, is considerable. Not only does this sponsored text condense and sacralize a body of specifically African texts and writers who might leverage that textual presence for further cultural gain; it also somewhat extricates the anthologist from the vicissitudes of the global circulation of cultural prestige. In effect, it begins to generate a new market—a new republic of letters that might start to define its own criteria for excellence and valorization.

# Organizing Possibility

### Nigeria's Literary Prizes and their Origins

In assessing poetry's connection to the social, literary critics have tended to privilege structure—be it linguistic, social, ideological, or material—over agency.[135] However, the attempt to map a literary field without subjects elides the activity of cultural entrepreneurship that animates the field. This elision of subjectivity is almost nowhere as poorly understood as in poetry at the periphery of the world system—a theoretical configuration I want to hold open not to reinscribe it, but to explore the extent to which it reproduces itself and to note the extent to which it becomes thematic for Nigerian writers in their proximity to concerns of state.[136] In the

[135] Hoyt Long and Richard Jean So, "Turbulent Flow: A Computational Model of World Literature," *MLQ* 77, no. 3 (2016): 153.

[136] We might note a few important exceptions. At the anthropological level, for example, Karin Barber's *Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics* charts the constitution of texts within specific cultures and examines the ways in which particular genres help to shape social structures and individual identities. In a similar vein, albeit a more politicized one, scholarship on Cold War magazines in West Africa has attempted to form links between the form of the intellectual periodical and what Peter Benson calls "modern cultural awakening," which might also be read, with attention to the investment of Western institutions in the making of those magazines, as cultural imperialism remediated by artistic ingenuity. Karin Barber, *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics: Oral and Written Culture in Africa and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007); Peter Benson, *Black Orpheus, Transition and Modern Cultural Awakening in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Rubin, *Archives of*

remaining pages I outline some additional stakes of public patronage for the literary complex in Nigeria before describing a few ways in which Nigerian poets have enterprisingly negotiated the literary complex to influence production and reception, starting with the matter of literary prizes.

If direct, national patronage for literature has been lacking in Nigeria, indirect efforts have arrived in different forms over the years, some of the earliest running back to the colonial period. In the 1930s, the British in at least one instance used prizes to incentivize production of vernacular literatures in the Nigerian territories. In the North, the Zaria Literature Bureau, later the North Regional Literature Agency, sponsored a prize for prose writing in Hausa. While the effort in Zaria was deemed a failure in terms of the quality of the work, as Abba Sani notes, such efforts, which in later years were funded by the Colonial Development Office, helped to "widen the chasm between orature and the emerging written literature" and in so doing undermined precolonial forms of expression and the social structures they supported.[137] It also helped to consolidate Hausa as the "medium of internal colonization."[138]

It is against this repressive background that we can begin to consider the post-independence role of literary prizes in Nigeria. Rather than seeing a prize as the simple recognition of excellence within a particular set of strictures adjudicated by a particular audience of judges, we should see them as involved in a larger economy of cultural distinction that is also involved, financially and through the exchange of symbolic capital, in the "real world" of commerce and everyday life.[139]

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*Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War*; Kalliney, "Modernism, African Literature, and the Cold War."; Suhr-Sytsma, *Poetry, Print, and the Making of Postcolonial Literature*.

[137] Abba Aliyu Sani, "Cultural Imperialism and Publishing in Northern Nigeria, 1903-1960," in *Radical Essays on Nigerian Literatures*, ed. G.G. Darah (Lagos: Malthouse, 2008), 289.

[138] Ibid., 295.

[139] This is the primary topos of James English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U Press, 2005).

These considerations begin to help us make sense of why a natural gas company might want to sponsor the most substantial monetary prize for literature on the African continent. The Nigeria Prize for Literature is sponsored by Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Limited (NLNG)—a company in which the Nigerian federal government, represented by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, is a 50% stakeholder. The prize offers $USD 100,000 each year for the best work of a specified genre. At the nexus of public and private, the one-time hope of the nation—the ability to exploit combustible, natural resources—invests real money in the work of literary craft as a means to "improve the quality of writing, editing, proof-reading, and publishing in the country with far-reaching positive effect on print and broadcast journalism."[140] It is telling—and perhaps misguided—that the company sees investment in an author as a kind of structural intervention within the culture industry. Not only does NLNG hope to improve writing; they hope to improve the entire chain of production for literature in the country, as well as the mechanisms for criticism and commentary, as well as their own badly tarnished position in the market for cultural value.

What does it mean to have a national literary prize? To what extent can or should that prize represent the idea of the nation? If we take Tade Ipadeola's Nigeria Prize winning volume, *The Sahara Testaments*, as an example, then the answer is both simpler and more complex than it might appear. On the one hand, to have a national literary prize means to celebrate the most gifted writing the nation can produce. *The Sahara Testament's* technical skill and learned breadth seems fitting on that account. The second question is a little more complicated. Ipadeola's book is not about a Nigerian geography, or not just. Its topos is regional in terms of

[140] "The Nigeria Prize for Science and the Nigeria Prize for Literature," Nigeria LNG Limited, http://www.nlng.com/Our-CSR/Pages/The-Nigeria-Prizes.aspx.

geography as well as subject matter.

In 2013, Ipadeola's Lagos-published *The Sahara Testaments* bested a field of 201 entries to win the NLNG Nigeria Prize for Literature. Ipadeola works by day as an intellectual property lawyer and has served as the president of P.E.N. Nigeria. *The Sahara Testaments* weaves together an ambitious cultural history of the Sahara through hundreds of meticulous quatrains. The text is epic in ambition and scope; it is a monumental work. Ipadeola himself, though only in his forties, has the bearing of an elder statesman—cheerful, wise, magnanimous, an eloquent speaker and a keen listener. The volume's capacious exploration of long and interwoven histories in the context of the Sahara—extended phenomenally for the reader through the length of nearly a thousand quatrains—produces an aesthetic consonance with what Wai Chee Dimock refers to as deep time—an ontology of time that recasts the scale of human experience across millenia rather than minutes.[141] Across the sections of *The Sahara Testaments*, momentous historical events are reduced to dust, for in the Sahara, "Here is remembrance beyond reach of memory / Beyond calibration of callow geology" (XXVI). The figure of the desert becomes a catechresis for being out of time—a catechresis because the name is itself under erasure and, in its geologic agency, the Sahara becomes a receptacle less of wisdom than a symphony of silence which undoes the civilizing tendencies of humanity. The "Sahara's suite of silence is an endless vault / Where time retreats from clocks and prying instruments (XXII).

And yet, Ipadeola's deeply syncretic text—with its capacious temporal and topical range of literary, scientific, religious, and other referents—closely engages with the thick problems of the now, providing perspective by torquing temporal frames in order to bring the strange into

[141] Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 2-6.

contact with the familiar. In this sense, time in *The Sahara Testaments* is both deep in Dimock's sense and profoundly shallow or thin—a Möbius strip that distorts time's topology. As Ipadeola queries, considering the history of the Nigerian nation alongside the history of the desert,

> Who is the enemy? Who flares poison gas?
> Who cuts down the trees without let?
> Who drains the marsh for all it has?
> Who trawls the seas with the killing net?
>
> The same kind that studies the dinosaur
> Learning nothing from lizards, building plants
> That make a million mirrors in the hour
> Learning nought from reflection or the ants (XXVII).

Rhetorical questions give way to actual answers which express antinomies more than certainties. The "same kind that studies the dinosaur," whether the archeologist or the petroleum geologist, fails to learn from lizards, from "reflection or the ants" the deeper wisdom that speaks beneath the heady rush of human ingenuity that can "make a million mirrors in the hour." As this example suggests, *The Sahara Testaments* pursues a calm didacticism that is less a political project in the sectarian sense than the work of macrohistorical meditation charged beneath the surface with the significance, given Nigeria's recent history, of the land itself as a site of mismanaged value, therefore of risk and danger.

For Ipadeola, poetry has an almost ineluctable political function that is allied to the preservation of knowledge and the bringing together of disparate social parts. Thinking back to his childhood experiences with a traditional herbalist, he reflected, "poetry has served as a repository for all kinds of knowledge, including dangerous knowledge in times past." And in reflecting on his literary influences, which span the globe, and his motivation to write, he commented,

> I saw myself as somebody who needed to do what they were doing for my own

> society…poets in indigenous languages have been doing this almost *gratis* for forever. But we are who we are today, this nation of 400-something indigenous languages, just coming together speaking English, the foreign tongue. We need to build that link between the soul and society, and the language mattered. The content of the language mattered. The manner of delivery mattered. Everything mattered.[142]

This sense that "everything mattered" is communicated *par excellence* in *The Sahara Testaments*. Less the disorienting bricolage of modernism than a carefully curated encyclopedic act, the text uses the figural and sonic powers of lyric to arrest attention in poems that probe literary and cultural values across time and space.

When Ipadeola won the Nigeria Prize, the money offered an opportunity to remediate an ongoing personal frustration, which is the paucity of good libraries in Nigeria. The place of the library in African culture must also contend with the inheritances of colonialism and neo-colonial enterprises. As Amanda Laugesen details, UNESCO was quite active during the late 1940s through the late 1960s establishing libraries in Nigeria and elsewhere on the continent "firmly within an Anglo-American institutional and ideological framework." Moreover, she notes, "Attached to this framework were certain values and assumptions that shaped the work that would be undertaken."[143] Imagined as democratic institutions, the libraries in fact institutionalized a particular kind of reader and a particular kind of reading. As Laugesen argues, "A library can never be politically neutral, because a library represents the aspirations of a community, or a government."[144]

With one hundred thousand US dollars in his bank account, Ipadeola told me, he

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[142] Tade Ipadeola, Intereviewed by the author at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 2015.
[143] Amanda Laugesen, "An Inalienable Right to Read": Unesco's Promotion of a Universal Culture of Reading and Public Libraries and Its Involvement in Africa, 1948-1968," *English in Africa* 35, no. 1 (2008): 71.
[144] Ibid., 86.

purchased land on which to construct a library through which he aspires to cultivate his preferred type of reader—the reader of poetry. Through this process of founding a poetry library, Ipadeola desired to take money derived from the bedrock of the nation to craft an idea in material form that transcends the idea of the nation. His idea of the poetry library, though a precisely local institution, aspires to transcend national borders by offering access to poetry from across Africa and beyond. This literary transgression of borders echoes the way in which *The Sahara Testaments* disengages the boundaries of the nation in order to dramatize biological, geological, and social processes that existed prior to the colonial imposition of Nigerian nationhood and that will continue to endure after the idea of the Nigerian nation exists only in the archives.[145]

This sense of geologic pan-Africanism and deep time roots beneath the signifying surface of the nation or even, to a lesser extent, ethnic affiliation. It largely evades the everyday social scripts that people activate in adjudicating the worth of others. It shows a commonness grounded in the matter of survival where survival can be read as the persistence of beauty—the ways in which beauty has been damaged but has yet prevailed. Ipadeola indicated that he wishes to name his library the Kofi Awoonor Memorial Library, not just because he was influenced by Awoonor's formidable craft but also, undoubtedly, because Awoonor's death at the hands of terrorists in a Kenyan shopping mall spoke to the precarity of the present moment in 2015.[146]

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[145] For Kwame Dawes, as for Ipadeola, the library proved a promising solution to the problem of poetry consumption in Africa. The African Poetry Book Fund has now expanded to include establishment of poetry libraries across Africa alongside collaborations with publishers to produce volumes of poetry. It seems suggestive to me of the problems around book distribution in contemporary Africa—even to libraries—that the most recent anthology of Nigerian poetry I have found, *Poems for a Century*, is published in Dakar rather than Lagos or Ibadan and credits Dawes for his collaboration.

[146] I employ the term "precarity" in the spirit of Judith Butler's use of it to describe the interdependent disruption of selfhood that has come hand in hand with global capitalism. The pith of her concept—that compromised selves can be a source of interdependency and that "final control is not, cannot be an ultimate value," applies here, even though she takes her philosophy and context from the West. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), xiii.

When I asked Ipadeola how he might describe the value of poetry, he paused thoughtfully before offering a counterfactual: "Would the world go on without poetry? Yes it would. But what kind of world would it be? I think it would be a world without bridges. We would forever remain islands removed from ourselves."[147] In this manner of thinking, poetry is not just the work of *poeisis* or making, but of metaphorizing, of bringing across. For Ipadeola, poetry brings across not just the content of one self to another; it renders our internal lives coherent through the bridging of qualities that add up to a kind of "grace" that he described to me at the level of civilization. For him, poets are "Those who make beauty possible," and, alongside acknowledgement of his animist, village background, he articulated that "those who celebrate grace of spirit should be honored amongst us because they are the truest expressions of what it means to be human."

## Media Innovations and Returns

In addition to innovating on the constraints of poetic forms and within them, Nigerian poets and critics have been notably attentive to the question of medium. Apprising the situation in the mid-1990s, Charles Bodunde asserts the need "to create alternative means of artistic production and circulation" because "the dominant outlet for the poet (the book publishing industry) has crumbled."[148] For Bodunde, newspapers must have seemed particularly promising in the mid-1990s because at that time poets like Femi Osofisan, Odia Ofeimun, and Niyi Osundare were embracing the medium as a way to reach a popular audience. In addition to its

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[147] I think it would be a mistake not to hear echoes of John Donne's "Meditation XVII" in Ipadeola's words, but perhaps also of Derek Walcott's in his "Ruins of a Great House," which provides a damning, metaleptic reflection on the "leprosy of empire" and English poetic tradition via Donne and other major English poets. See John Donne, *Devotions on Emergent Occasions and Death's Duel* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 102-4; Derek Walcott, *Collected Poems, 1948-1984* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), 19-21.

[148] Charles Bodunde, "Poetry in the Newspaper: The Younger Poets in Nigeria and the Search for Artistic Medium," *Okike* 34 (1996): 77.

democratic accessibility, the newspaper offers a means of insurgent communication; its frequency, distribution, and ephemerality mean that the state cannot comprehensively censor its contents. Newspapers consequently provided poets like Osundare with the means to generate new media spaces for reflection, promotion, and critique, often in a localized manner, and occasionally beyond the reach of government malefactors.[149]

One medium becoming arguably more democratic than the newspaper is the internet. I say "arguably" because, while access to the internet is on the rise in Nigeria, the means to purchase the smart phones or netbooks or laptops with which to access the internet is hardly open to all.[150] And despite the United Nations declaration of the internet as a human right, nation states continue to curb access to the internet and censor its content.[151] So what, exactly, does the internet suggest for the field of poetry in Nigeria? A UNESCO study based on census

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[149] These media spaces have social corollaries in other Nigerian social formations. In Hausa culture, for instance, *hira* (roadside conversation groups) provide a common site of connection and debate. See Olofson, especially 149, and Youngstedt. Closer to the midcentury and the work of anticolonialism, magazines provided one of the most important outlets for poetry publishing in Nigeria. Magazines like *Black Orpheus* and *Transition* provided a glossy space of expression for poets who would become household names in Nigeria. At a smaller scale, at the University of Ibadan in the fifties, for example, a student magazine of poetry, *The Horn*, was launched as a two-penny rag using a borrowed typewriter and funds supplied by a member of the English faculty. Like the newspaper, these magazines were not intended for posterity. Nonetheless, as Bernth Lindfors convincingly demonstrates, "Little magazines have played a big role in development of Anglophone African writing." Lindfors also points out the potential virtues of what might be read as an "Abiku complex" whereby magazines live briefly only to be reborn again in a different guise to the same mother. Roughly, the argument is that the ephemerality of these publications pushed writers to develop excellence anew, and they tended to be nurtured in the intellectual "hothouse" of the academy. Soyinka has a fascinating retrospctive account of *Transition* and its location within African culture during the mid-century ("On the Trail of Transition"). Bernth Lindfors, "African Little Magazines," in *Mapping Intersections: African Literature and Africa's Development*, ed. Anne V. Adams and Janis A. Mayes (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998), 87; Soyinka, "On the Trail of Transition." For an engaging account of The Horn and its context see W.H. Stevenson, "*The Horn*: What It Was and What It Did," in *Critical Perspectives on Nigerian Literature*, ed. Bernth Lindfors (London: Heinemann, 1975).

[150] The World Bank estimates that internet usage in Nigeria using any kind of device, as of 2014, was at 42.68 per 100 of the population, up from 1.29 per 100 in 2004. Estimates provided by the International Telecommunication Union and compiled by World Bank: World Development Indicators. "World Development Indicators," ed. International Telecommunication Union, Nigerian Telecommunications Plc (NITEL), and Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Individuals using the Internet (% of population) (IT.NET.USER.ZS) (World Bank, 2019).

[151] Frank La Rue, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression," (United Nations, 2011).

data estimated that in 2015 Nigeria's literacy rate was 59.57% for all adults 15 and over. However, that global statistic conceals a significant generational divide. While literacy was at 72.79% for young adults 15-24 as of 2015, it was at 23.65% for those 65+ years of age and 54.87% for those 25-64 years of age.[152] In other words, Nigeria's current generation of young adults is the most literate in the nation's history. Whether or not they currently read poetry, they mark a huge potential audience for digitally published poetry—an audience that can be reached as the internet becomes increasingly available in the country.

Seeing internet publication as a potential way forward, a number of other stakeholders—co-founders Dami Ajayi and Emmanuel Iduma, editors Adebiyi Olusolape, Ayọ̀bámi Adébáyọ̀, and Arthur Anyaduba, and guest editor Jumoke Verissimo—put together the online publication, *Saraba* magazine. The magazine's "About" page boasts, "The Magazine has, by virtue of the worldwide web, grown in leaps, and regular contributions now pour in from the rest of the continent."[153] With a focus on emerging writers, the magazine aims to create "unending voices" by publishing new voices in the magazine itself and through its digital imprint. In 2015, Verissimo published her own digital chapbook under the Saraba imprint entitled *Epiphanies*, this following her prize-winning 2008 print collection, *I am Memory*.

Verissimo, is a passionate marketer of poetry and a skilled poet herself. She has a global vision for Nigerian poetry with a strong focus on digital media, but she often keeps Nigeria at the center of her poems. In a critical comment at the end of *Epiphanies*, Emmanuel Iduma writes, "the work of poetry, as exemplified by our finest poets, is the work of creating rubrics of

[152] "Nigeria: Education and Literacy," (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2016).
[153] "About," Saraba, http://sarabamag.com/about/.

empathy."[154] He reveals a page later that he is the addressee of the sequence that forms the center of the chapbook, nine epiphanies that fixate on sight, touch, proximity, and distance in the context of an erotic relationship. This arresting of the possibility of an indeterminate addressee to emphasize empathy is a striking gesture, inasmuch as the lyric address to one who overhears becomes a dead letter that never arrives at a particular destination. Consider "Epiphanies VI":

> Your picture
> Is in my pupil
>
> This image of you
> Waiting For my voice to break
> Into a tear
> Is bright
> And you were light
>
> This paper it's printed on
> Has aged
> Why didn't I notice
> The greys on the paper?
>
> There's much a pondering paper
> Can give out
> I let it escape me
>
> Now that I flip through old photographs
> I can see all the details I left out
> Have rested on your eyelid.[155]

Lacking the critical commentary, one imagines a new subject of address with every new set of eyes that reaches this poem. A poem initially about seeing and being seen, the poem turns at its midpoint to the traditional medium of poetry, paper, even though the poem is ironically now conveyed in front of the reader on a glowing screen. As for the matter of empathy, the "it" that escapes the writer in the poem remains indeterminate, and we learn that she is flipping through

[154] Jumoke Verissimo, *Epiphanies* (Nigeria: Saraba Literary Trust, 2015), 17.
[155] Ibid., 11.

photographs, another medium, which lead her to reflect on the ways in which we impose meaning on others through memory as well as in the moment of address. "[A]ll the details [she] left out / have rested on your eyelid" because the photo cannot speak for itself.

Despite the inequalities generated by relative lack of prestige in comparison to magazines like *Poetry* at the metropolitan center, the internet democratizes distribution to the extent that one's potential audience has access to an electronic device. Partly for this reason, the rise of digital technologies has led to an optimism that the internet and handheld devices will yield a new generation of readers who value poetry in new ways. At the same time, alternative, sometimes older, forms of print publication continue to look promising to producers in the present. For example, one primary strategy of the African Poetry Book Fund run by Kwami Dawes and Chris Abani is to publish chapbooks rather than full volumes of poetry. The chapbooks are released between seven and ten at a time and sold as a boxed set in the global North. In Africa, they are sold singly. Where *Saraba* magazine provides free PDF chapbooks on its website, Dawes and Abani have orchestrated a scheme to sell inexpensive paper chapbooks through material distribution channels on the continent.

# New Nigerian Poetry

As *Saraba* and Verissimo's poetry suggest, the most recent output of Nigerian poetry can be characterized in large part by an attempt to join aesthetic acts to the art world's material realities, as well as to consider the complex of Nigerian poetry through the medium of the poem. Media innovations and returns continue that work. At the same time, perhaps counterintuitively, the manner in which the new generation poems engage with the material realities is less

explicitly ideological—less Marxist—than the preceding generation. As GMT Emezue puts it, the new generation's innovation is a "lucidity of expression and energy of breath not so overtly explored by other generations before them."[156] Writers like Ipadeola, Ajayi, and Verissimo would seem to bear out that observation. Garuba has also suggested that much of this poetry emerges from the pens of poets who are well aware of the political side of the literary world and that these new poets are making "strategic interventions" to establish their place in the world of letters.[157] These strategic literary interventions remain committed to the idea of poetry as a social force rather than simply a contest among literary titans.

The new Nigerian poet also seems to have been re-invested with the task of pointing the finger of accusation. As Emezue writes in the introduction to *New Voices* (2008),

> …when…criminals come with pretended messages and promises of a better life in the name of politics, the poet can see through all the hype. He helps us to wear our suit of armour against such onslaughts upon our intelligence when he adopts a mien full of contempt and scorn.The poetic interdiction is against all those responsible for stifling human essence.[158]

This politicizing of the field ironically celebrates the failure of efforts to commodify culture. Poetry exposes fault lines in the idea of capital-as-creativity without compromising the will to create, and in so doing poetry draws our attention to the idea of value, the ways in which we operationalize it, and how we might think of it differently. The danger is that in doing so poetry often self-prophesies the conditions of its financial poverty. Culturally rich, but cash poor, new Nigerian poems are being embraced by the literary complex for their social potential in a variety of modes. As T.A. Fasuyi commented in his 1973 report on Nigerian cultural policy, "A country

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[156] Emezue, *New Voices: A Collection of Recent Nigerian Poetry*, 10.
[157] Garuba, "The Unbearable Lightness of Being: Re-Figuring Trends in Recent Nigerian Poetry," 54.
[158] Emezue, *New Voices: A Collection of Recent Nigerian Poetry*, 18-19.

is not judged by its political and economic development alone—its arts, literature, and music also count."[159] It is a material fact, however, that these poems give voice only where they can be heard, and that horizon of possibility is a study in the problem of value and, at least in part, a matter of money.

[159] Fasuyi, *Cultural Policy in Nigeria*, 63.

# Chapter 2: Jamaican Poetry and Island Economics

Tell me again
how oil don't spoil
how we have plenty dollars
but no sense,
an how money is no problem
but de problem is no money
tell me again.

—Paul Keens-Douglas,
*Tell Me Again* (1979)

In preparation for independence celebrations in 1962, Jamaica's Ministry of Development and Welfare formed an Arts Celebration Committee, which appointed two editors to compile an independence anthology of Jamaican literature. The editors were A.L. Hendriks and Cedric G. Lindo, and ceremonial copies of their completed anthology were ultimately presented to Jamaica's Governor General, Prime Minister, and, of all people, the Vice President of the United States, Lyndon Johnson.[160] Inside the book's front cover, a foreword greets the reader, penned by the Minister of Development and Welfare, Edward Seaga, who would later become Jamaica's Prime Minister. Seaga heralds the volume as "a conscious effort on the part of the Government of Jamaica to bring the arts in greater focus as the country enters its new era of independence…As we enter independence, we can publish a collection of Jamaican poetry and prose without having to apologize for the quality of its contents."[161]

Among the writers and genres represented in the anthology, Seaga gives special quarter

[160] "Jamaica's Independence," *Quarterly Publication*, Jamaica PEN (Kingston, Jamaica): 1962.
[161] A.L. Hendriks and Cedric Lindo, eds., *Independence Anthology of Jamaican Literature* (Kingston: Arts Celebration Committee of the Ministry of Development and Welfare Jamaica, 1962), ix.

to Jamaican poets and poetry. Citing specific poems as examples of excellent literature that speak to the conditions of Jamaican life, he praises "San Gloria" by Tom Redcam, "Flameheart" by Claude McKay, "The Maroon Girl" by W. Adolphe Roberts, and "On National Vanity" by J.E. Clare McFarlane. A verse drama, Redcam's "San Gloria" indexes a characteristic form of early twentieth-century Anglophone Caribbean writing that Rajeev Patke colorfully describes as "a genteel form of transplanted pastoralism."[162] The last two poems are both sonnets. The first, Roberts's "The Maroon Girl," celebrates the "savage beauty" of a maroon girl, writ here as a figure for originary Jamaicanness and multiculturalism ("vanished Arawak / Flows in her veins with blood of white and black").[163] McFarlane's sonnet, "On National Vanity," takes a looser approach to the form and advises the reader, "Slowly we learn… / Nation on nation follows, sun on sun. / With empire's dust fate builds her great design…" Finally, McKay's "Flameheart" stands out from the group with its skillful, complex localization of the poinsettia plant in a Romantic, meditative style. These cited poems range widely in style, while maintaining a common focus on the figure of Jamaicanness. Put another way, at the moment of independence, we see politicians and bureaucrats looking specifically to poetry of a variety of forms in order to articulate the figure of the nation to other bureaucrats, domestic and abroad. And by a double movement, we also see the independence of the nation mapped onto the aesthetic independence of its literature and assessments of its quality.

Inscribed in an anthology—a literary monument to national culture—these poems share a sensibility that anthropologist Deborah Thomas has described as "creole multiracial

[162] Patke also allows that Redcam was "distinguished more by [his] politics than by [his] mastery over verse." Rajeev S. Patke, *Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 2006), 91.
[163] Maroons refer to Spanish slaves who escaped in the mid-17th century and their descendants.

nationalism."[164] According to Thomas, creole multiracial nationalism

> …encompassed efforts to legitimize selected elements of previously disparaged Afro-Jamaican cultural practices in order to foster a sense of national belonging among Jamaica's (majority black) population. This work of legitimation was operationalized through national policy, and it is epitomized by the Jamaican national motto, "Out of Many, One People.[165]

In the context of a renewed appreciation for Afro-Jamaican culture, the anthologized poems demonstrate a striking stylistic interplay between the adapted sonnet and blank verse drama of the European, global North, on the one hand, and the Afro-Jamaican themes of folk heroes, local traditions, and island flora, on the other. Put another way, the poems appear to be negotiating between domesticated cultural impositions and attempts to define a state of indigenous being by deploying a creole, multiracial stratagem that, as I will show, ends up intersecting with national policy goals.

Beginning with this moment of creole multiracial nationalism in Jamaican policy and poetry, this chapter charts the emergence of cultural policy around literature in Jamaica, its impact on the poetic field, and poetic responses to the increasingly neoliberal values which have sought to instrumentalize poetry in service to the Jamaican economy, particularly the tourist industry. In particular, I show how poets echo and contribute to the logic of policy debates prior to the 1970s, then how they reframe a new wave of debates during the latter half of the century. I

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[164] Deborah Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 4.

[165] Notably, "Out of many, One people" is a viable translation of the motto found on United States coin, "e pluribus unum." The Latin phrase used by the United States, however, suggestively omits "people" from the equation. In classical usage, the phrase was generally used to denote the combining of various things into a single mixture, from philosophical assertions (e.g. by Heraclitus and St. Augustine) to Virgil's poem, "Moretum," which is often cited as the origin of the phrase and describes, notably, the morning ritual of a man, Simylus, and his slave, whose "nationality was African." Ibid.; Virgil, *The Minor Poems of Vergil: Comprising the Culex, Dirae, Lydia, Moretum, Copa, Priapeia, and Catalepton*, trans. Joseph J. Mooney (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1916), 42.

argue that they work to access a space of reparative ambivalence—a space poor in determinism and rich in symbolic resources—deeply invested in the status of community and history in Jamaica. Rather than proceeding strictly chronologically, the chapter offers a general introduction to Jamaican cultural policy before re-encountering that history through several institutional lenses attached to specific Jamaican poets. Of special interest are poets Lorna Goodison, Mervyn Morris, and Kei Miller in their association with the Institute of Jamaica, the Poet Laureateship of Jamaica, and the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, respectively. As we will see, archival documents, interviews, surveys, and poems reveal a striking history in which poetry prior to independence was largely complicit in the emergence of cultural policy on the island, whereas later poets found themselves increasingly at odds with the neoliberal values that came to prevail in policy circles during the post-independence period. While it is well known that Jamaica's early poets had a close relationship, perforce, to colonial institutions, this account situates them as an important set of actors in Jamaica's work to develop its own cultural policy during the period of decolonization and after.

## Miss Lou and the Voices of the West Indies

Involved in the work of creole multiracial nationalism, though not included in the independence anthology, Louise Bennett, more commonly known simply as "Miss Lou," was one of the Caribbean's great commentators on decolonization, the diaspora, and the various issues that arose for West Indians who wanted to take ownership of their regional identities and histories during the powerful historical moment of decolonization. One such issue emerged via overseas educational and employment opportunities for young men and women who were forced to negotiate their often-conflicting senses of responsibility to self, family, and nation. With an

education in hand, should a young West Indian remain in the space of opportunity that is the global North, or should he return to Jamaica to put his newfound learning to use back home? In "Dry-Foot Bwoy," Bennett's persona concludes the poem by chastising a young man who has been trying on the British habitus upon return from England. She says,

> Me seh, 'Yuh understan me, yaw!
> No yuh name Cudjoe Scoop?
> Always visit Nana kitchen an
> Gi laugh fi gungoo soup!
> 'An now all yuh can seh is "actually"?
> Bwoy, but tap!
> Wha happen to dem sweet Jamaica
> joke yuh use fi pop?'

Bennett locates the boy's real, natural identity in his creole name (Cudjoe Scoop) and in his use of what Bennett elsewhere calls "Jamaica language," particularly in the form of the joke as a payment for gungo pea soup. For Bennett's speaker, the pretense of RP expressions—the Queen's English—coming from a good Jamaican jokester becomes too much to bear; but in the poem, the larger arc is less about the boy's identity than it is about his humiliation and, specifically, about the actors at that scene of humiliation who turn cultural assumptions inside out. The poem concludes,

> Him get bex and walk tru de door,
> Him head eena de air;
> De gal-dem bawl out affa him,
> 'Not going? What! Oh deah!'
> An from dat night till tedeh, mah,
> Dem all got him fi mock.
> Miss Mary dry-foot bwoy!
> Cyaan get over de shock!

The point here is that the women amongst whom this boy performs Englishness are equally able to modulate their use of the language. They, too, have access to RP, as their mocking "Not going? What! Oh deah!" cannily shows, but in this case they refashion the rhetorical performance

into the form of the joke. The embarrassed young man "Cyann get over de shock" of being forcibly disrobed of the cultural garb that he must have felt was his due for spending time at the metropole. The metropolitan North, after all, is the giver of cultural capital, so surely some of its aura must have rubbed off. The poem consequently and complexly illustrates the problems of cultural identity and belonging that creole multiracial nationalism attempted to solve. The poem also works roughly in the same way as the anthology poems to recover local culture without eliding the cultural legacy of colonization; but there's also an important difference. This creole multiracial nationalism of Miss Lou's has teeth, and it speaks not through the vernacular of policy, but through the vernacular spoken on the Kingston street.[166]

## Cultural Policy, Counterpublics, and Aesthetic Autonomy

National policy is rarely the place to find an open embrace of multiplicity or ambiguity, even if it gets articulated, on the cultural level, in the form of a poem that expresses something like creole multiracial nationalism. By the same token, we might assume that artists, including poets, would be loathe to pigeonhole the work into an agreeable echochamber of national expression. This conflict between cultural policy and aesthetic autonomy plays out in striking form during this postcolonial period in Jamaica and elsewhere in the West Indies. So let's say we are political functionaries during this moment, and we see an opportunity to advance our "new" nation's cultural identity. Crudely, how does a governing body prevent sponsored art from becoming the propaganda arm of the state? Addressing this issue in the introduction to the anthology mentioned above, Edward Seaga works to guide readers through the briar patch between aesthetic autonomy and cultural administration.[167] He remarks,

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[166] Recordings of "Jamaica Language" by Bennett, whose performance name is Miss Lou, can be easily found online.
[167] For an insightful discussion of aesthetic autonomy in the postcolonial context, see Kalliney, *Commonwealth of*

> one of the challenges of independence is that national pride will always seek for indigenous artistic expression. This is not the same thing as suggesting a blatant partisanship on the part of the artist or that he should be committed to one ideology or another.[168]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this articulation of artistic freedom finds its rhetorical force in the suggestion that national pride is somehow divorced from ideology and that indigenous artistic expression is the *summum bonum* of national sensibility. For this minister of government, the artist should participate in national culture – indeed, should provide its substance and artistic form – but should not hew to partisan ideologies. The official cultural policy thus desires expression free from ideological constraints that proceed from the trauma of the colonial experience, preferring instead to access something indigenous and prior to that trauma, *except* where creolization might be reconfigured as a national virtue rather than as a liability.

Seaga's sensitivity to artistic autonomy, and perhaps the very existence of the independence anthology project, underline an observation made by literary scholar Raphael Dalleo regarding a generational shift in the politics of Caribbean culture. Dalleo concludes that in the 1950s and 60s Caribbean writers of a certain kind comprised a dissident counterpublic "claiming to speak for the nation but not necessarily attached to the state" and that the presence of this counterpublic "was readily seen as a threat to postcolonial states seeking to define their place in a changing global system."[169] The anthology project can be seen as one attempt by a postcolonial state to mobilize literary claims on the nation for the advancement of the state—to forge a national sensibility out of the cultural materials available to hand, and perhaps to co-opt

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*Letters: British Literary Culture and the Emergence of Postcolonial Aesthetics*, especially pp.5-10.

[168] Quoted in "Jamaica's Independence."

[169] Raphael Dalleo, *Caribbean Literature and the Public Sphere: From the Plantation to the Postcolonial* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 144-45.

or pre-empt the formation of artistic counterpublics that might challenge the primacy of the state.

Sensibility only carries us so far, however, and Seaga's later comments add an intriguing wrinkle. He writes,

> until we are truly national, that is to say, and so we have really learned to exploit our own resources, the body of our creative literature will never speak with the voice that is undeniably its own, and thus throw up the writers who can win through to universal acclaim.[170]

These comments speak directly to the shape of the field of literary production and relate it to the production of a very specific type of nationalism conceived through an economic lens. Seaga offers both the definition of what it means to be national (in starkly econometric terms) and an endgame for the pursuit of creative excellence. He posits nationness as the ability not simply to own resources, but to exploit them, and he imagines for the artist a fantasy of "universal acclaim." These comments strikingly internalize the colonial experience. In this view, to be a nation is simply to domesticate the power of exploitation; and to be a successful artist is to earn approval from the wide universe and its metropolitan arbiters of taste.

As we will later see, this internalization of the colonial experience can also be seen as the start of a neoimperial era ushered in by the embrace of neoliberal economic policies and a new American hegemony.[171] At the same time, however, domesticated exploitation and the drive for universalism can be seen, in a more benign light, as attempts to appropriate the production of

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[170] Quoted in "Jamaica's Independence."

[171] There is also an important sense in which the combination of capitalist markets and cultural imperialism are deeply involved with what some scholars have articulated as global modernity's "drive for universalization." See, for instance, Laura L. Adams, "Globalization, Universalism, and Cultural Form," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 3 (2008).

knowledge as well as other cultural and material goods. The classroom, for instance, serves as most readers' entrée into literature of any sort, and it speaks volumes that many of the older Jamaican poets I interviewed in the winter of 2014-2015 cited education as their primary site of exposure to poetry and the place at which they received the most encouragement in the course of their artistic development.[172]

## From Decolonization to Cultural Entrepreneurship

In Dalleo's view, the discourse of decolonization eventually gave way to a marked discursive shift from oppositional rhetorics of modern colonialism and anticolonialism to a rhetoric of postcolonialism as an activist intellectual project that "reimagines the forms of opposition offered by previous models."[173] Lorna Goodison articulates one such reimagining when she says, in 2013,

> I get accused of writing about Jamaica all the time, and I'm gonna say, "guilty." But more and more I feel—no, I don't think so. Nothing human is alien to me now, and that's where I think the poems are. It is just about what affects human beings. So you might say I keep circling back to the Caribbean or Jamaica, but it's about humanity, wherever humanity is.[174]

On the surface, Goodison's comment is simply about writing the full range of human experience, of which Jamaican experience is one piece. But implicit in her comment, I would suggest, is a sensitivity to being accused of writing Jamaica in a reactionary mode—trying to define

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[172] Second to education, though equally important, was the household, in which exposure took a variety of forms, from hearing songs and poetic Bible verses in church to exploring the family bookshelves.

[173] The strong form of Dalleo's claim is that in the literary field globalization meant "privatization perversely performed in the name of a cosmopolitan public dominated by the United States." Dalleo, *Caribbean Literature and the Public Sphere: From the Plantation to the Postcolonial*, xii, 145. This ground is covered in a slightly more ambivalent manner by Belinda Edmundson, who examines the production of Caribbean middlebrow culture—ambivalent in the sense that she explores the conflicted agency at stake in the pursuit of culture by an aspiring black middle class that must contend with American cultural hegemony. Belinda Edmondson, *Caribbean Middlebrow: Leisure Culture and the Middle Class* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2009).

[174] Lorna Goodison, interviewed by the author at the University of Michigan, 2014.

Jamaicanness. Even at fifty years' remove, it remains possible for practical reasons to remain sensitive to certain forms of opposition that were active during the period of decolonization. In negotiating a sense of poetic access to "humanity," Goodison's comments highlight challenges to the discursive analysis used by much postcolonial theory to describe how the literary field evolved, because the field was shaped by a number of forces prior to theory and that theory has failed to fully access.[175] The radical-contingency types of theoretical insights are important and have resonated powerfully with scholars for good reason; however, a return to earth is needed to address these matters in the policy arena, not least because much of the discussion amongst policymakers since the midcentury has been around precisely how to encourage art in a way that will add value to the nation—that will convert public dollars to public good. In other words, we need a way of seeing poetry as bound up in several value continuums at once--namely those of literary quality, national identity, and economic value.

Taking this latter continuum of economic value in mind, the conversion of poetry from monetary value to text object is simple enough. A publisher acquires a text and spends time and resources to manufacture a physical book. However, poems rarely offer a financial return on investment. Instead, they more often transpose money into cultural capital and a minimum of economic capital. From roughly the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, Caribbean policymakers seemed largely agreeable to this arrangement. They were content to focus on the intrinsic value

[175] Jahan Ramazani pithily summarizes these approaches as "criticism's no-escape discursive models." Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 12. I am thinking of some of postcolonial theory's seminal texts. See, for instance, Homi K. Bhabha, "Dissemination: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990); *The Location of Culture*; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. I am of course unfairly overlooking the principal conundrum of such work, which is the necessity of critiquing imperial, hegemonic ideologies in the language and through the institutions of settler colonists and their North American, neocolonial counterparts. Dipesh Chakrabarty has a particularly insightful discussion of the challenge universalism poses to life and to knowledge under the logic of capital. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Universalism and Belonging in the Logic of Capital," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000).

of culture and cultural objects as a form of identity rather than to quantify culture in monetary terms. Then, shifting away from a focus on remediating the ills of colonialism and establishing a new Caribbean identity, policymakers during this new moment focused on "promoting the diversity of the region's cultural expressions."[176] Since roughly the mid-1990s, however, there has been a significant shift to econometric thinking—a kind of bright-eyed optimism for the future in which the island's culture becomes instrumental to the GDP. This thread of instrumentalism continues into the present, rocketed along by a booming hospitality industry, Bob Marley's reggae, and Usain Bolt's legs.

While compelling in tracing a movement from identity to diversity to instrumentality, this three-phases approach to the history of cultural policy in the Anglophone Caribbean—from nationalism to essentialism to instrumentalism—ignores the extent to which literary culture has historically, even in the first two phases and before, found itself in service to—or at least mutually implicated with—market forces. Back at the moment of Jamaican independence, Seaga, while acknowledging that opportunities for literary publication in Jamaica are limited, hopes that the independence anthology might help to create a "reasonable market [for literature] at home."[177] Moreover, he says, "I do not believe that writers can escape the responsibility of writing for their own people."[178] The writer has a duty. And to what end? For Seaga, the end is to communicate to Jamaicans "some illumination of life, to the extent they will be establishing contact with universal values and writing books of which we can be proud."[179] Again, within the

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[176] Suzanne Burke, "Disjuncture and Displacement: The Evolution of the Cultural Policy Regime in the Anglophone Caribbean," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 13, no. 2 (2007).
[177] Quoted in "Jamaica's Independence."
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid. Seaga, as of 1963, remained reflective on "Government and the Arts," as indicated by a paper he gave at a UWI seminar on the artist and his society at the social welfare center. Library of Jamaica, MS 2124 HP Jacobs Archive, "International PEN Club - Jamaica Centre, Correspondence, 1959-82."

context of universal values, this future prime minister casts the writer as one who might illuminate life for Jamaicans in new ways, and in so doing, also make a market.

With significantly less interest in poetry's market-making abilities, Jamaican scholar and poet Edward Baugh echoed Seaga's sense of poetry's illuminating value more than fifty years after the anthology's publication, during an interview I conducted with him at the University of West Indies in 2014. When I asked Baugh how he would describe the value of poetry, he replied,

> To use a huge generalization, it enhances life…a poem will strike some kind of chord in the person reading or hearing it, which illuminates something, makes them understand something better about themselves, which makes them understand something better about life. Or it's illuminating and uplifting in the sense that what it says isn't something you didn't know or think of, but it has said it in a way that fixes it, that lights it up, and makes it memorable. That effect on the individual might then have some wider social, even political impact in making some difference in the world. That's my hedging way of answering that question.[180]

In his view, poetry is able less to change the world directly or to create market value than to bring awareness or bear witness to aspects of everyday life (or of exceptional circumstances) in a manner that also "fixes" such awareness in the mind and makes it memorable. According to Seaga, even without this quality of illumination, Jamaicans have the hope of economic benefit—a "reasonable market for literature"—driven by national sentiment and other sites of consumer sensitivity. It is against this backdrop that we must understand, for instance, the cultural policy of 2003, in which Parliament voted to project the image of Jamaica as a "cultural superstate." It is also against this backdrop that we must understand the perspectives of poets like Baugh who hedges against poetry's social or political impact during our current, 21st century moment.

[180] Edward Baugh, interviewed by the author at the University of West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, 2014.

At a broader level, these issues of value in the historiography around Jamaican poetry and cultural policy remind us that when it comes to matters of identity, for the individual or for the nation-state, even the most radical notions of hybridity must call on referents that bind together the stuff which gives hybridity its presence, whether that stuff be physical locations or abstract ideas.[181] Postcolonial theory, if we can make such a generalization (perhaps we might say postcolonial theory in the poststructuralist mode), offers one such attempt to express the problem, if not always to provide an answer. A poet himself and a nuanced thinker along such lines, Éduard Glissant offers one of the most powerful variations on the theme of constitutive hybridity in his seminal *Poetics of Relation*.[182] For Glissant, relationality provides the ground of being, and the Caribbean, together with its difficult history, provides a figure for that ground—a place of constitutive hybridity, protean, like Louise Bennett's favorite figure derived from African lore, the trickster Anancy. I suggest, as I think Lorna Goodison especially evokes this in her creative output, that Jamaican poetry—and West Indian poetry more generally—often provides its own manner of theorizing such matters of identity and being, frequently in ways that are savvy to the questions of value I am raising and that are certainly savvy to the circuits of power that shape the field of cultural production in Jamaica. To be more specific, Jamaican poets have learned to become cultural entrepreneurs and continue to innovate along those lines, but not just; they are also citizens and neighbors of their townships, cities, and at the broadest level of the

[181] Kwame Appiah's notion of "rooted cosmopolitanism" is one early attempt to give expression to this conundrum of hybridity in the context of competing nationalisms. Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Against National Culture," *English in Africa* 23, no. 1 (1996); *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). From this historical vantage, however, cosmopolitanism strikes me as too compromised a term to do the theoretical work I envision. For an insightful take on the ways cosmopolitanism has been appropriated by neoliberalism, see Sonia Bookman, "Branded Cosmopolitanisms: 'Global' Coffee Brands and the Co-Creation of 'Cosmopolitan Cool'," *Cultural Sociology* 7, no. 1 (2013).

[182] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

planet, and the best poets uncompromisingly attempt to access those complex layers of being. That is, poems and poets and poets' sense of writerly possibility reflect these socioeconomic, political, and aesthetic concerns, engaging deeply with the values that underwrite the expenditure of political capital as public subsidy, often critiquing those values, and incessantly (and often irreverently) imagining them anew. In this way, poetry and poetic communities form more capacious and accommodating structures for articulating the values and symbolic co-dependencies that comprise the space that is Jamaican culture.

# Part I: Institutional Histories

## Norman Manley and the Institute of Jamaica

In 1955 Norman Manley signed an Executive Council submission praising government's "increasing… Contributions to the development of sports" but lamenting that "Little or nothing however has been done by the government to foster the equally important development of the arts."[183] Consequently, the document requests £1000 in aid, of which £200 would be allocated to awards through the Institute of Jamaica in the categories of fine arts and crafts, drama or dancing, writing, and music. The other £800 pounds would go to traveling exhibitions outside of Kingston, publication of Jamaican books, poetry, fiction, or plays; organizing concerts outside Kingston, and organizing actors or dancers outside Kingston.[184] On the basis of that recommendation, the Minister for Education and Welfare under whose provision the Institute then stood, confirmed the receipt of £1000 as "a subvention in aid of the development of art and

[183] "Executive Council Submission, Development of Arts and Culture," National Archive of Jamaica, 1B/31/605 – 1955. 442/CM.10.
[184] ibid.

culture generally throughout the island."[185] His letter further indicates that a select committee was appointed to advise the minister on the scheme, which included Philip Sherlock, Mrs. Manley, and a Rev. Wilson. Finally, the letter indicates that the director of the Institute of Jamaica "also has been informed of the above scheme."[186] Also included in the folder is a letter of congratulations to Norman Manley. The author trusts that the £1000 effort is "sure to have far-reaching effects in the future of creative art in this country."[187] What small investment, and what an ambitious expected rate of return!

The Institute of Jamaica has been crucial to the island's cultural programs. However, it often existed in a politically ambiguous space. Formed by the British in the late nineteenth century for the support of literature, science, and the arts, the Institute was for many years the primary vehicle for developing Jamaica's cultural policies and implementing them. It has also been (and remains) responsible for bestowing the country's premier cultural honors—the Musgrave medals, awarded in gold, silver, and bronze for contributions to art, science, and literature. Moving into the era of decolonization, in 1961 the Jamaican government formed the Ministry of Welfare and Culture and devolved responsibility for the arts to an Arts Advisory Council within the ministry. Fearing a complicated transition, the government file on the ministry's formation notes of the Institute, "it is not considered at the present time prudent to deal with the question of which ministry should bear the responsibility for the Institute of Jamaica… It is suggested… That the question be deferred for consideration at a later date" because the Ministry of Education was at that time investing a great deal of money in the

[185] "Letter 12 Oct 1955, [illegible], Permanent secretary to the Minister for Education and Welfare to Permanent Secretary to the Chief Minister," National Archive of Jamaica,1B/44/1/129.
[186] ibid.
[187] ibid.

Institute's infrastructure.[188] In other words, the Ministry of Education was supplying a good bit of the gold, and the new ministry hoped to avoid exhausting their own public appropriations accounts. So in independent Jamaica, the Institute was from the beginning a financial problem, as well as a primary vehicle of national culture that maintained close ties to its imperial roots.

Despite the reservations of the newly assembled Ministry of Welfare and Culture, the Institute was ultimately transferred to its responsibility the same year, with an annual budget of £59,700.[189] Fast forward to 1969, when the Minister of Finance and Planning, Edward Seaga, announces that the most significant measure under way in a broader cultural development program for Jamaica is enactment of legislation to amalgamate the Institute of Jamaica and the Jamaican National Trust Commission to "form one organization to be known as the Institute of Jamaica."[190] This new, consolidated organization is envisioned as an "umbrella" for all institutions dealing with the arts, with each division of the arts "headed by an administrative head… Responsible to the board of the Institute of Jamaica."[191] Significantly, the Ministry Paper states that the board of the Institute of Jamaica "will be the policymaking body responsible for cultural development" in Jamaica.[192] The document goes on to note, firstly, "there has been, in the past, a strong tendencey [sic] to overlook the folk culture of the country" and secondly, that Mervyn Morris was commissioned to write a history of Jamaican literature from the period 1938 to 1962.[193] The Institute of Jamaica was made responsible for its publication. It does not seem that

[188] "15 JUNE 1961, Letter from Jean Smith for Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Social Welfare to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Development," National Archive of Jamaica, 1B/44/1/319.
[189] "Estimates for the Ministry of Welfare and Culture," National Archive of Jamaica, 1B/31/1067 – 1961.
[190] The National Trust Commission was established under the Jamaica National Trust Law of 1958 to "preserve or restore monuments and places of historical or national interest." Library of Jamaica, Ministry Paper 32, http://www.nlj.gov.jm/MinistryPapers/1967/No.32.pdf
[191] ibid.
[192] ibid.
[193] ibid.

the book ever came out.[194] However, the emphasis on the folk echoes the logic of creole multiracial nationalism of the time and its desire to valorize that which is prior and alternative but still unmistakably indigenous.

In 1973, in a cabinet submission by Michael Manley commenting on expenditures associated with the restructuring of the Institute of Jamaica, the organization is described as the "all embracing body having overall responsibility for the country's cultural development program," in which, while its board would have "a considerable amount of autonomy," the "central governing body would be able to have an overview of the direction in which the country's cultural programs should develop."[195] At this time, two major projects were sketched. One was the establishment of a national Council on Libraries to provide training facilities for education in various branches of the arts. The enterprise required $24,140 the following year.[196] The second enterprise was a cultural training center for university-level training in art, music, dance, and drama at a first-year cost of $12,100. Also noted among the accomplishments of the Institute for the last year, "the publications program of the Institute has attracted considerable attention," with the further comment that

> expenditure…of funds now requested should be viewed as a further minimal investment into what is clearly a program with a multiplier effect reaching out to thousands of Jamaicans who are now becoming more aware of their own cultural heritage and who hopefully will develop a greater sense of pride as their own self-respect is strengthened by this recognition of their cultural identity.[197]

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[194] "Ministry Paper on the Cultural Development Programme," National Archive of Jamaica, 1B/31/380 -1969.
[195] "Restructuring of the Institute of Jamaica," National Archive of Jamaica,1B/31/272 – 1973.
[196] The change from pounds sterling to Jamaican dollars took place in 1969.
[197] "Expenditures associated with the restructuring of the Institute of Jamaica by Government in 1973," National Archive of Jamaica, 1B/31/237-1976. The publications program, about which I will have more to say shortly, encompassed publication of the house journal, *Jamaica Journal* and a number of creative and critical works.

This justification speaks to the economistic logic that came to govern the cultural policy of the 1970s onwards, focusing as it does on the "multiplier effect" which is a financial term here torqued to refer not to economic returns but to cultural (read national) pride as a kind of dividend.

As part of Manley's study on restructuring the Institute, an exploratory committee recommended that a statutory body called the Arts Council govern the Institute. However, a Cabinet Submission expresses concern about efficiency, particularly the "rationalization and maximization of resources and the necessity to curb the proliferation of statutory bodies."[198] The submission further proposed to change the name of the Institute to "The Institute of Jamaican Art and Culture" because it would be "psychologically wise to effect some change… In order that the public might be made aware of the considerably widened scope which it is proposed the organization will encompass."[199] Further, the submission recommended that the board of governors be renamed the "Council of Art and Culture."[200] Neither of these two latter recommendations were carried out.[201] By 1978, however, the Institute stood so squarely at the center of Jamaica's cultural development program and had consumed under its umbrella so many other organizations that Parliament recommended entirely new legislation to govern the Institute. Under the new arrangement, the Institute was charged with encouraging the development of literature, science, the arts and culture, as well as the study of and research of history. It was additionally tasked with preserving national monuments, establishing museums,

[198] "Restructuring of the Institute of Jamaica," National Archive of Jamaica, 1B/31/272 – 1973.
[199] ibid.
[200] ibid.
[201] ibid.

and discharging other functions "as may be from time to time requested."[202]

## Seaga and the Trojan Horse of Cultural Policy

By the 1980s, things had changed for Seaga. He was now Prime Minister, and his general approach to policy was one of "economic liberalization and privatization," in direct contrast to his predecessor Michael Manley's espousal of "democratic socialism and increasing state ownership of the economy."[203] What might it mean that Seaga, a proponent of economic liberalization and privatization, also placed a high value on literary culture as a vehicle for national identity[204]? As I suggested above, Seaga's earlier moves were part of a regional, Caribbean interest in demonstrating the diverse and valuable national cultures of the region, but even at that time, commerce was already, for him, a dominant theme. By the time we arrive at the 80s, his attention to culture as instrumental has become simply another iteration of postcolonial nationalist values playing out dialectically against hegemonic forces that were demanding particular types of economic reform and, less overtly, requiring certain types of cultural production. What is remarkable here is that this drama is staged in part through a medium—literature—that retains cultural capital in the metropolitan North. One might wonder, then, at the value of Jamaica's great texts and writers to the global tastemakers, particularly if the cultural policy aims to access prestige via the lionization of the ever-dwindling, increasingly constructed, true Jamaican folk.[205]

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[202] "Institute of Jamaica Act 1978," National Archive of Jamaica, 1B/31/26 – 1978.
[203] Mark P. Sullivan, "Jamaica: Political and Economic Conditions and U.S. Relations," (Congressional Research Service, 2006), 1.
[204] One of the advanced-career poets I interviewed noted, almost offhand, that the Seaga years were particularly good in terms of the relationship between artists and the government.
[205] Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica*. See especially pp.5-6 on respectability. Authenticity remains an operative key word, here, but even the authentic must be rendered respectable in order to counter perceptions of the black savage and so forth.

In the scholarship on cultural policy, researchers have found it useful to conjure the figure of the Trojan horse in order to explain how neoliberal values have insinuated themselves into cultural policies. As Stuart Cunningham puts it,

> One of the most wide-ranging and sophisticated critiques of creative industries policy argues that it is a kind of Trojan horse, secreting the intellectual heritage of the information society and its technocratic baggage into the realm of cultural practice, suborning the latter's proper claims on the public purse and self-understanding, and aligning it with inappropriate bedfellows such as business services, telecommunications and calls for increases in generic creativity.[206]

Some background is necessary. The critique begins with a shift in definition from culture, to cultural industries, to creative industries that occurred within policy circles over the past decades. The net effect is that policies and domains previously compartmentalized (e.g. art versus the knowledge economy) are now understood as part of the same "industry." The result has been, almost exclusively, that official policy tends to value art using matrices derived from management theory, whereas one would be hard pressed to encounter a policy paper that seriously considers assessing industry practices according to the aesthetic standards of art criticism rather than those of management theory.[207]

Cunningham ultimately takes issue with this Trojan horse narrative, preferring instead the image of the Rorschach blot. Rather than assuming that "discourses of information, knowledge, and innovation" trump culture every time, Cunningham asserts that the

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[206] Stuart Cunningham, "Trojan Horse or Rorschach Blot? Creative Industries Discourse around the World," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 15, no. 4 (2009): 355; Erich Poettschacher, "The Rise of the Trojan Horses in the Creative Industries," ibid.16, no. 3 (2010).

[207] For more on issues of definition in regard to "cultural industries" and "creative industries," see Susan Galloway and Stewart Dunlop, "A Critique of Definitions of the Cultural and Creative Industries in Public Policy," ibid.13, no. 1 (2007); Nicholad Garnham, "From Cultural to Creative Industries," ibid.11 (2005). Sarah Brouillette speaks eloquently to the implications for literature of the rise of management theory in policymaking, particularly with regard to the influence of Richard Florida. See Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*.

dissemination of cultural industries discourse around the world has been "tentative" rather than hegemonic and that, in any case, the whole matter need not be seen as a zero sum game.[208] In turning his attention to the Caribbean and other "smaller and poorer countries of the Global South," he determines that such countries as Jamaica, "must engage, as a precondition, with cultural heritage, poverty alleviation and basic infrastructure."[209] He goes on to comment, "In the global South, the [cultural industries] discourse can be used to leverage support for the development of basic infrastructure, both cultural and [Information and Communications Technology] – the 'unquestioned prestige' of the latter absolutely cannot be taken for granted."[210] It seems to me, rather, that one could not conceivably speak so frankly of instrumental culture as a strategic flip side of information and communications technology if it were not for the direct intervention of the Trojan horse of neoliberal discourse in the cultural realm. Such intervention comes across with startling frequency in Jamaican political rhetoric, as when, in 2007, the Prime Minister asserted that "cultural industries represent Jamaica's natural competitive advantage."[211] In other words, Cunningham is trying to write a revisionist history of the fall of Troy in which the horse was actually decorative—a cultural object—and the city mysteriously defeated itself.

My hunch is that this sort of temporal and categorical confusion has been as much the result of policymakers' consternation around how to administer culture as it is a source of consternation for historians. The all-encompassing, economistic logic of neoliberalism, formally implemented in Jamaica in 1977 with the introduction of IMF involvement in the country's

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[208] Cunningham, "Trojan Horse or Rorschach Blot? Creative Industries Discourse around the World," 376.
[209] Ibid., 381.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Quoted in Supachai Panitchpakdi and Kemal Dervis, "The Challenge of Assessing the Creative Economy: Towards Informed Policy-Making," (Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2008), 54.

finances and financial policies, caused many culture supporters to bridle at the necessity of articulating artistic value in dollars and cents. That is, such economic interventions came with hegemonic strings attached and ramified through the political structure during the latter decades of the century, including ministries and agencies responsible for developing cultural policy. Hence we observe a sincere conundrum regarding the ways in which it has become necessary to value art, or at least to articulate its value, and, in this, poetry is a kind of limit case. It turns out that it is very, very difficult to argue for the instrumental value of poetry.[212] As Jamaica's Senior Director of Entertainment in the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment told me, it has become very difficult to secure funding for a cultural project unless it brings "heads to beds."[213] And yet, this Senior Director was also one of the central figures responsible for a new, government-sponsored, fully-resourced poet laureate program. So perhaps, as Cunningham avers, this is not a zero-sum game, though one retains an uneasy sense that the Jamaican laureateship might provide a case-in-point for the general success of the Trojan horse of neoliberal discourse and policy in one small nation of the Global South.

## Jamaica Cultural Development Commission

Jumping back in time, again, in 1968, Seaga's government was continuing work that he had begun as a Minister of Community Development, and one of his priorities became the establishment of the Jamaica Festival Commission, an organization tasked with planning and organizing "various activities of [Jamaica's independence] Festival in conjunction with the private

[212] This approach has been productively pursued in sociological assessments of the European literary field. See, for instance, Dubois and François, "Career Paths and Hierarchies in the Pure Pole of the Literary Field: The Case of Contemporary Poetry."

[213] Gillian McDaniel, interviewed by the author at the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Kingston, Jamaica, 2015.

sector" and encouraging "independence anniversary celebrations throughout the island each year by means of competitions, exhibitions and parades."[214] From the beginning, the commission was imagined as a nation-building, cultural collaboration between public and private interests, and it continues in that capacity today under a different title. In 1977, the government of Michael Manley proposed to change the name of the organization to "Community Cultural Development Commission" because the directive "to stimulate the development of local talents" involved "an on-going community cultural programme which has been necessary in order to unearth the talent presented in the national finals at Festival time, which coincides with our independence celebrations."[215] The name was finally changed to the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC) in 1980. Along with the change in name came a broader remit and a larger budget.

One of Jamaica's most pressing needs, according to the JCDC's Drama, Speech, and Literary Arts specialist Andrew Brodber, is to discover creative talent and give it a stage as well as an opportunity for growth. Brodber believes the JCDC provides those services through literary competitions during the annual independence celebrations. In response to a question about how the competitions relate to the JCDC's larger mission, Brodber described a dual purpose, saying, "We would like to find the creative talent that exists and get that talent a place and a voice…But yes there is a concern about quality. What are works that can stand up to international scrutiny?" Responding to his own question, he continued,

> Let's look at Dr. Kei Miller, for example, who entered our competition and won gold in poetry. He's now *Dr. Kei Miller*. He went overseas and did his poetry…and now he's a doctor of poetry. So we see that our vehicle continues to be very useful…it is our duty to

[214] "Bill for establishment of the Jamaica Festival Commission," National Archive of Jamaica, 1B/31/426/1968.
[215] "Change name of Jamaica Festival Commission," National Archive of Jamaica, 1B/31/502 – 1977.

> say, "All right, you have talent. Show us it's real talent. We will tell you if it's good talent."[216]

Dr. Kei Miller marks an interesting case in relation to the JCDC's work, in that he epitomizes success as defined through the eyes of an administrator sensitively attuned to the necessity of international networks of prestige in the literary industry. Miller grew up in Kingston, attended the University of West Indies at Mona, and earned Ph.D. from the University of Glasgow. In 2014, he won the prestigious Forward Prize for poetry for his volume, *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*. For Miller's part, the JCDC prizes were part of the journey, but ultimately something he feels he "outgrew after a year or two."[217] Miller's relationship to the JCDC competitions is necessarily inflected by later success, as well as his access to other routes to publicity during his early years. He cites, for example, a column in a Kingston newspaper, *The Observer*, which was edited by a poet and mentor, Wayne Brown. Miller describes the pages of *The Observer* as a space, a platform, that pushed him to produce work of a very high quality. Miller's is not precisely the story of one exalted from murky obscurity by the JCDC's benevolent recognition. At the same time, one could imagine writers with a type of talent not nurtured, as Miller's was, by Jamaica's premier poets and who would benefit in a primary way from the JCDC's efforts.

What, then, is the nature of the linkage among the JCDC's community-oriented

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[216] The JCDC website also notes, "Professor Mervyn Morris, Dennis Scott, Olive Senior, Trevor Rhone, Hazel Campbell, Diane Browne, Michael Reckord, Michael Bailey are some of the names recognized in the field who have benefited from the exposure gained through this competition." See http://www.jcdc.gov.jm/literary_arts. Brodber also mentioned Mervyn Morris in our interview, saying, "Prof. Morris was with us as a competitor from the very start and then he evolved to the point where he became one of our chief judges for poetry. First of all he wrote for essay, and then he became more and more involved in poetry as time went by. Professor of English eventually and then poet Laureate currently." Andrew Brodber, interviewed by the author at the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, Kingston, Jamaica, 2015.

[217] Kei Miller, interviewed by the author at London, U.K., 2015.

activities, nation-building and, ultimately, international acclaim? As expressed by Brodber, a primary goal of the organization is to discover and give a space for works that can "stand up" to international scrutiny—that can succeed on the world stage. But for Brodber, the point is not simply to succeed, but, as Louise Bennett puts it, to colonize in reverse. Later in our conversation, discussing the policy directive to develop Jamaica into a "cultural superstate," Brodber offered the analogy of the Hollywood film industry, noting that the world has consumed the Rastafari image and that Jamaica, though a small island, is able nonetheless to influence global tastemaking, albeit in an indirect way. Recalling the presence of a dreadlocked villain in the film, *The Matrix*, he said, "If our borders are limiting, and we're going to break that order and infiltrate every available place, as Hollywood does, with our creativity, that is the wider vision, because the globe is at our fingertips today."[218] At the same time, Brodber envisions Jamaican poetry as galvanizing national unity, comparing laureate Mervyn Morris to Maya Angelou in his potential to "inspire the nation."[219]

Although the JCDC was initially planned as a public-private partnership, the government supplies the majority of the operating expenses.[220] In 2004, for instance, the Jamaican taxpayers supplied J$135.3 million of the JCDC's J$153.6 million income—a cool 88.1%.[221] By 2012, that percentage had dropped slightly to 84.4% of J$313.7 million, of which "Art Development Expenses" for the "Creative writing and literacy competition" took a meager

[218] Andrew Brodber, interviewed by the author at the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, Kingston, Jamaica, 2015.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Prize amounts range wildly, with song competitions taking the largest prizes. In 2010, that included J$1 million (about $11,000 USD) and a car. Brodber also notes that the organization fights to secure commitments from private sources for prize funds, though he declined to provide specific examples.
[221] Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, Annual Report 2003-2004.

J$391,148, down from 2011, when it received J$575,974.[222] Compare that to the music competition, which received J$ 7.4 million in 2012. This cash disparity between literature and the other arts emphasizes both the relatively minimal amount of capital necessary to support literature, as well as the extreme importance Jamaica has placed on popular music in the wake of Bob Marley's international success. And as only one portion of the literacy and creative writing competition, poetry accounts for only a small portion of that budget. At the same time, strikingly, poetry accounts for roughly 75% of the festival contest entries for literature. Brodber suspects that people send in poetry "because it's short," but he also suspects that in Jamaica

> the poet is more favored in some kind of way… as if his work is more accessible…And we find so much more of it in the atmosphere. It's so much easier to come in contact with the poet or with poems than the other forms.[223]

Poetry is indeed pervasive in Jamaican cultural life, especially if we consider lyric in its broadest sense. The performance of poetry on the island ranges from the lyrics of dance hall performers to the populist lyrics of the Jamaican Poetry Society to readings held at the University of West Indies at Mona and readings set up by the National Library in Kingston. The genre serves as a vehicle of cultural prestige at varying social levels, but none so much as elite literary culture.

Understandably, the JCDC falls in line with the larger thrust of cultural policy in Jamaica and its neoliberal logic, which activates again the primary problem of poetic value this chapter has been pursuing. As Brodber puts it, "We need to turn our creative resources into more financially rewarding situations. How do we turn the works of poets into commercially viable

[222] Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, Annual Report 2011-2012.
[223] Andrew Brodber, interviewed by the author at the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, Kingston, Jamaica, 2015.

things?"[224] He has no easy answer, but the force of this imperative is such that even his considerations of cultural capital tend towards the logic of money.

Alongside a vision of a nation unified by a poetic figurehead, Brodber's interest in moving Jamaican artists out onto an international stage—his concern with infiltrating the globe with Jamaican creativity—symptomizes the logic of neoliberal capital in the cultural workings of the nation, but it also reveals the presence of an epistemological fault line that is the direct result of the way Jamaican public agencies and those of other developing nations must relate to the international accreditation of cultural capital, which can produce extraordinary tension when weighed against the deeply communitarian, local concerns for which the organizations were often founded.[225]

## The Library of Jamaica and the Poet Laureate

In addition to influencing routes to textual production, public finances have also played a key role in the development of Jamaica's literary prestige apparatus. The Jamaican poet laureateship, for example, is a recent, state-sponsored undertaking that has nationalized what was originally the purview of a private club and has sent shockwaves through the literary community.

The office of the poet laureate of Jamaica now falls under the responsibility of the Library of Jamaica, which is in turn the responsibility of the Ministry of Youth and Culture. Founded in 1894 as the West India Reference Library, the library was originally part of the Institute of Jamaica and remained part of it until 2010. During my time in Jamaica I was fortunate to see the

[224] ibid.

[225] At its most extreme, this necessary engagement with international prestige produces strikingly hyperbolic, syncretic rhetoric in the organization's self-description. The current website (2015), for instance, describes the JCDC as Jamaica's "prime vehicle and the cultural cog for the nurturing of cultural excellence, patriotism and social hegemony." http://www.jcdc.gov.jm/about_jcdc

workings of the library and the laureate program firsthand, as well as to speak with a number of individuals who were responsible for establishing the program and running it on a day-to-day basis. In one of my conversations, I was surprised to learn that the program was funded via two primary channels, one deriving from the Ministry of Youth and Culture and the other, which supplies the bulk of the funds, deriving from the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment. Additional funds arrived from the Culture, Health, Arts, Sports, and Education (CHASE) fund, a quasi-autonomous government agency that disseminates tax revenue derived as part of the national lottery income. The money contributed by the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment originated ultimately with tourists to the island. Collected via a "head tax" on every visitor to Jamaica, the tax revenue goes into a Tourism Enhancement Fund and is made available for projects that promote "growth and development in the tourism sector."[226]

Consider this investment on the part of Tourism and Entertainment interests. How might one operationalize poetry as a touristic resource? To quote Kristin Laing, who at the time served as Publicity Officer for the Library of Jamaica and who was working far from the offices where policy is written—an extraordinary woman who ran many aspects of the laureate program single-handedly during its early days—she says, "We wanted to make sure poetry is recognized as it should be and turn Kingston into the literary capital of the Caribbean."[227] When I asked what she meant, she said, "We've already turned Jamaica into the music capital of the world," situating the literary field alongside Marley's lyricism and international success. At the same time, however, she felt the need to attenuate her ambition for the program, saying, "I guess more than the Caribbean that of the region, and the area – Kingston recognized for more than just parties

[226] http://www.mot.gov.jm/content/tourism-enhancement-fund
227 Kristin Laing, interviewed by the author at Manchester, Jamaica, 2014.

and business – and also to get poetry to the rest of the world."[228] As her comments suggest, a thread of precarious optimism ran through our conversation, and the uncertainty of future funding played a major role in Laing's sense of ambition for the laureateship. Reflecting on her ambitions for poetry in Jamaica, she lamented, "I'm living in the world where poetry and literature is on top, where in reality it's not."[229]

Laing's comments speak powerfully to the degree to which art worlds can exist at a remove from the world of "reality," even though both worlds exist in the same physical space and are often interpenetrated by the same financial realities.[230] I have often wondered since we spoke what exactly Laing meant by the "real world." After all, the world in which poetry is on top is real, but Laing's implication seemed to be that it is real only for some, or only in a provisional sense.

# Part II: Case Studies

## Poetic Worlds

Laing's comment might naturally lead us to ask, "Where, in point of fact, is the real world of literary production and taste making?" Finding my way into multiple literary cultures over the course of my research, in a very real sense I entered multiple, often-intersecting worlds that maintain quasi-independent criteria for what counts as literature at all. The rest of this chapter represents a deep dive into forms of literary worlding that I encountered and that have been tethered to political institutions in Jamaica. Across these cases, we might observe that the

[228] ibid.
[229] ibid.
[230] Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*; Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982).

worlds are never discontinuous with one another but that the logic of the nation as an organizing category might not always fit conveniently with the worlds the institutions configure. Indeed, the center-periphery structure that configures the ways we tend to assess the value of Anglophone literariness means that the nation often means rather less than the strength of the lines we can draw between particular writers and multinational, sacralizing institutions. Reviews in prominent publications, for example, give one form of access to metropolitan assessments of Jamaican writings. Reviews in prominent publications, for example, give one form of access to metropolitan assessments of Jamaican writings. Then there are the rarer, candid moments of expression. An appraisal by one self-appointed American tastemaker, for instance, describes J.E. Clare McFarlane's 1949 anthology, *A Treasury of Jamaican Poetry*, in damning terms. A note penned in the front of a copy of the text held at Emory's rare book library reads,

> This somewhat pathetic anthology is a typical 'poetry circle' product. It certainly does not 'acquaint the young people of the West Indies with the poetic tradition which has been fostered in their lovely islands,' and its use in West Indian schools will do much to stifle genuine poetic talent.[231]

It happens that the "poetry circle" to which the critic refers is in fact the Poetry League of Jamaica, which was responsible for selecting Jamaica's first two poets laureate and included men and women in positions of real cultural and political power on the island. Notably, the independence anthology that opened this chapter includes many of the names McFarlane and company selected those dozen years earlier.

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[231] McFarlane, J.E. Clare; Cedric Dover inscriber: *A Treasury of Jamaican Poetry (*London: University of London Press), via Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University. The person in question is Cedric Dover, better known as an art critic for his *American Negro Art* than as a literary scholar. His note goes on to suggest Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, eds., *The Poetry of the Negro: 1746-1949* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1951). That volume, fascinatingly, acknowledges assistance from the Poetry League of Jamaica. Notably, it ranges much more widely than Jamaica in its pursuit of race as a descriptive category.

Such variations in value judgments and slippages in the perception of prestige should not be surprising. A basic problem in the production of cultural value has confronted all of Jamaica's writers, to greater and lesser degrees, from the inception of anything we might call Jamaican literature (and opinions vary considerably on when "Jamaican literature" began and in what manner). Moreover, this conundrum is echoed in the web of institutional relationships that have evolved to support the Jamaican poet and the fields of cultural production in which Jamaican poetry is written and consumed. Namely, the political apparatus desired a truly national literature while also requiring that national literature to be worthy of universal acclaim—authenticity in addition to global appeal. And as the years wore on, that poetry was asked to become more and more marketable—more and more instrumental to the broader economic apparatus. At the same time, from the era of decolonization onwards, we face a situation in which the nation and state appear to be diverging considerably in their aims and mechanisms of action. The moment of independence was meant to signify a re-suturing of the nation and the state, but as the following decades would show, counterpublics with a strong popular appeal were to become a permanent part of the national landscape.

These issues raise significant questions pertaining to the legibility of cultural authority and the operation of cultural capital in Jamaica after the mid-century. Cultural critics based in Jamaica, such as Carolyn Cooper, have made fascinating inroads into some of these issues by studying figures such as Louise Bennett, discussed above, who at the midcentury sat at the crossroads of popular and elite culture in Jamaica.[232] My primary concern here is less orature than literature and the mechanisms of textual production, particularly where the state has a hand in

[232] Carolyn Cooper, "'West Indies Plight': Louise Bennett and the Cultural Politics of Federation," *Social and Economic Studies* 48, no. 4 (1999).

the matter. And in the sections that follow, I try to give shape and exemplary form to the worlds that the state-sponsored institutions explored above have created in Jamaica during the last 150 years.

## Histories, Large and Small: Lorna Goodison and the Institute of Jamaica

The Institute of Jamaica's support for literature has arrived in a variety of forms. According to a retrospective pamphlet, "Through its interpretation of the term 'literature' in its widest sense, the organization sought to promote scholarship by fostering a love of learning and also sought to cultivate 'men of letters' in the society."[233] This type of activity is often termed "audience development." Teach children to appreciate poetry, the logic runs, and perhaps they will continue to appreciate it as adults.[234] In terms of direct impact on publishing, the Institute from the late nineteenth century maintained two primary production circuits in the form of *Jamaica Journal*, which began in 1896 as the *Journal of the Institute of Jamaica*, and in the form of direct publishing efforts by the Institute, which ran sporadically. *Jamaica Journal* in its current, quarterly form began in 1967 and has run consistently since except for a short break between 2002 and 2004.[235] The current iteration of the *Journal* has been edited by, among others, Alex Gradussov, Shirley Maynier Burke, Olive Senior, Leeta Hearne, and most recently Kim Robinson-Walcott. Many of Jamaica's eminent poets have also served the Institute and the

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[233] C. McKenzie, "The Institute of Jamaica: A Cultural Catalyst. An Exhibition at the National Library of Jamaica, Aug-Dec, 1986," ed. National Library of Jamaica (Kingston: Jamaica Information Service, 1986). National Archive of Jamaica, 1B/36/2/421.

[234] While it seems intuitive, there is also some empirical credibility to this approach. In 2006, the US-based Poetry Foundation paid to have a survey conducted, which found, "People who remain poetry readers and listeners into adulthood studied poetry more extensively when they attended elementary and high school." The survey was limited to the United States, but the results reflect the overwhelming sense given by my poet interviewees that early, positive experiences were principally responsible for their pursuit of poetry later in life. Norman Bradburn, Kathleen Parks, and Michael Reynolds, "Poetry in America: A Summary of the Study," (Chicago: The Poetry Foundation, 2006).

[235] There is also indication that there was, at some point, another hiatus in the publication of the *Journal of the Institute of Jamaica*, which was resolved in 1941. Institute of Jamaica, Report for the year ended December 31st, 1941.

magazine, including Mervyn Morris, Neville Dawes, and Edward Baugh.

As an official vehicle of Jamaican culture, the *Journal* has found readers around the world, and indeed, I am told, it perhaps finds more readers abroad than at home.[236] In the first issues, which I found fortuitously archived online, the journal's masthead lists prices for the U.S. and Canada, the West Indies, and Europe. By 1971, Africa, Asia, and Australia were added to the list. The magazine bears the imprint of the Institute, travels around the world, and remains an important mediator of Jamaica's cultural identity.

One of the most important cultural figures of her generation, painter, novelist, memoirist, short-story writer, and poet Lorna Goodison began publishing poems in *Jamaica Journal* as early as 1972, including poems that would appear in slightly revised form in her first book. She would continue to publish with the *Journal* until 1989. The pages of the *Journal* served a legitimizing function for her work locally and abroad, while also implicating her in the Institute of Jamaica's production of national culture. Goodison published alongside other important Jamaican poets, such as Mervyn Morris, Jamaica's current poet laureate, and the *Journal* underlined the significance of her work through favorable reviews. In a 1981 issue, for instance, Pamela Mordecai, another prominent Jamaican writer now living in Canada, supplied a favorable "Commentary on the Poetry of Lorna Goodison."[237] The publication indexes how a relatively tight coterie of poets who published numerous times within the *Journal's* pages might be identified as particularly authoritative voices of Jamaican provenance. These are voices, I

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[236] West Indian little magazines have received attention in the scholarship. Typically mentioned are *Bim* and *Kyk-over-al*. There was also a little magazine entitled *Focus* published in Jamaica, but I have been unable to locate any definite information on it, except that it was mentioned in the introduction to a 1967 anthology. O.R. Dathorne, ed. *Caribbean Verse: An Anthology* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1967).

[237] Pamela Mordecai. *Jamaica Journal*, 1981, pp. 33-40

suggest, that we should read as legitimized in part by a bureaucratic institution run by taxpayer funds.[238]

Beyond *Jamaica Journal*, the Institute's direct publishing efforts were fraught almost from inception, operating in start-stop fashion, and the lack of a direct and continuing budget eventually scuttled the direct publishing project. However, as a pamphlet that designates the Institute a "cultural catalyst" relates,

> During the 1970's the Institute reintroduced its book publishing programme in an attempt to provide an outlet for creative writers and for historical research. The titles produced included, Lorna Goodison's first collection of poems, *Tamarind Season*; Anthony McNeill's *Credences at the Altar of Cloud*; and Vic Reid's *The Jamaicans*.[239]

In addition to the works of poets, the Institute published a moderately successful cultural heritage series, as well as a selection of biographies on Jamaicans of distinction. The Institute eventually formed a publications division headed by Olive Senior in the 1982, which was then formed into Institute of Jamaica Publications Ltd. in 1984—a limited liability company jointly financed by the National Investment Bank of Jamaica.[240]

In addition to appearing in *Jamaica Journal*, Goodison benefitted from the Institute's direct publishing efforts, in that the Institute published her first book, *Tamarind Season*. Goodison had self-published a short run of *Tamarind Season* using a Gestetner machine prior to the Institute's edition, but the Institute's backing allowed a far greater readership to experience the energy, tenderness, and grit of her language, which uses code switching between English and

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[238] Baugh notes that attempts to win funds from the private sector broke down eventually, largely due to administrative incompetence. He was unwilling, however, to name the incompetent administrator.
[239] "The Institute of Jamaica: A Cultural Catalyst," National Archive of Jamaica, 1B/36/2/421.
[240] C. McKenzie, "The Institute of Jamaica: A Cultural Catalyst. An Exhibition at the National Library of Jamaica, Aug-Dec, 1986," ed. National Library of Jamaica (Kingston: Jamaica Information Service, 1986).

Creole as a formal device and refuses to back away from difficult subject matter. In the volume, *Tamarind Season*, Goodison's lyrics deftly take up occasions of remembrance to co-constitute histories of love and horror, gain and loss that shuttle between the micro- and macro-social. For example, "A Brief History of a Jamaican Family" opens with an apostrophe to an imagined child. The speaker describes a grandfather, a "man of substance" against a religious backdrop, tracing in him the psychology of relative affluence. This is a speaker who observes carefully, minutely. The poem's attitude almost entirely lacks sentimentality when we learn, in the end, that the "fat inheritor twice removed," with his oily smile, crushes the dignity of those beneath him as his family "floats again" on "foreign money." This concern with foreign money taps into an issue of increasing salience in Jamaican society, but that has deep historical roots. Too long familiar with the ills of extractive economic arrangements, then the disastrous adjustment policies of the IMF, Jamaicans who see grim prospects for jobs on the island have been looking increasingly to the diaspora for provision of funds. According to a Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) AmericasBarometer survey, in 2006, 22% of responding Jamaican households reported receiving economic assistance from abroad. As of 2014, that percentage, at 45%, had doubled.[241] Though written a number of years prior, when economic assistance from abroad was

[241] Datasets were downloaded via web and analyzed using the R statistical computing package. The LAPOP AmericasBarometer surveys were designed in collaboration with Vanderbilt University with funding from USAID among other entities. They are primarily oriented towards gauging the status of democratic values and institutions. The statistics I cite are purely descriptive based on the surveys in question and should not be taken as the final word on Jamaica's cultural values. Indeed, there is a sense in which such surveys provide the ideal counterpoint to the poetic values and forms of ideation I have been describing. After all, survey data often obfuscate as much as they reveal, and poems, in their compression and embrace of ambiguity, often highlight—formally, figuratively, and thematically—such epistemological issues as the limits of data, perception, and knowingness. In Jamaica, the LAPOP surveys were conducted by representatives of the University of West Indies, and the surveyors attempted to interview a statistical cross-section of the population. Generally speaking, the survey seeks to ascertain the status, origin, and direction of political values. These values shade into social perceptions and moral values, as well as cultural ones, and certain types of bias clearly enter into the equation, response bias most notably. With questions ranging from degree of religiosity to the claiming of Creole as a primary language, one must take such data with a grain of salt. I think Mervyn Morris sums the matter when he writes, with brilliant use of enjambment, "Facts lie /

at lower levels, Goodison's poem accesses the issue of economic assistance with striking nuance, bearing witness to the social dynamics engendered when such matters are allowed to significantly impact class relations on the island.

Later in *Tamarind Season*, Goodison's interest in money continues in "For R&R in the Rain." In that poem, a home invasion turns out to be a personal betrayal, situating the poem's speaker precariously between terror and righteous indignation. At the climax of the poem, the poem itself becomes an item of lost possibility, a dead letter that "might have been the painless delivery." Instead, the speaker has been assaulted, with a gun, by a "money snatcher." Perhaps even before the precarity of finances in contemporary Jamaica, violence continues to fester as a site of unrelenting social tension. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the P.J. Patterson-led government underlined the problem of violent crime as a matter of policy, bringing to political prominence a problem that Jamaicans experienced as a harsh, lived reality.[242] The problem continues to be a serious one, fueled by rival gangs. According to one broad survey of Jamaicans that would include many of Goodison's generation, as of 2014, over 50% of respondents reported that someone to whom they felt close had been killed by violence. During my time in Kingston, poets of Goodison's generation as well as of the most recent, emerging generation lamented the violence endemic to life in Jamaica. One poet recalled her girlhood playing on the lawn—something she says she would fear for a child to do at the present moment, at least in that Kingston neighborhood.

For Goodison, poetry offers a way to constellate the interlinked issues of money, sociality,

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behind the poems / which are true / fictions." For further information on LAPOP survey design and other documentation, visit http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/.

[242] Sullivan, "Jamaica: Political and Economic Conditions and U.S. Relations," 3.

the bonds of friendship, and the consequences of recognizing common humanity. Considered broadly, Goodison's poetic meditations on money, its uses, and the problems that arise in its presence access the heart of Viviana Zelizer's insight about special money, which is money that signifies as more than "just money." In this sense, money is a site of precarious nonknowledge, as Georg Simmel puts it—a site that mediates the epistemological risk inherent in value judgments—a medium capable of turning friend to foe, and the occasion of deep meditation on the nature of social bonds.[243] Elsewhere in the volume, for example, Goodison refers to dowry money, invoking other special uses of money. In "On Houses," she writes of women's labor in the context of marriage and the monetary exchanges that circulate around women's bodies but never pass through their hands. Toying with the notion of agency, the beginning of the poem lets us know that the speaker has "built many houses," giving occasion to further meditate on the nature of the home. For this speaker, home can be as simple as "rooms, / with corners," created almost from nothing. Reflecting on her marriage, the woman goes on,

> You later led me to believe
> I led you to the house
> […]
> But, the kitchen grew electric
> spun me away from it.
> When you were not looking
> flung me against the dowry chest.

Correcting the narrative of the domesticating shrew, she turns to her own dissatisfaction with being the good wife. In this moment, the poem stages a collision of tradition (the dowry) and

[243] For a discussion of Simmel on nonknowledge, see Matthias Gross, "'Objective Culture' and the Development of Nonknowledge: Georg Simmel and the Reverse Side of Knowing," *Cultural Sociology* 6, no. 4 (2012).We might connect such nonknowledge in the West Indian context to Edward Baugh's discussion of "nothingness" and the posture of West Indian writers towards history. Drawing on the work of Derek Walcott and V.S. Naipaul, in particular, Baugh shows how "nothingness" might be a generative site of positive value. See Edward Baugh, "The West Indian Writer and His Quarrel with History," *small axe* 16, no. 2 (2012).

modernity (electricity) through the lens of the domestic space, illuminating the instability of those temporal categories. An ancient economisation of human life runs up against an invisible commodity that heralds a new era. But for this speaker, electricity does not bring any saving grace. The electric implements just remind her of the way her homemaking skills have become commodified, perhaps even more so when one must brag about the brand of one's appliances. Moreover, even today in Jamaica, electricity isn't a sure thing. It's there reliably, for the most part, until it isn't. To the same extent, the monetary value of the dowry is mutable. So in her present situation she has been flung against the chest that holds her value in coin, which has in tern been secreted away by her husband to whom she bids goodbye as he leaves "in a boat lined with careful money." The poem ends, "I'm inclined to think I'll build no more houses."

These microhistories reveal the sociality of value, suggesting ways in which close attention to the everyday might challenge how we think about affluence and value as such. At the same time, Goodison denies us easy answers, and at times the small observations reach out to touch issues of geopolitical importance. In the poem, "Ocho Rios," for instance, the speaker addresses international trade relations through the intimacy of a simple exchange at a market stall. The poem opens with a drift of thought that ranges over the genocidal consequences of Spanish and British colonialism. Then the speaker snaps back, and we learn she is in Ocho Rios market in Jamaica. She asks a vendor, "how much for the curry goat." The vendor replies, "Three dolla." Expressing her disattisfaction with the price, she retorts, in Creole, "Fi wan curry goat." Putting a quick end to the conversation, the vendor quips, "a four dolla fi tourist sista." Extractive colonialism has given way to tourism and tourist prices—the inevitable markup on goods for visitors to the island. For the vendor, tourism introduces a new (and successful) logic for haggling. A moment later, "sitting on a feed bag from Florida," the speaker observes, "The

sign in the square says 'Tourism, not socialism'," extending her observations to encompass the core and violently contested political debate of Jamaica's postwar years: socialism or free market economics? History tells us the answer. Returning to the Spanish, Goodison concludes the poem with a question, addressed to Queen Isabella and Christopher Columbus. She asks, tersely, "which colonizer is winning in Ocho Rios?" It is a rhetorical question. The tourist prices and feed bag from Florida confirm that the Spanish and British have fallen; neoliberalism is king, and America is its agent. A few pages later, a companion poem, "Ocho Rios II," also addresses tourism and trade relations, expressing anger and keen awareness of global financial flows by metaphorizing a tourist *as* bauxite. "Bless," the speaker says to a tourist, "even you burnt to the colour of bauxite," reflecting with incredible linguistic compression on two industries that fuel Jamaica's economy.[244]

## Poets Laureate and the Uses of Poetry

After I completed the bulk of my research for this chapter, I was pleased, if unsurprised, to learn that Goodison had been appointed as Jamaica's second state-sponsored poet laureate. While I was in Kingston, I had the pleasure to speak with the first laureate, Mervyn Morris. In the following section, I examine the development of Jamaica's poet laureateship as a way to further illustrate the rise of neoliberalism in Jamaica and the ramifications thereof for the values that have underwritten Jamaica's cultural policy and, consequently, its mechanisms of funding. And in the process, I explore the life and work of Morris, whose story and poems sit at a fascinating angle to the objectives and origins of the laureateship itself.

[244] At the time Goodison wrote the poem, tourism was Jamaica's principal money maker, followed by bauxite production and sugar. See Sullivan, "Jamaica: Political and Economic Conditions and U.S. Relations." Agriculture has since outpaced mining as the second-largest contributor to the GDP. "Jamaica," in *World Fact Book* (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019).

Jamaica's first poet laureate, Tom Redcam, pen name of Thomas MacDermot, was a Jamaican of Irish ancestry, formally recognized as Jamaica's first poet laureate by the Empire Poetry League of Jamaica in 1933 at the organization's 10th annual meeting. The program for the event, available contemporaneously for sixpence, provides a brief history of laureateship that ranges from the poets and heroes of classical antiquity to the contemporary British laureate. According to the brochure, "as far as is known no other country [than Britain] has an official laureate today," the implication being that Jamaica is embarking on something of rather special world-historical significance. The brochure further notes that it was in "few instances" even in England that poets laureate had "distinguishing merit [that] would have secured them a laurel crown as the gift of a grateful and admiring nation" (Wordsworth and Tennyson are provided as examples). Instead, the laureateship in many instances, "had little significance outside the purely official role." Such was the delicate balance between optimism and caution that "official," Jamaican cultural actors had to strike during the early days in which decolonization was not as yet part of the historical present. Here is a man—a creole multiracial nationalist poet—who epitomizes the post of laureate and perhaps even exceeds it. As J.E. Clare McFarlane, founder of the Poetry League, writes of the Jamaican laureate,

> [T]he laurel crown which we offer to Tom Redcam is in the tradition of Petrarch and Dante rather than in that of Johnson and Dryden; and this is well; for this laureateship is no mere official post: it is the outcome of his preeminence for many years as our national singer; and a tribute to political power unsurpassed by any writer of his generation in this country.[245]

Neoclassical masters provide too modest a comparison for Redcam, who McFarlane, it seems,

[245] "Jamaica Poetry League Programme – Formal Recognition of Tom Redcam as Poet Laureate of Jamaica," National Archive of Jamaica, 7/7/134.

believes to be the legitimator of Jamaican language on the scale of the Italian masters themselves. That McFarlane reaches back to the Middle Ages to express the pinnacle of cultural prestige is itself suggestive of the delayed temporality of the postcolonial experience, inasmuch as while the metropole was convulsing in the throes of modernism, an imitative relationship to the past held sway on the island alongside the desire to differentiate Jamaican culture from that of the colonizers.

Consider, for example, the first stanza of Redcam's ballade, "Now the Lignum Vitae Blows,"

> Now the Lignum Vitae blow,
> Fair-browed April enters here,
> In her hand a crimson rose,
> In her eye youth's crystal tear;
> Moonlit nights, serenely clear,
> Rock the lilac-purpled bloom,
> Robes the Lignum Vitaes wear,
> Fashioned at some mystic loom.[246]

The choice of the ballade form does not immediately mark this poem as neoclassical. After all, Ezra Pound maintained a profound interest in Provençal forms and skillfully innovated on sestinas and other varieties of troubadour verse. However, Redcam's ballade seems less a continuation of Modernist innovation than an echo of British Pre-Raphaelite verse, though it remains even more imitative than those mid-nineteenth century experiments, which often extended neoclassical routines to perform virtuoso formal gymnastics.[247] At the same time, the poem employs iconography—the Lignum Vitae tree—that carries a distinctive charge of meaning in Jamaica. Native to the island, the tree, while exceptionally ornamental with blue

[246] Tom Redcam, *Orange Valley and Other Poems* (Kingston, Jamaica: Pioneer Press, 1951), 2.
[247] Swinburne is magnificent at these sorts of gymnastics. See, for example, his "Anactoria."

flowers and a pleasing shape, can be used for a startling variety of practical purposes, from the extreme toughness of its wood, which was often used in the manufacture of ship propeller shaft bearings, to the medicinal properties of the tree's resin.[248] Hence the poem complexly embodies the general form of Caribbean cultural policy during the years leading up to independence. Situating itself at an oblique angle to anticolonial discourse and embracing imitative techniques, the poem yet attempts to localize its subject matter and, in a sense, to offer a transvaluation of neoclassical form to express something of Jamaicanness. The poem, therefore, embodies a paradox Redcam would struggle with for the rest of his life: "loyalty to Britain and love for Jamaica," the "England who mothers my soul" and the Jamaica where "I pay fe me fare an' I tell you / De Gubbena self wouden' fit / To come yah and ferancing wid me, / When I doan' brek none o' him rule."[249]

For his part, J.E. Clare McFarlane would hold onto the notion that the poet could wield political power, and he eventually took over the post of laureate himself. For McFarlane, politics and poetry went hand in hand. In an introduction to his 1945 collection of essays and addresses, he writes that around 1934, as a result of the global impact of the Great Depression, Jamaicans began to "become conscious of a condition of great stress in individual and public affairs, the nature of which no one had then attempted to define, but which could be described vaguely as a disturbance of spirit brought on by the clamorous demands of material dissatisfactions."[250] And in a later address to the Poetry League, he remarks, "We live in the twilight of an age…It is

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[248] For more on the lignum vitae vis-à-vis Jamaica, see the Jamaica Information Service website at http://jis.gov.jm/symbols/jamaican-national-flower-lignum-vitae/.

249 Redcam, Orange Valley and Other Poems, xxvi.

[250] J.E. Clare McFarlane, *The Challenge of Our Time: A Series of Essays and Addresses* (Kingston: The New Dawn Press, 1945), 11. N.B. While the volume was published in 1945, many of the addresses were given in the preceding years.

fashionable to talk about Art for Art's sake; and perhaps more fashionable to talk about Art for Money's sake," but it is ultimately the responsibility of the artist "to declare, as far as his voice will carry, what he has heard and seen."[251] While it is noteworthy that McFarlane is sensitive even in the 30s to the financial instrumentality of art, he ultimately hopes that artistic voices will disseminate a message of cosmopolitanism as embodied by Jamaica's creole, multinational island culture—cosmopolitanism as an ideological reparative to the nationalist fervor of Europe and Russia that was at that time leading the world into the jaws of World War II. In 1935, he writes, "Narrow nationalism in this day is illogical…unity is implied in…little Jamaica which for its size is probably the most cosmopolitan country on earth."[252] At the same time, he embeds Jamaica's cosmopolitanism in the sands of empire, with the conviction that poetry, of all the arts, offers a form of expression "upon which we feel certain the true foundation of this Empire rests and by which it will be preserved throughout the storm that now hangs above the horizon of civilization."[253] Almost a decade after the war, McFarlane was in 1953 elected poet laureate. He was also then serving as the first Jamaican ever appointed as financial secretary of Jamaica. This was a poet who did wield considerable political power, though perhaps not precisely through his poems, and he took to the streets and parishes, "preaching the doctrine of literary and cultural nationalism."[254] The Poetry League did not survive the fifties. When McFarlane died in 1962, so did the laureateship.

If we look back to *Jamaica Journal* during the postwar period, and to another poet who

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[251] Ibid., 27.
[252] Notably, the cosmopolitanism he cites is synonymous with worldliness and is not exactly the cosmopolitanism I intend, above. Ibid., 28-29.
[253] Ibid., 29.
[254] Wycliffe Bennett, "Mcfarlane, John Ebenezer Clare (1894-1962)," in *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*, ed. Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly (New York: Routledge, 2005).

has achieved a remarkable career as poet and scholar, the single strongest literary voice within its pages is undoubtedly Mervyn Morris. Morris also has the distinction of being Jamaica's first poet laureate since independence. Even so, outside of Jamaica he is read considerably less than Goodison. If read, he tends to be read as a scholar of dub poetry. However, on the island it is a different story. He dominates the poetry of *Jamaica Journal* in terms of quantity as well as interconnectedness with the Jamaican literary field. More to the point, his often-quiet, meticulous, and infallibly humble presence is itself an institution within the Jamaican literary community. The remainder of this chapter turns to the development of the contemporary laureateship and its funding mechanisms in conjunction with Morris's poetry to show how the poems shed new light on tensions of value that arose in the making of the office of the laureate and that persist in its enactment.

Like Goodison, Morris began publishing in *Jamaica Journal* in the late sixties, well before his first volume of poems came out in 1973. In addition to publishing poems in 10 issues between 1965 and 1989, he also published interviews with dub poets Linten Kwesi Johnson and Mikey Smith, as well as an article on Claude McKay. Since 1989, he has published a piece on Miss Lou (2004) and a review of Olive Senior's *Over the Roofs of the World* (2006). In 2008, the highly influential American-based, Jamaica-born poet, editor, and scholar Kwame Dawes published a sparkling review of Morris's *New and Selected Poems* in *Jamaica Journal*. Morris also, incidentally, served as Chairman on the Publications Committee at the Institute of Jamaica.[255] I highlight Morris's strong presence in *Jamaica Journal* as well as his status as chairman of Institute of Jamaica publications to illuminate the coincidence of his creative and

[255] See the masthead for *Jamaica Journal*, 12.42, for instance.

scholarly output with the journal's work of cultural definition and to provide a background against which to understand his selection as Jamaica's first poet laureate since independence. His work at the Institute of Jamaica and its literary organ provides one node among several that can help us better understand how cultural capital works in Jamaica, in a transnational context that involves state-sponsored institutions.[256]

Often terse and at home with ambivalence, Morris's poems frequently militate against certainty, especially where matters of identity are concerned. As he puts it, his poetry is less about conveying a message and more about "completeness – more of an attempt to capture the whole truth of the situation rather than part of it."[257] As a result, the poems are often satisfied with giving robust, nuanced expression to the shape of a problem rather than providing an answer. For instance, his 1992 volume, *Examination Centre*, offers the following poem entitled, "The Militant":

> was into painting
> butterflies
>
> & now
> is into jackboots
>
> stomping painters
> painting butterflies

A minimalist narrative of interpellation into militancy, the poem gives few clues as to why this painter of butterflies might turn not just against his medium, but also against those who practice it. Some trauma has occurred, and a remainder has taken its place that must, it appears, be

[256] The *Journal* provided a forum for Morris and other writers of developing prestige to grow their cultural capital through publication and commentary, and it enabled an international audience to encounter the work of names that would become familiar. While Morris most peoples these pages, Olive Senior, Pamela Mordecai, Anthony McNeill, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Louise Bennett, Dennis Scott, and other prominent Jamaican writers also make a good showing.

[257] Mervyn Morris, interviewed by the author at the University of West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, 2014.

exterminated. In short, the poem dramatizes a radical shift in values underwritten by unstated circumstances and unspoken—perhaps unspeakable—desires. After all, the painter-turned-militant does not have a voice. He is spoken for, though where painting failed him, violence seems to serve as a kind of voice. The poem suggests that the world of stomping butterfly painters and the world of painting butterflies are separated by a terribly thin line and, in the last resort, might depend on each other in ways that are deeply uncomfortable to consider.

So, too, does Morris's poem, "Literary Evening, Jamaica," reflect on voices heard and silenced, as well as the world in which Jamaican poetry happens. In this instance, poetry happens "In a dusty old crumbling building just fit for rats / and much too large for precious poetry circles." These opening lines give the lie to poetry's assumed cultural prestige. It happens on the page, but in "real life," or at least in that portion of real life that belongs to "culture fans" who belong to "precious poetry circles," it happens in dusty rooms. The poem goes on to dramatize a splitting between the caricatured ideal of English poetry embodied by Philip Larkin and the equally caricatured idea of Caribbean poetry as torrid and violent. Summing this strange encounter, Morris writes,

> For to us standing here, a naked nation
> Bracing ourselves for blows, what use
> Is fearfulness and bland negation?
> What now if honesty should choose
> To say, in all this world's confusion,
> That we are still too young for disillusion?

Compressing a history of violent oppression into two lines, Morris torques the collective pain of a nation into a figure for the psychological drama of the neoimperial present, dramatizing the difficulty of expression where one's choices seem to be either speaking truth to silence or walking into that silence. However, the final lines pull back even further, suggesting an extraordinarily

ambivalent answer to the impossible, existential situation that hinges on a personified honesty. What if honesty could speak? Can honesty speak? Is there yet hope? One answer, the poem suggests, is that Jamaica is in fact too young for disillusion, that Larkin's "fearfulness" has no place, there, at that particular moment,

A final poem from *Examination Centre*, "Question Time," gives another answer of sorts:

sometimes a poem
is a mask

to ritualize
connection

& preserve
a little something

shared a little
something treasured

in pretence
that privacy

lives on within
community

What poetry can do, this poem suggests, is to balance the demands of privacy and community through the artificiality of aesthetic speech—a ritual in which expectations are shared and preserved, but in which the rules of the game have always been rigged—a pretence of privacy where poetry demands community. In a sense, the poem is about the failure of poetry as a private act and, as such, an affirmation of community in spite of what the English lyric, as a genre, wants us to think. The form accomplishes its goal by dramatizing its failure, which turns out to be the failure of neoliberalism's most precious value: individualism and the desire not to preserve, but to consume.

To select Morris as the nation's poet laureate was a bold and sensible move. There was

little debate surrounding his appointment, even though several other prominent figures were in the running. He lives in Jamaica and has supported literary aspirants for decades. His poems are subtle but often speak to relevant social issues. His public presence is subdued but authoritative. Morris makes the ideal scholar-diplomat. What do we make, then, of the threads that tie the production of national laureateship to its policy and fiscal beginnings? The funding channel, from tourists through the Ministry of Entertainment to the institution of Jamaican poetry via the National Library of Jamaica, suggests a smart appropriation of tourist dollars to provide a common good to the people of Jamaica. But in the case of the ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, the logic is rather more circuitous, in that the program must be seen to return value for tourists, and only then for the nation in a process that looks more cyclical than dialectical—a process that seems necessarily to run up against either the Scylla of defunding or the Charybdis of instrumentalizing poetry in the service of the GDP.[258] Like Goodison, Morris does not give a way out of these issues, but he does provide a way to understand them anew with a reparative ambivalence expressed through poetry and distinctively rooted in the Jamaican context.

## Discovering Talent, Fighting for Hegemony

In this final section, I want to spend a bit less time with a long institutional trajectory and a bit more on a specific instance to which I alluded in the earlier section on the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission. One of the JCDC's star prize winners, Kei Miller, has gone on to enjoy considerable success on the international literary stage in recent years, and in that regard he

[258] Another important point, which Brouillette makes, is that writers, Goodison and Morris included, cue us to moment of complicity with instrumental approaches to creative work as well as moments in which they wish to distance themselves. See the introduction to Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy*.

can help us begin to write a history of the present—a topic in which he is particularly interested. As we observed earlier, the JCDC is among Jamaica's cultural institutions that I encountered the most explicitly and earnestly economistic. Given this situation, if we consider Miller as an output of the JCDC, it seems fitting that Miller's work gives a rich riposte to that economistic logic. So here I want to allow the literary text to speak more vocally than the historical and institutional threads I have been developing, because I believe this particular text, taken with some of Miller's other writings, well summarizes the current situation in Jamaica, circa 2015.

Specifically, Miller's *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion* addresses the epistemological rift produced when institutions get buffeted around by the winds of political change. He dramatizes this rift in part through a dialogic exchange between a cartographer and a rastaman. In the first poem of the dialogue, the cartographer asserts,

> …My job is
> to untangle the tangled
> to unworry the concerned,
> to guide you out from cul-de-sacs
> into which you may have wrongly turned.

A visitor to Jamaica, this mapmaker luxuriates in his ability to generate a synechdoche of place on paper—a form of correctness that morphs into a form of rectitude (places you "may have wrongly turned"). Beneath his formal knowledge lies cloaked the prejudicial assumptions that motivated his predecessors' "civilizing mission" on the island. In the poems, the work of mapping, via dialogue, moves beyond creation or representation into the work of interpretation and understanding in the broadest sense. In the second poem of the dialogue, for instance,

> The rastaman has another reasoning.
> He says—now that man's job is never straight—
> forward or easy. Him work is to make thin and crushable
> all that is big and real as ourselves; is to make flat
> all that is high and rolling; is to make invisible and wutliss

> plenty things that poor people cyaa do without—like board
> houses, and the corner shop from which Miss Katie sell
> her famous peanut porridge. And then again
> the mapmaker's work is to make visible
> all them things that shoulda never exist in the first place
> like the conquest of pirates, like borders,
> like the viral spread of governments.[259]

The rastaman has another reasoning—another form of conversation or expression according to the rasta vernacular—that emerges in the form of empathy, then judgment. In the mind of the rastaman, the map is a flawed synechdoche—an impoverished and misleading representation—that contains authoritative untruths and actively diminishes the importance of things "poor people cyaa do without." For the rastaman, the map is the thinnest of thin descriptions where he demands the thickness of presence.

In his critical writing, as well, Miller has been sensitively attuned to the ways in which different kinds of knowledge assert their authority. Thinking specifically about tourism and its connection to forms of knowledge propagated by the global North, for example, he writes,

> …the scientific language of statistics and the language of sociology does not offer a template nor a vocabulary to talk about this larger thing that I want to talk about—about love and hate, and how these things have been brewing in Jamaica, if not the whole Caribbean.[260]

The core values of love and hate would seem to stray rather far from the issues of citizenship, nationhood, and public value that this chapter has been pursuing, but in a sense this matter of love and hate, and the dialogue that the concepts generate in the contest to own nationhood as a constructive act as well as a defensive act against the threat of external hegemonies—these are precisely the issues that Miller's poetry opens up in full force. Says the rastaman, "draw me a map

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[259] Kei Miller, *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014), 17.
[260] *Writing Down the Vision: Essays and Prophecies* (Leeds: Peepaltree Press, 2013), 29.

of what you see / then I will draw a map of what you never see / … / Guess me whose map will tell the larger truth?"

Importantly, the *Cartographer* poems emphasize rather than disguise their mediated quality. In addition to the cartographer and the rastaman there appears a third, external voice—a voice of witness to the dialogue, but a voice that also ventures out on its own recognizance, beyond observation. We might instead understand this voice as one of active *testimony*—an authoritative voice that creates the dialogic scene with its own sense of agency. As Miller commented to me,

> To witness is one thing, but the witness must be mobilized into testimony, and that enacts something else. So no I'm not interested in a poetry that merely witnesses. I'm interested in a poetry that testifies or that submits testimony and that sometimes submits accusation as eloquently and fairly as it can, not necessarily out of anger, sometimes out of anger. I'm very interested in a testimony that can accuse humorously, if only because it makes you more willing to accept the truth of the accusation.[261]

In an introductory poem entitled "What the Mapmaker Ought to Know," for instance, we find a condensation of space and time. The voice avers, "On this island things fidget. / Even history." We begin to suspect that the history held up for inspection is an unwieldy thing, neither fish nor fowl, and certainly not something we might subject to a straightforward dialectical analysis. The testimonial voice intervenes in the dialectical contest, patiently constructing for the reader a ground of being able to communicate knowingness in a new register. The third voice later interjects, for example, saying,

> For the rastaman—it is true—dismisses
> too easily the cartographic view;
> believes himself slighted
> by its imperial gaze.[262]

[261] Kei Miller, interviewed by the author at London, U.K., 2015.
[262] Miller, *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*, 21.

This perspective resituates issues of aesthetic and epistemic autonomy for the reader by testifying to the conflicting perspectives rather than producing a tidy dialectical resolution.[263] In fact, the poem fails to access a dialectical resolution to the extent that both men's argumentative premises are shown to be already compromised—compromised by their cultural and historical constitution and compromised through acts of empathy and, ultimately, by the supervening voice of testimony that stands as counterpoint to the scientific project of gathering data and mapping it out.

Miller's volume is also sensitive to material realities, and in a poem entitled "Roads," the third voice captures well the tension between cultural production and the material reality underlying economic interventions in Jamaica, specifically slavery and later neocolonial claims on Jamaican land. He writes,

> But the cartographer, it is true,
> dismisses too easily the rastaman's view,
> has never read his provocative dissertation—
> 'Kepture Land' as Identity Reclamation
> in Postcolonial Jamaica. Hell!
> the cartographer did not even know
> the rastaman had a PhD (from Glasgow
> no less)…[264]

Lashing back at our inclination to essentialize the rastaman as an uneducated mystic, Miller makes him a cultural critic with a doctorate from Scotland (like Miller)—a not-unrealistic character capable of succeeding according to a Western rubric of intellectualism. For this highly educated rasta, the idea of Zion isn't so much Elysian fields as it is "a receipts and payments

[263] The dialectic approach assumes clear winners and losers, which is to say hegemonic resolutions to contesting perspectives or ideologies. See Timothy Reiss, *Against Autonomy: Global Dialectics of Cultural Exchange* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002).
[264] Miller, *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*, 34.

day"—a temporality and a form of justice rather than a location to be mapped and acquired.

Importantly, *Cartographer* dramatizes an unresolved encounter. The highly educated rastaman, for instance, turns to an economic metaphor to express the pith of his faith. Such irresolution testifies to the difficulty of squaring cartographic science and rasta belief (every episteme has an aspect of belief, perhaps especially where belief is decried) while the text itself circulates in a climate of cultural and economic exchange. Miller's book contains (in the active sense) both Thomas's notion of modern blackness (as an attempt to reappropriate black identity) and the logic of cartography (as a knowledge-producing science connected to a history of colonization), and he situates the message through a testimonial voice. The creation of a map is a first step in capitalist value creation—the inscription of place and material onto a transferable instrument—and in his own way, Miller testifies to the challenge of empathy and accusation across cultures, which is often communicated implicitly through the movement of capital, through the dialogism of poetry.

Miller's poems in *Cartographer* incisively and with generosity address not just particular concepts but entire modes of thinking, taking as a primary topos the shifting terrain on which our certainties—emotional and intellectual, as well as the middle ranges that connect the two—are constructed. At the same time, the volume does not suggest an objective perspective (it begins with a rasta heartbless and ends with the rastaman's voice), and much accusation can be read through it. At the heart of the volume, however, is an attempt to outline and inquire into a ground of being, thinking, and imagining that comprehends what I have been describing as neoliberal ideology as well as to imagine a way into other modes of being and thinking—all while heeding the limits of empathy. Miller is able, for instance, to imagine the narrator into the skin and the mind of the mapmaker, giving him a voice that speaks with eloquence and metaphor

rather than only through the logic of the surveyor's science. The cartographer says, for example,

> …what are turtles born with
> if not maps that break
> eggs and pull them up from sand
> guide them towards ocean instead of land?
>
> Still, he wonders
> if on his map he made our roads a little
> smoother, a little straighter, as if in drawing
> he might erase a small bit of history's disgrace.[265]

The metaphor of the turtle gives life to the notion of an organic, abstract map that the mapmaker's craft makes solid and real. And we learn that for the cartographer, his personal sensitivity runs deeper, to a place of intergenerational guilt, and he (with all the privilege that it entails) suspects that his sensitivity in carrying out an intellectual task more precisely might somehow repair "history's disgrace" for the island. I note this rationalization in particular because Miller elsewhere explains in direct terms why such perspectives can be profoundly damaging. He writes, speaking here of himself as well,

> …here is a truth I now believe: that whenever we belong to a privileged class or race or group of any kind, whenever such a group is accused of their oppressive behaviors, then they/we begin to demand "nuance" or the avoidance of "easy generalizations"…In such moments we are not seeking nuance at all; rather, we are seeking absolution.[266]

Without access to absolution, one is left with few choices. One may choose silence, accusation, or repression. But there are other ways to respond that speak profoundly to what the poet might accomplish as a cultural actor in the Jamaican context.

Cultural entrepreneurship is one such manner of active response, and while the JCDC might see an opportunity to capitalize cultural products in an economic sense, we must also see

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[265] Ibid., 29.
[266] Miller, *Writing Down the Vision: Essays and Prophecies*, 93.

the savvy with which poets such as Miller negotiate international circuits of cultural prestige through their writing. Arguably, Miller was able to win a major prize with a volume containing a clear-throated rasta voice only by virtue of the rastaman's engagement with a European-seeming interlocutor. Miller brought this to my attention as he reflected on where his next volume might begin. He pondered the idea of writing something "that could only be situated in Jamaica," with the understanding that such a work would not be appealing to judges of the major literary prizes.[267] This sort of strategizing is now part and parcel of the creative task for Jamaican writers, though precisely to what extent that is true is difficult to quantify. Indeed, for Miller, a primary task is to question the forms of knowledge that would quantify creativity or put a numeric value on human relationships, including relationships mediated by aesthetic objects. Speaking of the troubled 1970s, for instance, he writes,

> Jamaicans have always been inventive. Many decided they would achieve their possibilities for themselves. What helped was that at this very moment, the large-scale importations of illegal guns had begun. Take note of the following recipe: arm people with a message and then with a machine gun, and they will believe that the second thing can achieve the first; they will believe that guns can achieve love…And neither sociology nor homicide statistics can pinpoint when the prophesied love turned to hate.[268]

Covert United States intervention in Jamaica's domestic affairs during the Cold War led to an exponential increase of violence and immiseration, particularly in and around Kingston. Without addressing these matters directly, Miller's *Cartographer* provides a verbal map that testifies with necessary ambiguity to the tensions between different forms of knowledge that persist on the island and that emerge symptomatically in its cultural policy. To this extent, Miller eschews the charge of cultural entrepreneurship while actively performing its necessity. And as for what

[267] Kei Miller, interviewed by the author at London, U.K., 2015.
[268] Miller, *Writing Down the Vision: Essays and Prophecies*, 30.

poetry can do, as he put it, with a sly grin, “Can poetry do anything? That’s a million dollar question at every moment.”

# Chapter 3: Accounting for Poetry in England and Northern Ireland

## Historical Overview

*I would think the British…do see poetry as one of their national art forms. I think poetry is really very important to us, even though we don't appear to buy it very much.*

— Antonia Byatt, Literature Director, Arts Council England[269]

During a trip to London in the summer of 2015, I was able to locate Arts Council archival material in the Victoria & Albert collections and at the British Library. In those collections, I discovered handwritten account books and annual reports that detail expenses for much of the post-war period on what one annual report calls "the serious pleasures."[270] Using those account books in addition to annual reports, I was able to work out the total public funds allocated to the Arts Council of Great Britain from 1952-1990. That done, I isolated the funds allocated specifically to literature. Opportunistically, based on the available information, and to give a more detailed view of how the funds were distributed, I zoomed in on initiatives of the 1970s to track precisely how poetic efforts were funded. Although account books and annual reports also only tell part of the story, these archival records open up a fascinating history with significant stakes for the fate of British poetry.

Consequently, I open this chapter by examining, at some length, the current situation of literary history regarding post-World War II British poetry alongside the institutional history of

[269] Antonia Byatt, interviewed by the author at Arts Council England, London, U.K., 2015.
[270] "The Arts Council of Great Britain Annual Report," (London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1951), 1.

arts funding in the United Kingdom during from the 1950s to the 1990s. The literary history and historiography emerge from a review of secondary sources, while the history of arts funding comes from a combination of archival, interview, and secondary sources.

As I was working through the archival material, having also read some of the poetry that was funded by those efforts, I developed a few working intuitions regarding what I would find on a deeper dive. These intuitions were a necessary aspect of the work, as the body of primary sources was broad and deep, and I needed to anchor the analysis. So here were my working assumptions, based on an initial dive into the material: I supposed, first, that I would find that literature had received a small portion of the total budget and that allocation to literature as a percentage of the net budget would not vary much over time. In other words, I came to assume that literature didn't get very much money, and that the percentage of the whole that it received hadn't really changed much over the years. I also came to expect that direct grants to writers would constitute the primary mode of ACGB intervention for poetry. I further came to expect that the ACGB annual reports would articulate specific values vis-à-vis art in order to justify ongoing expenditure and that the specific values the reports espoused would vary quite a bit over time and reflect the political concerns of the moment. So there were quite a few moving pieces and quite a few assumptions in play as this work progressed. It turns out I was right and wrong at the same time, and it takes a bit of work to draw out how and why, but first, a few words about the literary critical tradition.

## The Critical Tradition

At the current moment, much of the recent debate about poetic categories has occurred within the American academy and concerns itself with the American poetic tradition. However,

a crisis moment in poetry scholarship has evolved in the form of a building critical dissatisfaction with the ways we describe historical aesthetics, as well as through frustration with our lack of consensus on what we mean when we talk about poetic form and genre.[271] These lines of thinking are of no small significance to anyone thinking about poetry outside of the United States, and elements of this ongoing debate seem especially well positioned to shed critical light on the ways in which we discuss post-war British poetry, particularly in the historical-aesthetic register. This has significant consequence for how we talk about poetic values and what we mean by that in the first place.

In our current critical environment, we have become accustomed to discussing post-war British poetry along anti-modernist and neo-modernist lines, occasionally with the mediating term of neo-Romanticism. On one hand is the authorized, anti-modernist tradition of Philip Larkin, Donald Davie, the Movement—poets often disseminated by prestigious presses like Oxford or Faber. On the other hand is the peripheral, neo-modernist avant-garde of Basil Bunting, J.H. Prynne, and the British Poetry Revival—poets mostly self-published or published by small presses.[272] Certainly by the time we arrive at poets of the 1960s and '70s the debate stalls on adjudicating negative or positive reactions to modernism.[273] While that cultural rift offers

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[271] For a robust exchange on issues of lyric form, genre, and historiography, see Oren Izenberg et al., "Being Numerous," Emory College of Arts and Sciences, http://nonsite.org/the-tank/being-numerous. In his recent opus on lyric, Jonathan Culler opens by noting lyric's fraught generic situation. As he puts it, "Lyric poetry has a long history in the West but an uncertain generic status" before going on to articulate history and stakes of that uncertainty. Jonathan Culler, Theory of the *Lyric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 1.

[272] Of course, sometimes the countertradition is in fact ignored. See, for instance, Dillon Johnston in an otherwise fascinating study. Dillon Johnston, *The Poetic Economies of England and Ireland, 1912-2000* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), xiv. And in some cases, critics are in fact quite well attuned to the inadequacy of the usual modes of analysis. See, for instance, Zachary Leader's study of Movement poets in which he calls for a "more balanced reassessment" over against the usual *modus operandi*. Zachary Leader, ed. *The Movement Reconsidered: Essays on Larkin, Amis, Gunn, Davie, and Their Contemporaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

[273] As late as 2005, one can find a critic of British poetry lamenting scholars' general failure to "take in or on the explosion of British poetry in the 60s." The charge is hardly fair; but it *is* fair to say that historians of post-war British poetry routinely embrace broad-strokes formations that often underserve the poetry and the history. See

suggestive grounds for explaining literary historical developments that bridge aesthetics and ethics, overlooked poetries that do not sit well with these categories—and, indeed, that challenge them outright—want for better treatment in the criticism and historiography. The unwary binarization of post-war British poetry obviates important forms of critical observation, such as those that engage with the sometimes-acute historical and literary unpredictability of lyric.[274] Confronted by the stories which critics tell about modernism's long shadow and the various reactions against it, such nonbinary poetries and readings become material silences—in substance and disciplinary significance—in the history of lyric.[275]

Issues of category and historiography extend to form and genre, broadly, but such issues become especially salient in the critical history of lyric poetry. Specifically, the history of lyric form cannot be extricated from aspects of that history which we ignore as we assemble our

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Andrew Duncan, *Centre and Periphery in Modern British Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), ix. For a concise formulation of the dueling traditions, see Edward Larrissy, "Modernist Survivors," in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). The tendency to group British poets into an anti- or neo-modernist camp reflects a broader trend in using categorical binaries couched in historical dialectics to assess the evolution of British poetry. However, if one looks closely at the neo-modernist countertradition, it becomes difficult to wrap one's mind around a grouping that accommodates Basil Bunting and J.H. Prynne equally alongside Eric Mottram and Elaine Feinstein. All four would presumably fall out along the modernist continuum, but even in my groupings Bunting's Eliotic, nearly tribalistic modernism seems far removed from Prynne's more Poundian, obtuse invigilation of the historical workings of the language. Both Bunting and Prynne, by turn, sit uncomfortably alongside the Americanness of Mottram's Beat-inflected poems and the breathy prosody Feinstein inherited from the Objectivists. Moreover, the simultaneity of different aesthetic modes troubles the historical narrative, since types of poetry that operate before and beyond the modernist dialectic evolved during the post-war years with considerable vigor. For a broader view that largely avoids the pitfalls I'm describing, see Eric Falci, *The Cambridge Introduction to British Poetry, 1945-2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[274] In a recent essay on lyric and ethics, John Michael refers to this feature of lyric reading as a "problematic involution of literature and history," and Jonathan Culler poignantly sums up the problem, noting, "…above all it is the unpredictability of lyric's efficacy and the different kinds of framings to which it is subject that make any reflection on lyric and society a process in which the analyst cannot be but humbled and dismayed by the contingency of his or her own discourse." John Michael, "Lyric History: Temporality, Rhetoric, and the Ethics of Poetry," *ELH* 48, no. 2 (2017): 266; Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 348.

[275] The vigor—and instability—of this sort of two-traditions thinking in the British context is handily illustrated by the introduction to Peter Barry's *Poetry Wars*, which arrives at no fewer than eight binary formulations, settling finally on "conservative v. radicals." Peter Barry, *Poetry Wars: British Poetry of the 1970s and the Battle of Earls Court* (Cambridge: Salt, 2007), 8.

knowledge about it. For the study of lyric, such sites of ignorance have enabled "critical fantasies" that amount, as Meredith Martin suggestively argues, to our definition of lyric itself. Such fantasies range from the definition of lyric as the utterance overheard to notions of "preliterate universalism" and other pieties that are similarly rooted in institutional histories and pedagogical practices rather than in the history of the forms themselves.[276] For the post-war British tradition, the most consequential fantasy has been one that identifies particular poetic forms with particular ethical commitments. This fantasy, in the form of an analogy, says that neo-modernist poetics equals a communitarian ethics, while anti-modernist poetics is in cahoots with neoliberalism.[277] The fantasy offers a seductive, dichotomous account of British literature based on an establishment / anti-establishment binary that parallels elements of the class warfare which came to characterize Britain during the latter half of the century. Moving into the final decades of the twentieth century, labor disputes leading into the Thatcherism of the 80s only reinforced the narrative of king and rebel, citizen and alien, the authorized and the inadmissible.[278]

However, a more capacious view of post-war British poetry must intervene in this formal-

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[276] Meredith Martin, ""Imperfectly Civilized": Ballads, Nations, and Histories of Form," *ELH* 82, no. 2 (2015): 361.

[277] Peter Middleton offers a good overview of the matter that I think is also symptomatic of the problem the politicized binary poses for criticism. See Peter Middleton, "Poetry after 1970," in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*, ed. Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), especially pp. 770-71.

[278] Moreover, the two-traditions narrative has proven a generative model for thinking about literary history in other geographies. In the American context, according to Oren Izenberg, we find "a nearly unanimous literary-historical consensus that would divide poetry into two warring camps—post-Romantic and postmodern; symbolist and constructivist; traditionalist and avant-garde—camps that would pit form against form on grounds at once aesthetic and ethical." Though looking at the American context, he also finds this dialectic problematic and tries to shift the terms of the debate by arguing for poetry as a ground of social life. This sort of claim goes beyond my purpose here. Whether or not we agree with Izenberg's claim regarding poetry and sociality, other scholars of American poetry have also begun to seriously question the two-traditions approach, suggesting that such aesthetic-ethical binaries both obscure important aesthetic concerns and, on a strictly historical basis, fail to hold up under scrutiny. Introduction to Oren Izenberg, *Being Numerous: Poetry and the Ground of Social Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). The most influential thread of the two traditions narrative derives from Marjorie Perloff, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). For a more recent illustration, see Heinz Ickstadt, "For Love and Language: The Poetry of Robert Creeley," in *Modernism Revisited: Transgressing Boundaries and Strategies of Renewal In* ed. Viorica Pâtea and Paul Scott Derrick (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007).

ethical determinism, because the attempts to align volumes and poets to modernism and its ethic or, alternatively, to modernism's dialectical opposites only work part-time, and they make for too poor a fit too much of the time. The "serious pleasure" that is poetry escapes that categorical tidiness. These forms of determinism mark a failing of our critical apparatus, especially in light of figures of value that emerge from institutional archives and the poems themselves, and which often show misalignment with the neo- / anti-modernist narrative.[279]

In what follows, I explore three specific poets with connections to the Arts Council. Taken together, they cover a wide swath of British soil and also reach reach over to the contested soil of Northern Ireland, or, as they say in Dublin, simply "the North." The first poet, Peter Redgrove, implicates another major name in British letters, Philip Larkin. Redgrove's story reveals the complexity of interactions between cultural and economic capital in post-war Britain. His case also opens up the challenge of method. To analyze the Council and Redgrove's work, I attempted to quantify the values that emerge in the poems and to segment those values by aesthetic and political emphasis. The second poet, Tom Pickard, provides a brief counterpoint to the institutional legitimacy of Larkin and Redgrove. Influenced by the American Beat poets, Pickard has been described as a member of the British Poetry Revival, which marked a turning of the poetic gaze onto non-London geographies, their histories, and also the fate of the less affluent of England, more broadly. Finally, I examine the work of Belfast poet Michael Longley, who worked for a decade at the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and who developed subtle and indirect methods for talking about the Troubles—methods that work to bridge deep social and cultural ruptures with metaphors that suture together modes of experience that a Catholic, a

[279] Elsewhere I make the case that a turn to the lyric voice marks one route to resolving this tension in the critical tradition. "Tom Pickard and the Voices of Post-war British Poetry," forthcoming in *Twentieth Century Literature*.

Protestant, a British soldier in Belfast, and a London barrister might find in common with one another. Taken together, these poets and their associations with the Arts Council reveal a raft of complexities, a handful of outcomes, and deeply human aspects of an organization that traveled from its wartime roots into the cultural turbulence of the 21st century.

# Back to the Archives

## Art and War

At this point, it will be useful to excavate a little more earth, to dig a little deeper into the archive. Looking back to the very beginning, to the archival prehistory of the Council, we can see with remarkable clarity how the organization was developed during World War II as a cultural weapon. In the United Kingdom, the cultural front of World War II motivated the nation's leading political minds to engineer a profound change in the way the nation defined itself through creative endeavors. In part, this meant redefining how artists might seek the largesse of potential benefactors—from courting moneyed interests to courting the idea of the nation itself through application to an official institution. This shift away from the old patronage model amounted to a new medium for the expression of national identity—enabled through investment of public funds. Officially, the object of this new way of supporting the arts was "to give financial assistance to cultural societies which may find difficulty in maintaining their activities during the war."[280] However, from the outset, this mode of national expression was also envisioned in the mode of projecting soft power, or propaganda.[281]

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[280] V&A Collections, Notes on the policy and structure of the Committee and the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/archive/ARC93352

[281] Of course, this was never explicitly stated. In the founding documents, however, we find a record of disagreement over where the funds should come from. Here is the outcome of a second meeting:
"It is not cynical but rather realistic in the true sense of the word to say that while the actual encouragement of music

The precursor organization to the Arts Council was initially called the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA). Headed by the then-Minister of Information, Lord McMillan, the CEMA initiative grew in its earliest days out of a concern, on the one hand, about the "morale of the people," and on the other hand, about "the position of the arts in war-time."[282] There seems, in particular, to have been an interest in identifying Government as taking a "constructive" approach to addressing the "problems of the 'black-out'."[283] The effort was initially funded by The Pilgrim Trust—a British trust endowed in the 1930s by an American philanthropist, of which McMillan was board president. Work by McMillan and others ultimately brought the initiative under the wing of the Treasury and, conspicuously, of Government more broadly. As a year-one post mortem report indicates,

> The Committee sees in [an expanded initiative] an opportunity for enlisting and focussing the energies of a great number of people in this country, who are at present not only cut off from their normal sources of inspiration but are actually disillusioned, without centre or conviction. We are engaged in a war to defend civilisation. Such a policy can only have meaning if the people behind it believe intensely in the value and reality of their own cultural roots. It might be possible to make the country aware that its traditions are indeed bound up in conceptions of democracy, tolerance and kindliness. These things have little meaning in the abstract but are actual and concrete when expressed through national literature, music, and painting; and *such consciousness might become the spearhead of national effort, both as a weapon of war and as a means of implementing a constructive peace* (my emphasis).[284]

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and the arts and even the preservation of the people's morale in war time might indeed be left for individual initiative and be paid for out of trust funds, it is essential…that it should be a government concern…it is of practical importance to show publicly and unmistakably that the Government cares about the cultural life of the country. This country is supposed to be fighting for civilization and democracy and if these things mean anything they mean a way of life where people have liberty and opportunity to pursue the things of peace." Circa 1940, Ibid.

[282] The memo goes on to mention, specifically, that the initiative is considered as a way to move beyond "mere subsidies for the arts, and beyond the entertaining of the depressed evacuees." Notes of informal conference held in Board's offices on Monday, 18th December, 1939, at 3:30 p.m., V&A Collections, Cultural Activities in War-time : memorandum and notes on an informal conference, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/archive/ARC93351

[283] Memorandum for informal conference, Ibid.

[284] Report, title page missing, date unknown (around 1940), V&A Collections, Progress report and outline of case to be made to the Treasury for a grant, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/archive/ARC93354

These reflections unambiguously connect the work of supporting national culture to the work of waging war, as well as to the work of shaping a victorious peace. It is in this perspective that we should understand the establishment of the government-funded Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), the organization which ultimately became the Arts Council of Great Britain.

As my opening discussion of the Council's finances and reporting suggests, the evolution of the organization tells, in layers of archival history, the story of Britain's post-war imperial decline and crisis of identity, from the "dislocation of…national life" during the war to the multicultural society and beyond.[285] We might read the Council as an evolving organ in the biological sense—one that adapts to the changing body politic, and we might read that organ as also indexing certain features of that body politic. A diseased liver, for example, might tell quite a lot about the body to which it belongs. Viewed in this way, I would affirm that the Council's efforts symptomatize important aspects of Britain's political life during the post-war period and, moreover, that the Council—far more than simply providing access to "serious pleasures"—worked strategically to shape the idea of the nation for British citizens and for the world. And in that work, poetry played a fascinating role.

## Annual Reports

As a matter of form, ACGB annual reports open with a general statement regarding the status of the Council before expanding on the specific activities of the various area-specific panels. Over time, panels such as "literature" and "music" were added, altered, and occasionally eliminated, sometimes to return, sometimes to return in a different form, sometimes not to

[285] Ibid.

return at all. The first allocation to literature arrived in 1952 for the encouragement of poetry and coincided with the formation of the poetry panel. Encouragement for fiction was not included in the council's remit until 1964. Also as a matter of form, the reports conclude with detailed financials, including a balance sheet, income statement, and cash flow statements for each panel. Reports would occasionally include a detailed list of grant recipients.

While income arrived to the Council in a variety of forms, each year's grand-in-aid from the royal treasury supplied the majority of the operating expenses. Remarkably, the Council's royal grant enjoyed almost uninterrupted growth from 1952-1990, sometimes jumping by as much as 46% in a single year. However, funding for literature was much more volatile, ranging from more than fourfold increases to 50% budget cuts. The most significant increase in literature funding occurred during the years immediately following the introduction of fiction as an area of support. In 1965, following the expansion of the poetry panel to include other types of literature, the panel enjoyed an 83% increase in funding, followed by a 446% increase the next year.[286] These significant increases coincided with substantial, but far less significant gains by the organization as a whole (22% for 1966 and 45% for 1967). However, inasmuch as literature's entire budget never accounted for more than 1.2% of the royal grant, changes that might have seemed small at the upper levels of the organization reverberated significantly through the literature section.

The shift from poetry to literature coincided with a shift in governing body to which the Council answered. From its beginnings, the ACGB was responsible to the Treasury; but 1964 marked its movement to the Department of Education and Science. 1964 was also the first year

[286] The staggering 446% increase can be explained almost entirely by a one-time £300k grant towards the Festival of Britain, as reflected in the archival account books.

that the ACGB awarded direct bursaries to poets with the intention of "buying time" for them to complete poems. The annual report makes special mention of Martin Bell as the first recipient and highlights not only the free time the money bought him, but that "he also benefitted to a marked degree from the prestige attached to the award."[287] With this overture, supplemented by a list of poetry bursary recipients for 1965, the report announces the broadening of ACGB's remit to cover "literature as well as poetry." The Council's rationale emerged as follows:

> The Arts Council has considered the position with care and has decided to turn the Poetry Panel into a Literature Panel by increasing its membership. The new panel will have the responsibility of advising the Council on ways of helping literature--particularly imaginative literature, including poetry. How far it will be able to evolve an active policy which is likely to benefit writers, and encourage publication and reading will depend to a large extent on the funds made available for this purpose. But, funds apart, the influence and authority of the Arts Council should make an important contribution towards the furtherance of these objects.[288]

In this short space, the report opens up questions of aesthetic distinction (*imaginative* literature), policy, funding, and the Council's cultural influence and authority. On the one hand, the Council styles itself as a helper, but also as an assessor and a market maker in both the cultural economy and the fiscal economy.[289] This strong move of genre expansion and existential grandstanding seems appropriate, on the one hand, for an organization with a new overseer. On the other hand, the few lines above evoke both the thorniness of the connection between finance and aesthetics and the self-perceived cultural significance of the Council as a tastemaker.

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[287] "The Arts Council of Great Britain Annual Report," (London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1965), 39.
[288] Ibid., 40.
[289] I'm using "market maker" in the formal sense, as one who can generate liquidity by setting both buy and sell prices for a financial instrument or commodity—or, as I'm implying, cultural distinction—in hopes of making a profit on the "spread" between the buy and sell prices. See Robert C. Radcliffe, *Investment: Concepts, Analysis, Strategy*, 5 ed. (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 134.

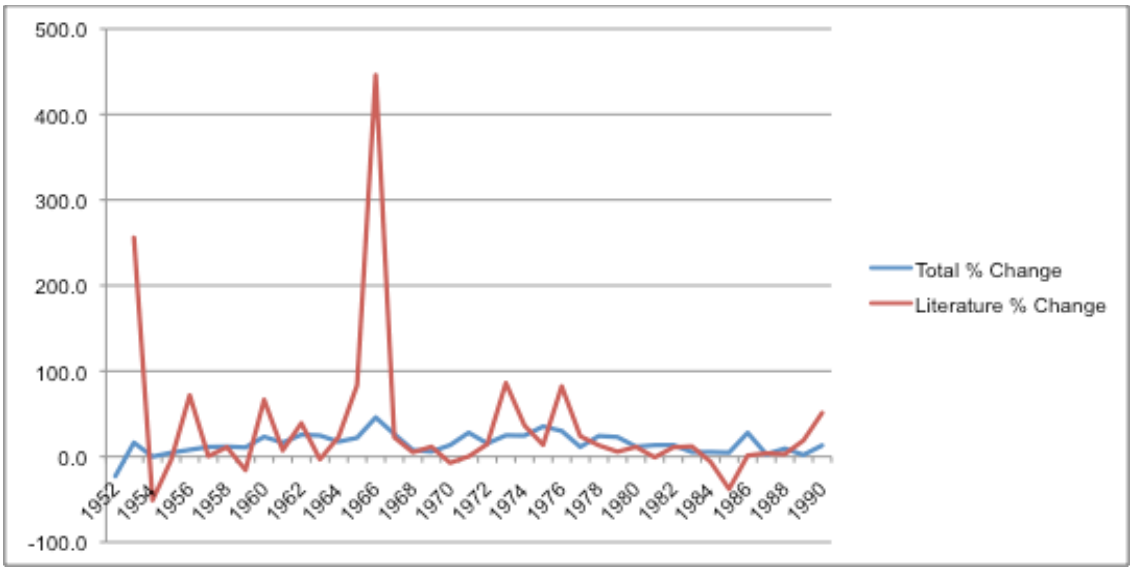


*Figure 2: ACGB Literature Funding per Annual Reports, Percent Change Over Time*

While the ACGB's royal grant steadily rose, literature's allocation swung wildly through the sixties and seventies. Peaks in funding (e.g. '67, '74, '77) can be explained largely, though not exclusively, by special grants for festivals and other one-time events. Indeed, the larger picture that begins to emerge is that of a minimal investment in literature relative to the organization's total public grant. In fact, spending on literature never accounts for more than 1.2% of the total grant, and in the early years poetry received only .1%. A 1.1% variation over 48 years confirms my original assumption that the net percentage wouldn't vary much over time, but that 1.1% variance ends up being rather more significant than it might initially appear. As ACGB leaders are quick to point out in the reports, literature does not require the same infrastructure as, say, theatre or music. A poet does not require a purpose-built building or a stage on which to perform, even though poets certainly *can* perform (and the ACGB did pay poets to perform). But this sentiment, too, can be taken too far.

In sociological scholarship, it has become a bit of a standard example to refer readers to poetry as an art that requires few resources, especially on the production end. However, as Shyon

Baumann has rightly observed, when we look a bit closer, the matter of poetry shows in a spectacular way that the production of poetic legitimacy requires more resources than the production of the cultural object alone.[290] It is partly for this reason, I would suggest, that the Council funded not only poets and novelists, but also the entire infrastructure that generates and disseminates the art, from author to publisher to reader.

## Account Books

Account books for the literature panel were available for the years 1968-1982. While the account books are in reasonably sound condition, all entries were done by hand (including corrections and references to external records); some are done in brilliant blue calligraphy, and some are nearly illegible, smudged pencil markings. Consequently, the accuracy of the accounts as I have transcribed and calculated them is less than perfect, as comparison with the annual report figures will attest. However, even in their imperfection, the accounts offer a much more detailed picture of ACGB expenditures than the rough figures found in the annual reports.

Most striking in the evolution of the literature panel's spending from 1968-1982 is the movement from a strong focus on direct funding to a strong focus on indirect funding. Direct funding includes grants, bursaries, and manuscript purchases that put pounds directly into the hands of poets. Indirect funding includes contributions to prizes administered by other organizations, contributions to publishers, little presses, magazines, journals, festivals, and so forth. Indirect funds eventually land in the hands of poets, but often by a circuitous route that eats away at the initial investment. Direct funding accounted for nearly 70% of the total literature expenditure for 1968-1969, but by 1974 indirect expenditures exceeded direct expenditures,

[290] Shyon Baumann, "A General Theory of Artistic Legitimation: How Art Worlds Are Like Social Movements," *Poetics* 35 (2007).

marking the beginning of a policy era wherein the literature panel privileged established, corporate entities over direct grants to writers. By 1982, indirect expenditures accounted for 80% of the literature panel's spending. That is not to say that writers did not receive grants. As the data show, direct grants continued to serve as a primary budget item; but expenditures eventually skewed strongly in the direction of indirect funding. This disproves the original hypothesis, which predicted consistently greater direct funding to individual authors.

Interestingly, the annual report for '73-'74 includes a more or less ambivalent statement of support for direct funding. Noting a time of economic distress, the president of the council comments, "It would of course be possible to decrease…direct grants to artists and writers. But these are the areas in which the Council already spends a relatively small proportion of its funds..." At this pivot point, the leader of the Council articulates a disproportion that persists with profound consistency during the years for which I have gathered financial data. Moreover, this statement of vague support for direct funding precedes a later, longer comment on a general "outcry" regarding grants to individual artists. His concluding remarks articulate a project of gap filling. The Council fills financial gaps, and, perhaps, the individual artist is a gap that needs filling; but the Council's policy ultimately swung in the direction of indirect action.

| Year | Total | Direct | % Direct | Indirect | % Indirect |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1968-1969 | £60,497 | £42,232 | 69.8% | $18,265 | 30.2% |
| 1969-1970 | £68,604 | £42,170 | 61.5% | $26,434 | 38.5% |
| 1970-1971 | £64,887 | £36,075 | 55.6% | $28,812 | 44.4% |
| 1971-1972 | £25,560 | £25,560 | 100.0% | $0 | 0.0% |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1972-1973 | £82,365 | £40,000 | 48.6% | $42,365 | 51.4% |
| 1973-1974 | £133,451 | £45,550 | 34.1% | $87,901 | 65.9% |
| 1974-1975 | £196,161 | £55,100 | 28.1% | $141,061 | 71.9% |
| 1975-1976 | £228,306 | £42,650 | 18.7% | $185,656 | 81.3% |
| 1976-1977 | £413,054 | £129,058 | 31.2% | $283,996 | 68.8% |
| 1977-1978 | £501,805 | £100,600 | 20.0% | $401,205 | 80.0% |
| 1978-1979 | £438,594 | £98,550 | 22.5% | $340,044 | 77.5% |
| 1979-1980 | £464,137 | £81,175 | 17.5% | $382,962 | 82.5% |
| 1980-1981 | £610,239 | £115,225 | 18.9% | $495,014 | 81.1% |
| 1981-1982 | £551,737 | £116,683 | 21.1% | $435,054 | 78.9% |

*Figure 3: ACGB Literature Support by Direct and Indirect Routes, per Account Books, 1968-1982*

## Institutional Values

Geared towards a very particular, very bureaucratic audience, ACGB reports convey outcomes, intentions, and exigencies in a manner that emphasizes and justifies the organization's ongoing existence and policy choices. Strategically, it would seem, values that these reports assign to art—literature in particular—emerge via a circuitous logic. The Council seems reluctant to articulate specific values in the reports, and it consistently invokes ambiguous, broad definitions of artistic value. We also see a strong focus on the ambiguous term, "quality." In one example, the president of the Council calls direct grants into question but at several moments draws attention to the Council's "criteria of choice." Even as he invokes these criteria, he performs a delicate dance of definition. The important criteria must be neither too "rigid" nor too "flexible." Important to "national achievement," such criteria should help to isolate and fund

the best "serious literature." Very much in the vein of Matthew Arnold's 19th-century definition of culture as "the best that has been thought and known," the ACGB emphasizes its "encouragement" of a very vague definition of "quality."[291]

So how does the ACGB define quality? In terms of the organization's operating mode, the reports emphasize, in the aggregate, "response" and "indirect action." To this extent, the Council's operations intersect directly with the concerns that John Guillory raises in his work on cultural capital and the history of canon formation in literary studies.[292] That is, the ACGB's operating logic suggests that while they "do influence" the shape of the literary field, responsiveness to the desire of the public limits the stated extent of their cultural intervention. However, to find and fund works of "quality" is to determine the very definition of quality. By emphasizing the encouragement of quality via response and indirect action as the organization's primary objective, the Arts Council veils the manner by which it constructs what counts as valuable in the field of Anglophone poetry, specifically in the British context.

The practical result of these value formations was a deep institutional insecurity that caused the ACGB to go so far as to question altogether the usefulness of funding poets, in spite of a sense of its obligation to do so, since, according to one report, poets often make do with other jobs anyway.[293] For the ACGB, poetry becomes decreasingly a craft and increasingly a "lifestyle"—a sentiment expressed multiple times in the reports.

It is in some ways unremarkable that the Council should hew to the notion of a poetic lifestyle versus a poetic living, given the strong roots of such a view in British Romanticism. As

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[291] Matthew Arnold, "Culture and Anarchy with Friendship's Garland and Some Literary Essays," in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Robert H. Super (Ann Arbor, MI: U of Michigan Press, 1965).
[292] Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*.
[293] "Arts Council of Great Britain Annual Report," (London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1966), 15.

scholars of literature have shown, the development of British national identity during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries drew heavily on (and then reacted heavily against) eighteenth-century cultural narratives that privilege the isolated artist recollecting strong emotion in solitude.[294] But the reports seem to be of two minds about even this Romantic ideal. At times, they go on to espouse democratic sentiments, suggesting in vulnerable moments that art should question a status quo the Council seems to believe it enforces through standards of quality and excellence. These sentiments speak significantly to the very origins and existential struggles of the organization as a whole.

## Redgrove, Larkin, and the ACGB

Peter Redgrove is a name not often uttered in undergraduate classrooms, nor in graduate seminars, for that matter. A poet with a good reputation and ample prospects for being remembered during his own time, his poetic reputation has generally given way to that of poets such as Ted Hughes and Geoffrey Hill. Awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 1996, he passed away just after the turn of the century, in 2003. The uncertainty of his place in the canon of British poets might be well summed by the title of Graeme Richardson's short, 2012 article in the *Times Literary Supplement*: "Saving Peter Redgrove from Oblivion."[295] That we have cause to save him from oblivion is suggestive. To crib from Richardson, it's not that Redgrove's poems are roundly unsatisfying or unskilled. It's more that his output is manifestly

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[294] See Maureen McLane, *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 2011). For an interesting revisionist history of British romanticism itself in the context of the development of British bureaucracy, see Anne Frey, *British State Romanticism: Authorship, Agency, and Bureaucratic Nationalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford U Press, 2009).

[295] Graeme Richardson, "Saving Peter Redgrove from Oblivion," Book Review, *The Times Literary Supplement* (2012), https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/saving-peter-redgrove-from-oblivion/

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uneven, sometimes difficult, often odd, and frequently laden with linguistic and semantic excess. This general, if still somewhat vague, consensus that Redgrove perhaps needn't make it onto our bookshelves becomes fascinating when we note that he might be the most establishment of establishment poets, viewed from the angle of getting the support of England's arts funding organ—the Arts Council of Great Britain.

To give a bit more color and insight into Redgrove's situation, the following pages compare him to another poet—one who sat on the Arts Council's literature panel from 1980-1982. I also compare his body of work and the values he espoused to the goals that the Arts Council's leaders articulated in their annual reports for the years 1968-1982. Without attempting to generalize too much, the situation of Redgrove helps substantially to explain what exactly was going on in the republic of English letters during a time of immense poetic output. Seen in this light, the story that encompasses the Arts Council of Great Britain and the fate of Peter Redgrove also becomes the beginning of an attempt to discern how movements in England joined with the world historical picture that set in motion towards the end of the second world war. Namely, we see the emergence of an organizational structure that, not unlike the role of the church or the education system (which remains a key player in the cultural policy landscape), makes the symbolic power of culture in civil society appear tantalizingly available to the political class. But the transmutations of value inherent in the movement from institutional desire to artistic execution, mediated by financial and other value formations, repeatedly problematized the aspirations of the political class. So during this period of what Sarah Brouillette has called the emergence of cultural protagonism—the tendency to view culture as an actor with a kind of agency—we see also Nigeria, Jamaica, and Northern Ireland similarly mobilizing and negotiating state institutional structures to intervene in circuits of poetic prestige that operate at the level

both of the nation and also of the world.

To get at where Redgrove sits, contextually, within the canon of what we might call "Council poets," I used an online application called Dedoose to code poems both by Redgrove and by a poet responsible in part for allocating funding, both of whom published actively during the 70s. By "coding," which might sound cryptic outside of scientific circles, I simply mean using "tags"—descriptive categories that I assigned to phrases of text—to provide a layer of metadata that can be analyzed. For instance, "My love is like a red, red rose" might be coded with a value such as "Love" or "Intimacy." This is of course a highly subjective approach, and I didn't make any attempt to bring in additional researchers to validate the codes or apply additional methodological rigor. One could usefully think of this approach as close reading viewed from a medium height. A kind of 5,000 foot view. As I worked through Redgrove's writing, I coded value expressions that show up in the poems, and I went through everything twice. Redgrove's *Selected Poems* provides 43 poems that I read as providing evidence of the sort of material the Arts Council funded and implicitly endorsed. He was one of the best funded poets of the 70s, receiving in excess of £8,000 over ten years. While I was at it, I also coded Philip Larkin's *Collected Poems,* which contains 65 poems, to provide a point of comparison. Larkin was in a leadership role but wasn't paid in any meaningful way for his efforts. As far as I have been able to determine, Larkin received no funding from the ACGB, directly or indirectly, during the period under investigation. However, he served on the literature panel of the ACGB in a limited capacity during the period from 1980-1982 (an unpaid position). I suppose this makes him seem like eccentric choice for comparison to Redgrove (why not pick some unfunded poet?), but the case of Larkin ends up offering a productive complication that allows us to better examine the extent to which institutional values mesh with the administrator-poet's poems as compared to

poems by the Redgrove.[296]

During the first round of reading and coding, I used an intuitive sort of close reading to define value types on the basis of a) explicit expression of values, b) engagement with literary history, and c) aesthetic effect. I used the information I gathered from the first round of coding, which I looked at alongside codes used by the World Values Survey, to develop the following overarching "buckets" into which to we can group elements of the poems:[297]

1) Aesthetic Values
2) Economic Values
3) Political Values
4) Public Values
5) Pragmatic Values
6) Religious Values

It was important that these values emerged organically from the poems rather than arriving readymade from, say, the World Values Survey or from a theoretical text. The full significance of this method will become clear in the ensuing pages. Of course, any literary scholar reading this must be asking, "Why in the world approach the poems in this manner?" Good question. I wanted to test an assumption—more like an informed guess—that the values evoked by the Redgrove poems would track more closely with ACGB values than the values evoked by the Larkin poems. However, as I note above, what I ultimately discovered was more akin to a set of observations about how the Council was generating the idea of quality, rather than producing a comparison of Redgrove and Larkin to some freestanding, ACGB rubric of quality.

In addition to working with the poems, I also gathered records from the MLA scholarly database that aggregates literary scholarship citations. I used the database to determine the extent

[296] For a look at poet-critics who similarly played key roles in bureaucratic institutions during the 1920s-50s (American institutions, in his case), see Kindley, *Poet-Critics and the Administration of Culture*.
[297] A full list of codes can be found in Appendix 2. The WVS was consulted to ensure a level of consistency.

to which literary scholars have written about Redgrove and Larkin. I also gathered data from the search engine, WorldCat, to determine how many repositories hold copies of the texts I coded. Inasmuch as this study intersects with debates on canon formation, figures from Modern Language Association index of scholarly publications and WorldCat index of library holdings can offer a kind of thumbnail sketch of the economic and cultural significance of both poets. Going in, my assumption was that Larkin would be better represented in the MLA results but that Redgrove would be better represented in the WorldCat results, since I'm aware of a good deal of Larkin criticism (and not so much Redgrove criticism), and the archive tells me Redgrove was a poet of significant stature during his time and seemed to have a kind of readerly appeal near to that of a laureate.

With close attention to affect, theme, form, and cultural history, I coded 65 Larkin poems and 43 Redgrove poems. The poems were all published between 1959 and 1985. The earlier date provides a necessary basis for the Council's assessment of excellence, and the later date provides a window for publication. Poems produced by Redgrove during the period under discussion can be viewed as "products" of the Council's investment. Two rounds of coding produced 825 code entries, averaging 7.6 codes per poem. All results are normalized to show relative code application.

## Redgrove Growing Up

Peter Redgrove grew up in the south of England and enjoyed a middle class upbringing. He received a sound early education at a preparatory school before serving in the army. While in the army, he suffered a psychological break and was released to be treated with an experimental protocol called Deep Insulin Coma Therapy. During the course of this "therapy," the poet was

put into more than fifty induced comas before being deemed fit for everyday life. After that treatment came Cambridge, which introduced Redgrove to the art world and initiated his poetic career.[298]

Despite being relatively unknown today, Redgrove produced a large number of poetry volumes and novels. The poems I analyzed were taken from his *Selected Poems*. The sweep of the 70s saw Redgrove develop a sensibility that marches back through literary modernism to the beat of a very old, very nationalistic drum. Rather than retain the fragmentary form and broken images of poets like T.S. Eliot, Redgrove's poems tightly cohere.[299] The poems evoke nature almost without fail, and while they do not engage self-reflexively in aesthetic concerns, they privilege sensuousness and emotional affect. Most poems are composed in free verse rather than in traditional, rhymed verse.

The concluding stanza from an early Redgrove poem, "Lazarus and the Sea," reads as follows:

> I could say nothing of where I had been
> But I knew the soil in my limbs and the rain-water
> In my mouth, knew the ground as a slow sea unstable
> Like clouds and tolerating no organization such as mine
> In its throat of my grave. The knotted roots
> Would have entered my nostrils and held me
> By the armpits, woven a blanket for my cold body
> Dead in the smell of wet earth, and raised me to the sky
> For the sun in the slow dance of the seasons.
> Many gods like me would be laid in the ground
> Dissolve and be formed again in this pure night

[298] For more on Redgrove's life, see the recently published Roberts biography. Neil Roberts, *A Lucid Dreamer: The Life of Peter Redgrove* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2012).

[299] T.S. Eliot's poetry and criticism came to define a generation of poetry as well as to provide a basis for reaction by poets of the succeeding generation. Above all, Eliot aimed for impersonality in his poems. For him, poems enter into something very like Casanova's World Republic of Letters that he calls the circle of tradition. The circle of tradition awards not inward sentiments but acute reflections of the zeitgeist. See "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in T.S. Eliot, book *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, 1932).

Among the blessing of birds and the sifting water.
But where was the boatman and his gliding punt?
The judgment and the flames? These happenings
Were much spoken of in my childhood and the legends.
And what judgment tore me to life, uprooted me
Back to my old problems and to the family,
Charged me with unfitness for this holy simplicity?[300]

The poem takes nature as a wellspring of figures used to describe bodily and emotional sensations. Built around a near-death experience, the poem arrives in free verse with a title that points us to the Bible and to nature. Explicit questions at the end of the poem are direct, referring us to classical and Biblical myth while emotionally questioning both. But the questions are not answered, nor are they pushed into a moment of existential crisis. The speaker of the poem accepts his uprootedness and a return to "old problems," leaving the poem somewhat ambivalent on the matter of myth and religion. Strongly valued, however, are nature and simplicity. Nature takes on the religious function, and its joys are simple and pure.

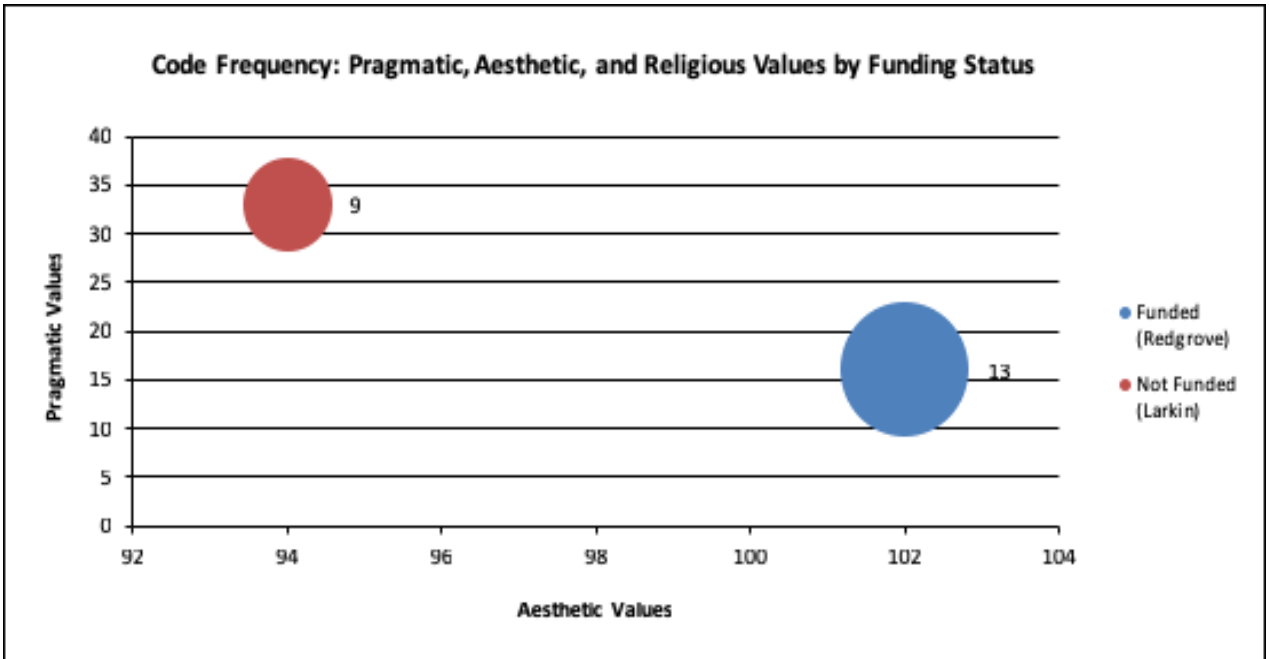
Later Redgrove poems lean similarly towards surreal experiences, and the linguistic images begin to echo the surreality in more direct fashion. For instance, his poem, "The Half-Scissors," relates sexual desire and loss to the familiar use of nature. Unlike the previous poem, this one is written in a straightforwardly descriptive mode rather than in the interrogatory manner of "Lazarus and the Sea." The full text of the poem reads as follows:

Humming water holds the high stars.
Meteors fall through the great fat icicles.
Spiders at rest from skinny leg-work
Lean heads forward on shaggy head-laces
All glittering from an askew moon in the sky:
One hinge snapped; a white door dislocated.
The night leans forward on this thin window;
Next door, tattered glass,

[300] Peter Redgrove, *Selected Poems* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999).

Wind twittering on jagged edges.
Door beat like wings wishing to rise.
I lean forward to this thin fire.
A woman leaves—even the flames grow cool—
She is one hinge snapped, I am half-scissors.[301]

Again, nature does much of the heavy lifting in the poem, even though the conceit of the scissors gives the poem its primary metaphor and title. The odd juxtaposition of meteors and icicles, water and stars, and celestial bodies and spiders leads into a description of beautiful disorder. Everything glitters from "an askew moon," echoing the brokenness of the half-scissors. As with the previous poem, no strong judgments—moral or otherwise— are insinuated. The poem is a slice of free verse experience offered up with a strong helping of nature; it characterizes Redgrove's work of the later 70s and 80s.




| Series | Aesthetic Values | Pragmatic Values | Religious Values |
|---|---|---|---|
| Funded (Redgrove) | 102 | 16 | 13 |
| Not Funded (Larkin) | 94 | 33 | 9 |

[301] Ibid.

*Figure 4: Aesthetic, Political, and Economic Codes (Normalized) by Funding Category*

Compared to Larkin, Redgrove's poems much more strongly evoke aesthetic values and meditate on them, especially aesthetic values linked to nature. He tends to avoid controversial topics. The poems are rarely political. Even rarer is the intimation of economic value. He also affirms religion in benign ways. His is a safe poetics that delivers the glitter that we expect of poetry. His free verse is often clunky, in terms of the verse, and, in terms of pacing, follows often on the heels of culturally conservative modernists such as Eliot. Where Redgrove most strongly differs is in his focus on nature and in the thematic tautness of the poems—their strong cohesion. Eliot, who influenced an entire generation of poets, was remarkably anti-romantic in his intellectual and poetic sensibility. He brooked no tolerance for the folk or for the brooding artist. For Eliot, existential crisis was a way of being for Europe as a collective entity, and the poet attempted to give that crisis expression through language. Redgrove returns to the self, and he is revolutionary in a safe way. He combines an aesthetic that emerges from the modernist moment with the intellectual preoccupations of romanticism, which results in a kind of cultural conservatism perhaps one step removed from Eliot and headed in another direction.

Philip Larkin, on the other hand, was culturally conservative in quite a different manner, and he made a strange fit for the ACGB's literature panel. While he was certainly attuned to the economic difficulty of living the literary life, he once commented in an interview,

> On the one hand, you can't live today by being a "man of letters" as easily as a hundred or seventy-five years ago, when there were so many magazines and newspapers all having to be filled. Writers' incomes, as writers, have sunk almost below the subsistence line. On the other hand, you *can* live by "being a writer," or "being a poet," if you're prepared to join the cultural entertainment industry, and take handouts from the Arts Council (not that there are as many of them as there used to be) and be a "poet in residence" and all

that.[302]

It would seem that taking a handout from the ACGB is akin to selling out (or at least part of selling out). For his own part, Larkin worked as a librarian at the University of Hull for the better part of his life. His output was much smaller than Redgrove's, and the poems I examine here come from his *Collected Poems*. Like Redgrove, he also wrote novels, but he was primarily a poet. Like Redgrove, he enjoyed a middle-class upbringing in the South. Like Redgrove, he attended a preparatory school and was an Oxbridge scholar. Unlike Redgrove, he is massively well known in the current academic scene and served in an administrative capacity on the literature panel of the UK's quasi-governmental taste- making organization. However, he never, to my knowledge, received a penny of ACGB funding.

| Series | Public Values |
|---|---|
| Funded (Redgrove) | 30 |
| Not Funded (Larkin) | 105 |

*Figure 5: Public Values Code Totals (Normalized)*

In almost all the important ways, the two poets' output could hardly be more different. As the above figures show, unlike Redgrave, Larkin brazenly addresses matters of economic and public sensitivity, and he undertakes social critique more often than not. His is a poetics that glimmers in its formality but that cuts like a hot knife. Take the poem "Money," for instance:

> Quarterly, is it, money reproaches me:
> 'Why do you let me lie here wastefully?
> I am all you never had of goods and sex.
> You could get them still by writing a few cheques.'
> So I look at others, what they do with theirs:
> They certainly don't keep it upstairs.

[302] Philip Larkin, interview by Robert Phillips, 1982, interview 30.

> By now they've a second house and car and wife:
> Clearly money has something to do with life.
> —In fact, they've a lot in common, if you enquire:
> You can't put off being young until you retire,
> And however you bank your screw, the money you save
> Won't in the end buy you more than a shave.
> I listen to money singing. It's like looking down
> From long french windows at a provincial town,
> The slums, the canal, the churches ornate and mad
> In the evening sun. It is intensely sad.[303]

This poem is in some ways unrepresentative of Larkin's use of form, in that it employs the relatively simple four-line couplet stanza rather than a more complex stanza. Other poems make use of the sonnet form and other less familiar forms. The meter is an irregular iambic pentameter, which is the default mode for formal Anglophone poems. If the poem is somewhat simpler in form than other Larkin poems, "Money" *is* highly representative of Larkin's willingness to dance a foxtrot on a cultural minefield. The couplets produce a singsong pattern that undercuts the serious, very un-poetic topic of money. Using these playful couplets, then, the poem stages a cultural observation, by turns sardonic and sad, that is also a critique. Larkin puts himself in the position of the cultural critic. He looks down on the common run of people as he listens, at a distance, to money singing. While the poem opens with money challenging the speaker, by the end of the poem, from his vantage, the speaker pities his lowly neighbors and their monetary difficulties.

Where Redgrove's poems mark a return to a romantic ideology that brings together romantic and modernist aesthetics, Larkin's poems mark a return to formal verse combined with relatively little of its ideological baggage. There are, to be fair, hints of seventeenth-century aristocratic poetry (John Donne, for instance) lingering around the edges of Larkin's often-

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[303] *Collected Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004).

sarcastic critiques. And in many ways Larkin's poems suggest a culturally conservative poet who wants to represent things as they are while also giving them a dose of logic and common sense. In this, we might say that Larkin's poems are much more pragmatically-oriented than the aesthetically ornate, but generally philosophically dull poems of Redgrove. Given these differences, we might well ask, how, and whether, thematic values of the type I am pursuing were pertinent when the Council referred to poetic "quality." After all, the Council did not supply concrete values or thematic requirements, so in that sense, the poetic works themselves must be understood to deliver the Council's definition of quality.

What we can observe here is that the Council employed a gatekeeper (Larkin) whose poetic value expressions, in form and in content, were considerably different from those of the poet, Redgrove, who was most supported by the organization in terms of financial outlay. Moreover, we can observe that Redgrove's work seems to fit well with an historical moment in Britain characterized by increasing social rifts and economic hardship. His Neo-Romantic focus on the self, together with the modernist impulse to innovate, suggests a new conservatism deeply interested in the self, but not especially concerned with big existential questions—a type of reflexive inwardness that might help to shape a British culture that was outgrowing Larkin's brand of outward-looking conservatism.

| Series | Existential Values |
|---|---|
| Funded (Redgrove) | 82 |
| Not Funded (Larkin) | 217 |

*Figure 6: Existential Values Code Totals (Normalized)*

## Database Results

While the ACGB was kind to Redgrove, posterity has not done him the same service. As

of December 2013, the Wikipedia entry for Redgrove's boarding school, the Taunton School, does not list his name under the distinguished alumni section, suggesting lack of distinction even within a relatively small alumni network. The Modern Language Association Index and WorldCat Numbers reinforce this picture. For the MLA database, Redgrove's work has earned 23 scholarly articles to 524 articles that consider Larkin's work, confirming my hunch that Larkin would be better represented in the scholarship. According to WorldCat, Redgrove's *Selected Poems* is held by 443 repositories worldwide, and only 49 have his *Collected Poems*. Larkin's *Collected Poems* is held by 1,225 repositories. So my hunch that Redgrove would be better represented in libraries was soundly disproven. For Redgrove, ACGB support did not result in a strong legacy of scholarly or institutional interest. For Larkin, ACGB support was not required for a strong legacy of scholarly and institutional interest, although his position on the literature panel eventually led to a seat on the Board of the British Library and an offer of the poet laureateship (he declined the offer).

Taken together, these various pieces of information and my analysis of them suggest that for the ACGB during the 70s, quality was in many ways synonymous with safe ideological investment, even though the organization clearly valued symbolic capital that sometimes emerged in more contentious form. Larkin's formal dexterity and ideological brazenness were rewarded with a welter of cultural capital while Redgrove's aesthetic conservatism was rewarded with economic capital that the ACGB disbursed in a failed attempt to reap cultural dividends. Larkin's financial autonomy allowed him to publish at a slower pace than Redgrove; it also allowed him a great deal of aesthetic autonomy. While we could raise counter-examples, these observations suggest that aesthetic autonomy is intimately linked to economic autonomy and that during this period the ACGB exercised a minimally authoritative cultural function except

perhaps as a site for the cultural 1% to earn large returns on already-large sums of cultural capital. Finally, we do well to note that Redgrove largely fits the neo- / anti-modernist narrative that I described in the opening to this chapter, together with the formal-ethical fantasy that comes along with it. And for that matter, so does Larkin. I would suggest that it is not at all coincidental that the neo-/anti-modernist framework and the ethical fantasy it entails is ratified by these Council poets. Combined with a policy of response, the Council's vague definition of value and its later-20th c. focus on indirect funding provide suggestive material for further study and theoretical consideration. In particular, we might think about ways in which the Council's legitimating operations reflect as well as influence social and political life.[304]

Another insight, here, is that in the limited comparison of Redgrove and Larkin, it appears that the network of values and institutions that grant poetic legitimacy might indeed operate according to an economy of distinction somewhat set apart from the world of public finance and political values. However, the magnitude of difference in distinction between Larkin and Redgrove, especially given their mutual ACGB connection, also highlights the complexity of the social forces that link economic, social, and cultural capital as they act on the poetic field and within it. In the case of Redgrove, it would appear that the ACGB serves as a vehicle for reification of historically nationalistic values while it remains somewhat at odds with itself on that account, calling, as it does, in a halfhearted manner for art as social critique as well as affirmation. This ambivalence is turned on its head in the negative example of Larkin. Larkin's poems address the truly tough questions that challenge social norms, while Redgrove's reify a romantic notion of the nature poet who meditates on safe topics via mildly surreal associations.

[304] Viviana Zelizer has provided an outstanding initial contribution on this front. See Viviana A. Zelizer, *Economic Lives: How Culture Shapes the Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

A few words of qualification are also required. The archives that I reconstructed for this project are uniformly incomplete. It would be fascinating, for example, to be able to determine what percentage of funds after 1964 went to poets versus other types of writers. Annual reports might also be supplemented by letters and memos. The archive of poetry could also be considerably expanded to include additional poets. Moreover, Larkin is a very special case, and it could be fascinating to examine a poet who attempted to secure ACGB funding and failed. It would also be helpful to include criticism and interviews by poets as a way to further reconstruct the author figures the Council funded (or did not fund). It would also be useful to investigate indirect funding at length, given the Council's strong focus on that method of funding. Finally, the case of the ACGB would benefit considerably from comparison with studies that undertake similar examinations in different cultural contexts.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this comparison offers a productive example of how sociological investigations might make recourse to literary texts as a primary source of evidence. It also provides literary scholars with a new framework for understanding links between literary and fiscal economies. And in specific terms, we have gained significant insight into the operations of the ACGB in funding poetic endeavors since the mid- century, as well as a much more detailed picture of the Council's operations during the 70s.

# Tom Pickard's Raven

## Tom Pickard, Poet and Pensioner

*The kinds of poetry I write are a range of poetries, really.*
–Tom Pickard[305]

Refocus. Pan out. Head North. When we move our attention to the North of England, we can see in stark terms the crisis of categorization I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. In this section, I explore the implications of that crisis through the lens of a fascinating poet who was funded by the Arts Council but who is professedly as anti-establishment as a poet could possibly be. That poet is Tom Pickard—a noncanonical British poet who received Council funding at a very contentious time in the Council's existence. Hardly an establishment poet, Pickard nonetheless received £7,500 of Arts Council funds from 1973-1979—£1,500 as direct support and £6,000 that provided him with a creative writing fellowship at Warwick University.[306] With considerable temporal range, Pickard's poetry bears witness to many of the grittier aspects of Britain's social evolution from the early years of Thatcherism to the largely rhetorical pivot of Blair's New Labour.[307] However, Pickard was not comfortable simply traveling through these historical moments. Poems such as "Fragments from a Dig in Gallowgate," which

[305] Tom Pickard, interviewed by the author at Hartside Café, Penrith, U.K., 2013.
[306] This is not necessarily the full amount. This is simply what I was able to find in the ACGB account books.
[307] Literary texts continue to wrestle with the Thatcher revolution as the most profound shift in British politics and culture since the world war, and Pickard's career fully spans that period of transition. See John Su, "Beauty and the Beastly Prime Minister," *ELH* 81, no. 3 (2014): 1083.

surveys a bus stop across from a construction site, access a space between the archeological record, the knowledge we assume that science produces, and the moments that escape history altogether. Similarly, poems, such as "Winter Night," "Paddy Scullion's Jarrow March," and "Skaman Report" offer a kind of poetic reportage that reinscribes the voices of the working North through acts of attention that give voice less to the voiceless than to those whose voices have been shouted over or overmastered. In this, Pickard also highlights the political dimension of poetry—its ability to give presence, to give voice. This focus on marginal, situated subjectivity positions Pickard, alongside other Revival poets, such as Eric Mottram, Elaine Feinstein, Bill Griffiths, and Veronica Forrest-Thomson as a significant point of entry into a fuller history of British poetry.

While we might fixate on these social and political aspects of Pickard's poems, there is also an important formal dimension to his work. As Maureen McLane notes, at the end of her book on the ballad and its influence on Romantic poetry and ideology,

> Pickard's reworking of...ballad strains suggests the ongoing vitality of traditionary poetry for contemporary poetry; his work, in its delicacy, close listening, utterly contemporary yet deeply grounded tones also exemplifies the richness we may still find in poetries alive to various oral-literate (as well as inter-species) conjunctions.[308]

Where McClane finds inter-species conjunctions of balladry, Pickard himself has gone so far as to suggest that the project to which McLane refers—*Ballad of Jamie Allan*—is a "modernist ballad."[309]

In terms of their capacity to carry value, it can be useful to view this kind of genre development in the context of media innovations during the latter half of the century. And when

[308] McLane, *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry*.
[309] Tom Pickard, interviewed by the author at Hartside Café, Penrith, U.K., 2013.

we start to peel back the issue of media, in Pickard's case, we quickly encounter economic considerations, as well. Discussing his life and work in 2013, Pickard and I shared the following exchange:

> BC: When you've been especially struggling, has your government been supportive of you?
>
> TP: No, not really, I wouldn't say. I think you said you found somewhere in the Arts Council files I got some money out of them once. Actually, there was a period I persuaded the Film department of the Arts Council to let me make some films. When I was working with the television company there was a particularly interesting guy in charge of the company who wanted to see if poetry could work on TV. So he linked up with the Arts Council. I directed and [was the series editor], and we made a series of programs for commercial television. So the Arts Council put money into that, and they generously put money into film I made about my friend the poet Roy Fisher. So that paid me a decent wage—very good money compared to what I was used to, but that was a very short period in my life. Other than that, I just existed on unemployment benefit a lot of the time when I haven't had jobs.[310]

On Pickard's telling, public funds ended up benefitting him in different ways, but only minimally with regard to his poetic craft. Other media led to "very good money," and then the welfare state supplied some support when other efforts came up short.

While other media might lead to money, they also supply different signifying resources, and Pickard incorporates the idea of the sounds of other media, specifically, into his poems. On the sonic end of the spectrum, his *Ballad of Jamie Allan* recalls the radio ballads broadcast on the BBC by Peggy Seger and Ewan MacColl in the sixties, for example. In a sense, we might think of that work as a product of media innovation made available by economic necessity as well as conversation with modernist masters that takes its cues mostly from sixties activists.

While he plays with sound and a persona in *Ballad of Jamie Allan* that is clearly not him,

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[310] Ibid.

Pickard's professional trajectory and his own relationship to it—the ways in which he takes its measure through autobiography and poetry and personae—has produced a stunning echo-chamber of self-representation. In "The Real Tom Pickard," for instance, we learn, "When I search the internet for a hit / there he is, deputy head of the FBI…Tom Pickard takes on the mob."[311] Likely most of us have at some point discovered our online other, reacting with that special form of indignant curiosity. But for Pickard, the discovery sparks a strange form of fear. He writes, "I hope they don't trace him to me— / I'm too easy to find and forget," with the consequence that "His friends will disown him, / his enemies become mine." The poem's surface message—the discovery of a digital doppelganger—parses easily enough; but the relationships the poem develops between origin and myth (why "trace him" to the poet Pickard?) and the consequences thereof (the agent losing friends, the poet gaining enemies) remain deeply ambiguous.

Pickard's digitally-infused meditation on self shares a striking resemblance to the following passage from C.H. Sisson's *The Usk*.

> Nothing is in my own voice because I have not
> Any. Nothing in my own name
> Here inscribed on water, nothing but flow
> A ripple, outwards. Standing beside the Usk
> You flow like truth, river, I will get in
> Over me, through me perhaps, river let me be crystalline
> As I shall not be, shivering upon the bank.
> A swan passed. So is it, the surface, sometimes
> Benign like a mirror, but not I passing, the bird.[312]

I raise the spectre of Sisson because he, too, complicates the neo- / anti-modernist divide I

[311] Tom Pickard, *Hoyoot: Collected Poems and Songs* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014).
[312] Charles Hubert Sisson, *Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1998), 166.

described at the beginning of the chapter through his relationship to Donald Davie (who starts out anti- then becomes neo-) as well as through his own poems. In an Eliotic key, *The Usk* pays homage to the deep, pre-Arthurian Welsh mythscape that emerged from the region around the Usk River. Before the banks of the river, which is the precise reverse of the internet as a technology of remembering, the speaker gives presence to "nothing…in my own voice" and leaves "nothing in my own name…but flow." The self-abnegation of Sisson's lines converges with Eliot's challenge of impersonality in a surprisingly literal vein. The cultural depth of Sisson's poem and the manner in which it is voiced register an aspiration to cultural distinction that Pickard often mocks; yet Pickard's reflections on self in "The Real Tom Pickard" and elsewhere gives voice to a remarkably similar sentiment, and a noteworthy scrambling of the anti-/ neo-modernist divide.

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Of the strands of what has come to be called the British Poetry Revival, the writers of the North seem least well understood. The Cambridge group, which includes J.H. Prynne, gets most of the critical attention. Part of the problem, I think, has to do with the diversity of Northern writers during the period, the distance from the literary epicenters of London and Oxbridge, as well as with the mythos surrounding the North itself—a mythos related to the region's recent and difficult past but also approachably connected to Britain's ancient roots. Donald Davie was of the North, as was Ted Hughes and Tony Harrison. So was Basil Bunting, who incidentally was one of Pickard's mentors. The region wants expression and has produced some of the most innovative poets in the language. Pickard's expression of place travels from the city to the fells, and it often travels far afield of the North, but he maintains a remarkable consistency in his attention to dialect and sonic rhythms, even as he persistently returns to the geography of the

North. Put differently, the attention to place and how it might be represented exceeds the North in his work and becomes simply a habit of mind—an act of poetic attention. His "Starlings," for example, opens with a prosody and synaesthesia almost like something out of Hopkins. He writes,

> flyting street
> of twisting sheen
> starling
> your glittering sing
> your pharaoh's wing

The diction ranges from 'flyting'—a fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Scottish practice of exchanging versified insults practiced in Scotland—to the more familiar (and further removed) "pharaoh." Further down the page, we find "star flecks / star splat / in Starlingstraat," in a Teutonic turn that then leads us to "little old ladies / in lurex," which is a type of fabric that incorporates metallic thread. The free associations continue until the final three lines: "alight / diffused / in flight." The poem turns out to be a dramatization of diffusion—a flight of light, alight like the bird it considers. Drawing on a history of voice, the poem draws a tension between translocation and situatedness in a contemporary setting, stretching referents across geographies and their histories while privileging the particular history and traditions of the North through voice and figure—a tension that, not coincidentally to my broader argument, might complicate reception practices calibrated to a politicized neo-/anti-modernist binary that uses geography as a formal-ethical landmark.

Songbirds provide rich figural resources for Pickard, and they suggest a connection to the British Romantics that is not lost on him. Responding explicitly to that Romantic inheritance, the title poem from *The Dark Months of May* looks out over the Teviot river in the borderlands of Scotland, blending local description with a meditation on love lost. The poem dramatizes the

failure of romantic imagination, though it is written in a mode more romantic than modernist. The poem ends with a repudiation of a songbird and its existential consolation, reading, “I hate that dawn thrush / frothing bitter lullabies / in hawthorn blossom.” Other moments of less subtle anti-romanticism, again delivered in romantic voice, arrive even earlier in the poem. He writes, for instance, “I would give you anything / old / as a poem.” The success of the poem, as with much of Pickard’s work, resides in its reflexive and syncretic relationship to form and genre.

In the summer of 2013, I sat across from Pickard at the Hartside Café – a small affair directly adjacent to a cottage in which Pickard lived for the better part of 10 productive years. Situated on the summit ridge of the Pennines of North England, the café overlooks an expanse of countryside that fuels many of Pickard's poems. And as we talked, he broke off, his voice suddenly dropping and thickening. Glancing intently at the window, “Look,” he murmured, "A raven. You never see them this time of year." The beauty of the raven is not the beauty of the lark; and the beauty of the raven might provide a fair figure for the beauty of Pickard’s poetry. For Pickard, that is, the two traditions narrative has become something to which he can respond and to which, via his exposure to the American avant-garde and to the culture wars of the 80s, he is sensitively attuned. He does not need to be either a songbird or not-a-bird. “The Dark Months of May,” rather than programmatically denying self or pushing towards transcendence or wryly chatting up one’s coterie, and indeed rather than forcing a choice between a textual consciousness and a vocal, “lyric” consciousness, the poem makes available a vocal gaze. Beginning with Orphic failure—a failure of the animating voice—it ends with failure even of Romantic transcendence—all while supplying a raw version of the power of the imagination and the shaping of the landscape in a recognizably Orphic mode.

While Orpheus might have had his day, lyric voices are not without their social

possibilities. As Mutlu Blasing notes, poetry can suggest a threat to social order in two ways. In the first place, poetry can stir "unruly emotions," but more threateningly, poetry suggests the threat of an alternative system for underwriting reason itself, and it occasionally embodies that threat.[313] In Blasing's account, that alternative system of reason involves affective, intersubjective connections through the aesthetic powers of language that has been creatively estranged from its everyday uses. This unruly intersubjectivity captures much of what the previous pages suggest about Pickard's poems. In my assessment, Pickard's poems give intersubjectivity a felt presence through a vocal gaze that comfortably bridges an assumed divide between anti- and neo-modernist techniques. And, of course, the poems continuously remind us that it would be a mistake to take that felt presence as a form of identity or identification in any straightforward way.

We might point to a range of recent insights that can also help to repair the modernist/anti-modernist narrative. Romana Huk has pointed out a shift in the 1990s, for instance, from modernist/anti-modernist rifts to a celebration of plurality and the undefinable. Certainly many of Pickard's poems echo off into a space undefinability, but others do address plurality in specific terms.[314] For Huk, "The crisis that the acknowledgement of all these differing artists on the poetry scene precipitates is primarily a crisis for conventional criticism because it is, in large part, one of judgment (and therefore power)."[315] In one sense, she opens up a new space of possibility for criticism. But in another sense, she continues the binary frame—the two-

[313] Mutlu Konuk Blasing, *Lyric Poetry: The Pain and the Pleasure of Words* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007), 1.
[314] For instance, his "Skaman Report"—an epistolary poem I mention in the introduction—inhabits the voice of a woman reporting on the Brixton riots.
[315] Romana Huk, "Introduction," in *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism*, ed. James Acheson and Romana Huk (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 4.

traditions problem—in a less Manichean mode by pitting poets at large against a critical edifice that stands on the defensive. Of course, such a charge might be leveled at almost any history that uses categories. And how do we do history without categories? Perhaps we can't, but for British literary history, breaking the received binaries of post-war poetry provides a needed opportunity to open up a third space flexible enough to accommodate a plurality of categories.

And finally, the scholarly debate I have been surveying, and to which I have responded, itself assumes a great deal—a great deal about value and community and poetry's place in all of that. I assume, for example, that this analysis might prove valuable to a reader or two, for example. When I asked Pickard, directly, how *he* saw the value of poetry, he replied counterintuitively, saying,

> I don't know. I think in the contemporary sense it's actually valueless. I think it's worthless. Of course, given the nature of the society we live in it has to be commodified and turned into a product, and that's how we get the stuff out to people. As art, it obviously has a function. It nourishes probably, or it irritates and annoys with a bit of luck. But I'm now sure how you would put a value on it, really.[316]

How fascinating, and how appropriate, that the poet might express this valuelessness, and in a way that a cultural administrator could positively never do. When I asked the current head of literature for the Arts Council, Antonia Byatt, how she deals with the demand for an economic valuation of the art form, she was both honest and hedged a bit, referring me both to the honest truth that poetry will "come in and out of needing different kinds of support," due to what we might call "market failure," and also that the organization was working to define "quality metrics" that might be applied to poetry and perhaps related in some way to economic or other

[316] Tom Pickard, interviewed by the author at Hartside Café, Penrith, U.K., 2013.

types of value.[317]

# Michael Longley and the ACNI

Throughout this chapter, I have referred with little differentiation to the Arts Council, the Arts Council of Great Britain, and the Arts Council England. The Arts Council as it exists today, and as it has existed for some time, is actually a collective of organizations taking direction and funding from a central body. As time has worn on, the Council has negotiated greater and lesser degrees of decentralization. Looking to the West, out over the sea, I will spend the rest of this chapter exploring a tightly related set of issues around poetry and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland—the Belfast outpost of the English literary empire in Ireland.

In the words of poet Michael Longley, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland—a regional outpost of the ACGB—might have stronger practical ties to the Arts Council Ireland than to its umbrella organization on the mainland. This Irish connection seems only sensible, given the cultural connection and proximity and, more to the point, the position of culture in trying to bring together the warring ideologies and geographies of the Republic and the North. The internecine violence of the Troubles so scrambled the ideas of space and place—in trying to delineate them regionally and sub-regionally—that, Longley's poems seem to say, we must needs look to something older or otherwise—to a history of violence that played out in World War I, for example, which Fran Braerton has attended to closely in Longley's work, or to a classical past that gives us the ideas and poetic forms to mediate the world of Belfast and its surrounds, and also to the natural landscape and the things that fill it up—the work of naming and listing and

[317] Antonia Byatt, interviewed by the author at Arts Council England, London, U.K., 2015.

setting down for posterity. These features of Longley's work embody what I want to consider loosely as a form of cipher or encryption—a figural encoding that gives access, for those close by or with the predilection to follow the clues, to the cultural content of Belfast routed through the symbols of its landscape and the experience of this poet. In the context of the Arts Council, this work of encryption proves highly relevant to the cultural work the Council wished to pursue, both during the Troubles and after, as part of an attempt suture deep national wounds.

Born and raised in Belfast, Longley not only lived through the worst of the Troubles in Northern Ireland; he also worked for ten years at the Arts Council, doing the work of cultural administration while scribbling poems during moments of reflection and distraction. Longley has been relatively less celebrated than the best known poets of his generation from Northern Ireland—Seamus Heaney, the Nobel laureate, foremost, but also the internationally celebrated (and slightly younger) Paul Muldoon, who has been an unlikely celebrity, given the opacity and technical quality of much of his poetry. Longley, for his developmental years and professional life, has lived squarely in Belfast, and his poems, while they often stray from the city itself (temporally as well as physically), form a kind of enciphered key to the city's most difficult years of the last century, as well as to a web of relationships that embody the poetic voice of a generation.

In his second collection of poems, the ominously named *An Exploded View*, Longley writes, in the poem, "Irish Poetry":

> Impasto or washes as a rule:
> Tuberous closings, a muddy
> Accumulation, internal rhyme—
> Fuchsia's droop towards the ground,
> The potato and its flower:
>
> Or a continuing drizzle,

Specializations of light,
Bog-water stretched over sand
In small waves, elisions—
The dialects of silence:

Or, sometimes, in combination
Outlining the bent spines,
The angular limbs of creatures —
Lost minerals coloring
The initial letter, the stance.

This poem gives a good introduction to the way that Longley's poetry works.[318] As a reader, the work of orienteering arrives immediately. Irish poetry is like certain painterly media—the thickness of impasto or also the thinness and atmospheric transparency of washes. But then, paint isn't paint at all as we turn to the land and its vegetation—tuberous closings, muddy accumulation. But, also, in that drift to the land is a drift towards language. Closings of lines. Accumulation of words, and, then, "internal rhyme." And in the final lines of the first stanza, that internal rhyme is no longer language at all, but the shape of a flower or a tuber. What kind of language and accumulation is this? And how do we understand it, with that closing colon leading away from material impasto and into the washes of a "continuing drizzle, / specializations of light," these, too, becoming language, or its absence—the "dialects of silence." After the wash of the second stanza, the final stanza works to bring together these various oppositions, aligning, "in combination," a resource for outlining a landscape, or, rather, the inhabitants of that landscape. In this manner, poetic language becomes a dualistic medium, and a precarious one—a preserve of "lost minerals" which color the "initial letter, the stance." Poetry becomes a kind of layering onto language—an impasto effect—that gives color and substance,

[318] For a thoroughgoing, book-length overview of how Longley's poetry works, alongside a wealth of manuscript and other material, see Fran Brearton, *Reading Michael Longley* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 2006).

but also—like a wash or painting of whatever sort—is less action than an attitude towards action—a stance.

This vision of poetry as a coloring and a stance leads us to questions of medium, but rather than chase down the various significances of painterly media, I want to explore more intimately the idea of accumulation—a muddy accumulation—that offers up a substantive outline or a kind of "internal rhyme" in material form. What is an accumulation, after all, other than the suggestion of significance embedded in material heft? Longley answers this for us. Accumulation is also the thinness of representation, of language, in the face of things as they are, whether that be falling in love, the materiality of a flower, the death of a friend, a bomb in a pub.

If we take Longley's poetry to be an accumulation, what sort of accumulation is it? What resources does it give us—whether impasto or wash, substance or silence—for accessing the things that it would seem to value or accrete? I want to suggest that the fundamental work of Longley's poetry is to use refraction as a form of encryption. Refraction of light, much like in language, turns an image by passing it through another medium—glass or some other clear thing like water. This in itself is not any kind of encryption or secret-keeping. But in the realm of language, to pass experience through the figural resources of language that are local to the self or the community or the geography—this *can* amount to a form of encryption and, simultaneously, an evocation of the privation of sense and security that one would wish to enjoy in the comfort of one's home. So in Longley's poetry, a flower is rarely just a flower, a scene rarely just a scene. It suggests a mysterious—washed—depth beneath, and where it gives sturdy impasto—the thickness of WWI history or of Roman poetry—it all but guarantees that something else is afoot.

Much has been made of the proliferation in Longley's poetry of lists, themselves

accretions of things—the impasto a foundation on which meaning has been washed across the line. In his poem, "The Ice-Cream Man," for example, we encounter a poem more than half composed of flavors and flower names:

> Rum and raisin, vanilla, butter-scotch, walnut, peach:
> You would rhyme off the flavors. That was before
> They murdered the ice-cream man on the Lisburn Road
> And you bought carnations to lay outside his shop.
> I named for you all the wild flowers of the Burren
> I had seen in one day: thyme, valerian, loosestrife,
> Meadowsweet, way blade, crowfoot, ling, angelica,
> Herb robert, marjoram, cow parsley, sundew, vetch,
> Mountain avens, wood sage, ragged robin, stitchwort,
> Yarrow, lady's bedstraw, bindweed, bog pimpernel.[319]

As I hinted above, the flowers here are not simply flowers, the walk through the Burren not simply a walk, the flavors of ice cream not simply flavors, even as the act of listing constitutes an important work of archivization. And it's but one line in the entire poem, and of course the title, that turn the entire contrapuntal catalog—the ice cream of the city and the flowers of the countryside—into an impossible elegy full of the irresolution and the failed mourning that Jahan Ramazani argues characterizes the modern elegy.[320] What would be a moment of shared intimacy—"you would rhyme off the flavors"—becomes an anchor for a common, human response to a violent, casual trauma—the murder of the ice-cream man. In a moment of impossible address, the apostrophized "you" has taken carnations to lay "outside his shop," and then, apropos of nothing, it would seem, the speaker is naming flowers that are not carnations and are not even in the surrounds of Belfast. The flowers are of the Burren, in the Southwest of the republic, not in the North at all. What manner of reassurance or mourning might this be,

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[319] Michael Longley, *Collected Poems* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Wake Forest University Press, 2007).
[320] Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

this listing of things that are more than 200 miles away, across the border? Is it mourning, at all, that occasioned the naming of these flowers? It's hard to say.

What isn't as hard to notice is that the act of listing is in itself a ritual impulse. An act of preservation and remembrance. Longley has himself likened it to a "prayer."[321] So the flowers of the Burren, like so many of Longley's lists, provide the impasto and the wash—the anchor and the figurative drift—that facilitate the work of an incomplete mourning in the context of an intimate encounter between a father and daughter. In this, we see another of the contrapuntal impulses in Longley's poems—that subtle negotiation and blending of the public and private—the swerve between the whispered intimacy and the public declamation, the ways in which the forms of consolation that the intimate body requires are not so far removed from the forms of consolation demanded by the injured political body and its traumatized social organs.

One way to begin to understand the significance of this approach—a fundamentally oblique approach to mourning as a private act with public stakes—is to take a view of the ways in which protest and political expression were happening in Northern Ireland during the years of the Troubles. In the anthropological literature on the modes of public protest during those years, Jack Santino notes the similarity of public display among both Republicans and Loyalists—the use of "bonfires, effigies, parades, flags, and banners," as well as the use of murals.[322] Anchoring his analysis is the notion of a "marked culturescape," which refers to the ways in which people have shaped both the land and the built environment to generate forms of collective

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[321] He also notes that the poem is addressed to his daughter, who had laid flowers for the ice-cream man while Longley was "botanising in the Burren." Michael Longley, "Songs for Dead Children: The Poetry of Northern Ireland's Troubles," *New Statesman*, 28 December 2017.

[322] Jack Santino, "Public Protest and Popular Style: Resistance from the Right in Northern Ireland and South Boston," *American Anthropologist* 101, no. 3 (1999): 516.

expression.[323] The marked culturescape has a geography and a presence, but it is a compromised geography, or a developed one—one that has been marked, whether with graffiti or the char from a bonfire or the riddle of bullet holes from a past conflict.

I want to suggest that we can tie this impulse to preserve, to name, and to respect the fundamental situatedness of all experience to the type of work Longley and others were doing in the Arts Council. Further, we can observe that preservation and naming create a site of translation between public and private spheres, and we can connect that site of translation to the ways in which arts administrators in Northern Ireland had to negotiate trauma. Cultural administrators encountered clear and present trauma, then historical trauma, and they, too, had to find ways to speak across the borders of time and space and meaning in order to find sites of reconciliation and attempt the work of national and sub-national mourning.

The work of mourning, Longley seems to suggest, or the work even of acknowledging or articulating what has happened—the work of documentation—demands distance from the marked culturescape. It demands a jump across the border to the Burren—a landscape richly populated by an incredible diversity of flora. There is a quality of oldness to the Burren—a landscape left behind by the coming and going of ancient glaciers—that counters directly the newness, the urgency, of the flag parades and revolutionary murals one finds on frequent display in Belfast even today. In anthropological terms, we might say that the Burren casts the matter of conflict, death, and mourning in a different cultural style. In human terms, we might say that the Burren gives an escape hatch from the symbols that are ready to hand and frequently deployed in the expression of partisan affiliation in the North. So, too, do they offer a way to cast human life

[323] Ibid., 517.

in an ecological frame of precarity in which humans are as delicately beautiful and self-same as the wildflowers of the Burren.[324]

In other moments, Longley takes us even further afield to Rome, China, and Japan. And in many moments, those poems are not attempts at mourning at all. They are simple appreciations or bridges across time and space—a celebration of symbols held in common. And yet they seem often to be edging towards something unsaid or unsayable—something outside of the speaker's moment of address. That is, there is a presence, an unmoved mover, behind the poems that never quite disappears or reveals himself. Whether it's Longley or not doesn't really matter. Consider the title poem, "The Ghost Orchid," from the volume of that name:

> Added to its few remaining sides will be the stanza
> I compose about leaves like flakes of skin, a color
> Dithering between pink and yellow, and then the root
> That grows like coral among shadows and leaf-litter.
> Just touching the petals bruises them into darkness.

This ekphrastic stanza recurses into itself immediately, standing the reader in the middle of an act that has not been described, a description that has not been contextualized. "Added to its few remaining sides"—What is it? What sides? The poem appears in the midst of a series that touches on Oriental themes. Should we infer that this describes some work of pottery?[325] Perhaps rather than note something unsayable or indicate some unmoved mover we would more appropriately identify here a dramatization of the privation of experience—a statement on the phenomenology of being, in an artistic mode, presented through the medium of the poem and the metaphor of the ghost orchid. After all, this is a flower that cannot survive being touched.

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[325] Nathan Suhr-Sytsma provides an excellent overview of Japan in Irish poetry with attention to Longley's time in Japan and his engagement with Japanese poetry. Nathan Suhr-Sytsma, "Haiku Aesthetics and Grassroots Internationalization: Japan in Irish Poetry," *Éire-Ireland* 45, no. 3 & 4 (2010): especially pp. 255-6.

One and beautiful in itself, the act of observation seems almost to harm it. The act of touch destroys it, or, at least, alters it completely.

The culture of a people can sometimes take on the quality of a ghost orchid. Try to touch it, and it dies. This is one aspect of cultural administration that I believe Longley understands, even as he considered ways to harness the power of culture. What's necessary to understand about the Arts Council of Northern Ireland is the extent to which it became not only an administrator of culture, but also an arbiter of history, through the work of cultural recovery and interpretation. When one looks to an era of internecine strife—of the internal conflicts of colonized peoples, for instance—and tries to conjure a means to suture the wounds engendered there, routed, as they are, through long histories and complex externalities, the political class looks to its usual resources of gold and guns, but it also looks to the work of culture. If anyone doubts the significance of culture to the political, simply observe the situation of culture in the political rhetoric and institutional priorities of the post-conflict era. In the North of Ireland, the Arts Council evolved from an organization concerned with the recovery and support of literature as a core part of Ulster identity and a precarious gem in the cultural crown of the North to an organization that attempted to serve larger political ends with literature, such as to encourage a society in which "all individuals are considered equals and diversity is respected" — an organization that highlights "ways in which the arts and artists can play a role in addressing issues such as racism, discrimination and secterianism."[326] The "world stage" remains a consistent concern across the years, but the turn from intrinsic values and cultural pride towards the role of the arts in "boosting people's confidence, enhancing well-being and empowering individuals"

[326] "Various reports on cultural activity together," Public Records Office for Northern Ireland, AC/2/4/6.

tracks lock-step with the development from the 1970s need to deal with the location of culture in Ireland during a period of civil war to the need during the post-ceasefire era to integrate Irish culture and cultural administration into the larger global model led by England and the United States. For the new century, the objective is to place the arts "at the heart of [Ireland's] social, economic, and creative life."[327]

In 1976, Longley produced two reports for the Arts Council in his capacity as Assistant Director for Literature. The reports address, and recommend, support for publishing and the collecting of manuscript archives by the council. The reports, as a pair, give a fascinating snapshot of the publishing industry and the literary manuscripts market from the perspective of a practicing poet and cultural administrator. In one of these reports, in broad strokes, we learn that between 1971-1975, the Literature, Art, and Traditional Arts committees of the ACNI provided direct subventions to publishers "to offset the costs of producing books of Northern Irish cultural interest and artistic worth…"[328] In practice, the funds supported primarily poetry, drama, prose, and criticism across 49 books and pamphlets published by 10 publishers, of which two were in the Republic of Ireland and one in Great Britain.

In taking a close look at the market for poetry in Great Britain, Longley concludes that "a civilised country is asking too much of its publishers if it expects them in difficult times to be solely responsible for the encouragement and dissemination of imaginative literature."[329] And in Ireland, he indicates, the situation is only compounded by increased costs and decreased demand (due to a smaller population), with the result that "It can be stated categorically that there are no

[327] Ibid.
[328] Public Records Office for Northern Ireland, AC/10/2/1, File entitled "Council Philosophy."
[329] Ibid.

fortunes to be made in Irish publishing, and, almost as categorically, very few modest and assured livelihoods."[330]

He notes that in a situation where "mergers and take-overs are the order of the day" and in which the "resulting organisations tend to be impersonal and exclusively profit-seeking," work of "literary value…is invariably the first to be axed." He provides for reference the example of Macmillan, who "have close their poetry list."[331] Poetry becomes a special point of concern for Longley, as he notes the inability of the market for poetry to support itself. He remarks, "Those London houses which continue to publish poetry to do [sic] so out of altruism and/or reasons of prestige," and he quotes a London editor who avers, "the health of a publishing concern can easily be judged by its poetry list."[332]

Articulating the mathematics of the market in explicit terms, Longley confirms, "Those houses which continue to publish quality books of limited appeal (this category automatically includes all collections of poetry and short stories) can only do so by allowing one or two best-sellers to finance such books."[333] indicates that to make a "reasonable profit on a hardback book," a publisher will need to sell approximately 1,200 copies. A book of poetry in Great Britain, he notes, will have done "extremely well if it sells 1000 copies," and "200 or 300 is an accepted norm."[334] As we can easily see, poetry does not pay for itself, and it seems that especially in the larger context of Great Britain, the consolidating market is largely content to leave poetry by the wayside.

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[330] Ibid.
[331] Ibid.
[332] Ibid.
[333] Ibid.
[334] Ibid. For paperbacks, he cites 25,000 sales as a baseline for a sound "economic proposition."

However, Longley makes a case that Irish publishers are a special case. He writes,

> The only factor that offsets this financially precarious situation [in Ireland] is the enthusiasm of Irish publishers. Nearly all of them are bibliophiles who, because they believe in what they are doing, accept the likelihood of little or no financial reward. Unlike the major London houses, they make the encouragement and dissemination of imaginative literature their central purpose…Liam Miller of the Dolmen Press and Peter Fallon of the Gallery Press are typical examples. Fallon publishes nothing but poetry. Although he works entirely on his own, his impact in cultural terms has been enormous."[335]

This story about the situation of publishing in Ireland broadly, as opposed to the industry in Great Britain, leads Longley to conclude that we might see a distinctiveness of culture in Ireland that circulates around the value of the literary—namely, that "Ireland's culture is primarily a literary one…especially in poetry." In his mind, "The achievement and reputation of [recent writing out of Ulster] should make it unnecessary to justify Council support for literature…"[336]

Even so, Longley articulates the following primary reasons for supporting Irish publishers using state funds:

1. Writers (poets especially) are an acclaimed part of the local culture, and they are at risk
2. Supporting publishers means supporting writers
3. Supporting publishers benefits readers by increasing availability and reducing cost

In his mind, "Northern Irish writing should be seen as part of a continuing literary tradition" that needs to be both nurtured in terms of new production and recovered in terms of preserving valuable texts that are going or have gone out of print. He also notes the interconnectedness of the creative and critical traditions, indicating that it is desirable to support criticism, though he expresses ambivalence about whether scholarly works should be supported by universities or the council itself. He writes,

The Council's sponsorship of these border-line cases [of criticism] should not require

[335] Ibid. Longley also notes small subventions to Fallon from ACNI and AC Dublin.
[336] Ibid.

> much justification. Nevertheless, it might be asked how wide the border should be, and whether or not it is reasonable that the Arts Council should be the only cultural body patrolling it.[337]

And then, outside of the educational context, he encourages the council to take into account libraries and bookshops, as well. And, remarkably, he also suggests engaging the Department of Commerce and Local Enterprise Development Unit for support as the argument could be made, for example, "that publishing is a small but crucial industry as elegible for the grants and encouragements as pottery or lace-making."[338] For Longley, writing in this context, publishing of poetry aspires to the cash-value playing field of traditional arts and crafts, which of course in the Irish context must be taken as a considerable accomplishment.

Also in the Irish context, during this historical moment, the funding of art cannot be discussed without addressing the violence of the Troubles. This was true especially at the time. In an extended analysis of the Council's support of Blackstaff Press, Longley notes without much ceremony "In Autumn 1973, a bomb started a serious fire in the Athletic Stores, next door to the Blackstaff Press whose stock of books was extensively damaged, mainly by water."[339] For Longley and, we must imagine, the Council, water damage subsequent to bombing must be considered just as the cost of paper or the size of the poetry reading public must be considered. In the face of the very real practical realities of keeping Blackstaff on its feet, Longley estimates, "the Literature Committee and other involved committees might wish to consider the possibility of diverting funds from certain other projects into publishing."[340] Specifically, he recommends diverting funds from "poetry reading tours" which are "expensive entertainments for which there is little

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[337] Ibid.
[338] Ibid.
[339] Ibid.
[340] Ibid.

demand."[341] He also notes that the Council would be pressured to establish a new press were Blackstaff (the only local press at the time) to be forced out of business.[342]

This question of the business of poetry, presented in this way to this particular type of organization offers striking insight into how poets and publishers and poetry advocates have negotiated the contending values that animate the world republic of poetry. In an appendix to his report, for example, Longley describes how markups worked in the publishing world at the time. Taking into account the unit cost of a book, x5 was the standard markup, although trade paperbacks with low unit costs could be up to x20 markup, and the London standard had moved to around x8. By contrast, Council subsidized books tended to be marked up approximately x3.5.[343] He then conducts a series of calculations to show that for Blackstaff, an ideal case for poetry is simply to break even, leaving no money for reinvestment or minimal profit. And yet, he is adamant that poetry is a thing to be preserved and valued, and even if we can feel the tug of an idea that poetic expression is in and of itself a kind of ultimate value, Longley works through the medium of the business report to quantify its value and justify ongoing support.

Since this analysis has proceeded with such a strong emphasis on context, opening out onto two poems that Longley wrote at his desk at the Arts Council while on the job shows how the two sides of Longley's career—cultural administrator and poet—might be understood alongside one another.[344] The poem first is entitled, "Casualty," the second, "Skara Brae." Both poems fixate, albeit in different ways, on memory and temporality and the ways in which

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[341] Ibid. His comment is also characteristically self-deprecating. Heather Clark has written about Arts Council funding for poetry tours that helped launch Longley's career as a poet. See Heather Clark, *The Ulster Renaissance: Poetry in Belfast, 1962-1972* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 81-84.
[342] Ibid.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Michael Longley, interviewed by the author in Belfast, Northern Ireland, 2015.

memory is, in the end, less about the firing of neurons in the human brain and rather more about the persistence of material things and the stories that they tell. In an interview I conducted with Longley in 2015, we had a long conversation outside a coffee shop on a noisy street in Belfast. One of the repeated and remarkable claims that Longley articulated over the course of our conversation is the fairly simple point that "poetry is a way of remembering," with the consequence that, "poetry gives things a second chance." In some cases, to paraphrase, poetry gives people a second chance, but it is this connection between the language and song of poetry and the persistence and memory embodied in things that strikes me as a direct line between Longley's poetics and the sort of work the Arts Council was attempting in this era, and in which Longley was personally involved.

"Casualty," from Longley's 1973 volume, *An Exploded View*, opens,

> Its decline was gradual,
> A sequence of explorations
> By other animals, each
> Looking for the easiest way in —

This poem disorients from the outset. The title, "Casualty," primes us to consider a broken body, a dead soldier. It might also prime us to think of Heaney's own "Casualty," from the 1979 volume, *Field Work*, but Longley wrote his poem first. His poem is much subtler than Heaney's elegy, the message more cryptic and material. In the opening lines, we find the decline of an "it," which we learn is an animal, known as such only because "other animals" are trying to find a way into it. Alienated and affronted, the "it" sits silent as these other animals pursue

> A surgical removal of the eyes,
> A probing of the orifices,
> Bitings down through the skin,
> Through tracts where the grasses melt.

Compromised, the corpse opens up to the elements and to the violations that are part of the

natural processes of scavenging and decomposition. And then we discover the source of the gaze—the perspective that would see in this decomposing animal a kind of casualty, a quiet echo of the ways in which humans also encounter this putrefaction and the memorial imposition of meaning. The poem continues,

> And the bad air released
> In a ceremonious wounding
> So slow that more and more
> I wanted to get closer to it.

For this speaker, it is the stench—escaped from the corpse in a "ceremonious wounding"—that because of its slowness invites him closer. This slow decomposition and its sensorium wants the speaker's attention, even though the process is no more or less natural than the one that imposes itself on every other animal corpse that has decomposed and fed scavengers on every other hillside in Ireland. But the poem is not insensitive to the generalizing impulse. Though clearly an account of a specific corpse, the descriptions remain somewhat nondescript:

> A candid grin, the bones
> Accumulating to a diagram
> Except for the polished horns,
> The immaculate hooves.

We can now start to narrow in on a list of possible animals this might be. But it would seem that the "candid grin" and the "diagram" of bones are much more specific than the poem itself, which keeps the reader at one degree of remove. To this extent, the poem and poet seem to suggest that this one life is irreducible to description or figure, but that we might yet learn some larger lesson from the material that survives, which is in every way the material that gives it meaning.

In the end, what seems most notable about the material that gives meaning in this poem is the way in which it is perceived. Elegizing this dead animal, Longley dramatizes the way in which we yearn to extract value and meaning from material and symbolic detritus. He concludes,

> And this no final reduction
> For the ribs began to scatter,
> The wool to move outward
> As though hunger still worked there,
>
> As though something that had followed
> Fox and crow was desperate for
> A last morsel and was
> Other than the wind or rain.

"[D]esperate for / A last morsel," something seems to act on this disassembled corpse, to need something nourishing from it. That hunger is the hunger of the poet, of the reader, of a nation, to extract value from the dead and from the exploded remnants of bombed out buildings. In this sense, the poem not only does the work of commemoration that Longley articulates as his poetic objective, it also dramatizes the problems of financial risk and cultural preservation in the work of poetic commemoration—something he was acutely attuned to given his work at the Council.

In Longley's second Arts Council poem, "Skara Brae," we meet a poet anthropologist. The poem opens,

> A window into the ground,
> The bumpy lawn in section,
> An exploded view
> Through middens, through lives[.]

For Longley, the poem suggests, writing provides a kind of window into the archeological ground. And as a cultural administrator, he also demonstrates a kind of archeological impulse. A desire for the exploded view, but also a sense that the way we tend to see writers in that exploded view—through the paper detritus of their writerly careers in the form of manuscript archives—is intimately bound up in contemporary market systems. Though his medium is ink and paper, Longley translates this desire across media, from the archeological ground of "Skara Brae" to the administrative language of a Council report.

Much has been made of Longley's lists, but they take on a new tenor when viewed from this perspective of accounting and markets and the fight for cultural memory as a share of our collective attention.[345] In the second and third stanzas of "Skara Brae," we find a list of things, artifacts, which is to say, objects laden with context and meaning, erupting from domestic kitchen waste piles:

> The thatch of grass roots,
> The gravelly roof compounding
> Periwinkles, small bones,
> A calendar of meals,
>
> The thread between sepulcher
> And home a broken necklace,
> Knuckles, dice scattering
> At the warren's core[.]

The durable calendar of meals connects grave to life, and while Longley is clearly attentive to the role of poetry in cultural preservation, he also takes a longer view. Looking back to this ancient site, he finds something before and beyond poetry, we might imagine—

> Pebbles the tide washes
> That conceded for so long
> Living room, the hard beds
> The table made of stone.

These items bear the mark of the living, but they persist almost beyond meaning. And in this way, the poet becomes, as he has always been, an interpreter of things and a merchant of myths. For Longley, the myth is a profound belief in the sanctity of things and the historical memory that they are able to hold.

As a cultural administrator, Longley expressed, through policy recommendations, this

[345] See, for example, John Lyon, "Michael Longley's Lists," *English: Journal of the English Association* 45, no. 183 (1996).

same regard for the sanctity of things, especially in the context of poetry, and especially in the context of the market for manuscript materials. As he notes, "In recent years, dealing in manuscripts has become something of a growth industry, producing raw material to feed into the voracious North American academic machine."[346] He also notes, with considerable humor, that some "unscrupulous authors" try to "exploit this situation" by filling notebooks with "random jottings and coffee stains" and selling them on for a "few hundred pounds" to an American university.[347] Nonetheless, he continues, "the authentic article invariably declares itself."[348]

While humorous, the manuscripts report opens up the question of value in a profound and fascinating manner. Reflecting on the impact of the "American market," Longley catalogs work by the Arts Councils of Scotland, Wales, and Great Britain to acquire literary manuscripts beginning in the mid-1960s. A sincere concern seems to be both the "depressingly steady flow of valuable papers across the Atlantic" as well as the extent to which government at the "highest…level" acknowledged the value of retaining "at least some important parts of Britain's literary heritage" by, in 1973, providing an approximately 22% reduction in tax on private sales of manuscripts to British institutions.[349] Sensitized to the explicitly public value of these works, Longley sees no problem with suggesting even tax breaks to encourage the preservation of vital pieces of (Northern) Irish culture.

So there is, in Longley's view, something to be gained on the side of the public in the retention of poets' papers. But there is a boon, also, he is quick to realize, to the poet, as well. And this positions the poet fascinatingly in this market for cultural goods. He notes, by way of

[346] Public Records Office for Northern Ireland, AC/10/2/2, File entitled "Collecting Manuscripts."
[347] Ibid.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Ibid.

example, that "the sale of papers came at crucial periods in the careers of both Joyce and Yeats, when large projects were looming and they had no money" and that this type of exchange might be seen "as a form of patronage."[350] The organizations that might facilitate this type of patronage, on Longley's view, include university and public libraries, the public records office, the Ulster Museum, and the Arts Council itself. In order for there to be manuscripts there must be poets, and in order for there to be poets, there must be time and energy and money to facilitate the writing. Given the market for poetry, a degree of patronage is required. While he presents this part of the argument in a swift, sometimes jaunty manner, one might imagine him sitting at his desk, pondering the possibility of a sinecure, the freedom and time to write.

In concluding his report, Longley quotes Philip Larkin from the preface to a *Catalogue of Modern Literary Manuscripts*, the force of which is to indicate that retention of archives amounts to a declaration of seriousness in the preservation of British literary culture.[351] The argument, we are given to understand, is that poetry is part of the nation, and the materials of poetry—the detritus of poets' lives, like so many shells in a midden—are worth keeping, and paying good money for, as a link in the chain between being and memory. There is in the material something solid. A cultural bond that will only accrue interest and value in Ireland and beyond. Looking to the Northern Irish context, he closes the report by celebrating a "literary efflorescence in Ulster" that has attracted "overseas interest." As a consequence of this success, he argues, "Some kind of policy should be evolved against the day when the speculators move in."[352]

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[350] Ibid.

[351] Larkin's preface can be found in Jenny Stratford, *The Arts Council Collection of Modern Literary Manuscripts, 1963-1972 : A Catalogue* (London: Turret Books, 1974).

[352] Ibid. It is perhaps a sign of how things played out with the manuscript purchasing schemes, and no small irony, that Longley's own papers, together with much of the correspondence between him and others of the Belfast group, ultimately landed across the Atlantic, at Emory University.

Early in my conversation with Antonia Byatt, the director of Literature at the Arts Council, she noted,

> …poetry and poets have always needed more. It's been a stronger area of market failure than fiction. So that's how it started, I think, and obviously poetry is, I would think, the British—they do see poetry as one of their national art forms. I think culturally poetry is really important to us even though we don't appear to buy it very much.

This articulation of cultural valuation has stuck with me. In the face of "market failure," there is yet great value placed on the "serious pleasure" of poetry as a national good. And in this sense, poetry becomes relegated to the symbolic realm of flags and anthems—something to be monumented and revered, but not perhaps to be published and purchased. At the same time, poets and those who for a variety of reasons wish to keep poets fed and publishers publishing and prizes endowed and festivals scheduled—these people put in the effort to translate for the rest of us, into pounds and pence as well as into configurations of expressive language, not so much what we *should* value as *how* we value things and how we might think of our repertoires of value in different sorts of ways. And of course, bodies such as the Council undoubtedly participate in inflecting regimes of value that determine what poems and ideas reach us through publishing and other means. And yet, sometimes even that work fails, on top of market failure and perhaps other sorts of failure. After all, we don't much read Peter Redgrove, in spite of the public investment.

# Afterword

Money has accrued a variety of symbolic meanings in this analysis, from public funds to prize winnings to covert money to investment returns.[353] In its attachment to social relations, money behaves as a metaphor, bringing values across while serving as an absolute reifier of value. And as we have seen, following the trail of public money takes us on a journey from the lyric "I" to the global "we" and back again.

For sociologists Thomas Franssen and Giselinde Kuipers, the idea of literature as the "art form of the nation state" has given way during the late twentieth century to other media forms—a development that coincides, they argue, with the decline of the central position of the nation-state itself.[354] However, for them, this shift does not mean the cultural world system follows suit. Rather, much like this study, they recognize that when we begin to look away from the metropolitan centers of New York, London, and Paris we find that "theories developed to explain the workings of the literary center lose part of their relevance."[355] As they also recognize, when we look more closely at what is really going on, writers and publishers in the global South, especially, often rely heavily on "cooperation and mutual collaboration" rather than strict Bourdieusian competition.[356] The findings in this dissertation reinforce that conclusion and

[353] Viviana Zelizer calls money's ability to take on different meanings "earmarking," which for her encompasses the complex processes whereby "money is attached to a variety of social relations rather than to individuals." Viviana A. Zelizer, *The Social Meaning of Money* (New York: BasicBooks, 1994), 25.
[354] Thomas Franssen and Giseldinde Kuipers, "Sociology of Literature and Publishing in the Early 21st Century: Away from the Centre," *Cultural Sociology* 9, no. 3 (2015): 291.
[355] Ibid., 293. See also Suhr-Sytsma's critique of Casanova with regard to modernist Nigerian publishing networks. Suhr-Sytsma, "Ibadan Modernism: Poetry and the Literary Present in Mid-Century Nigeria."
[356] Franssen and Kuipers, "Sociology of Literature and Publishing in the Early 21st Century: Away from the Centre," 293.

extend it by re-suturing connections between the civil and the political spheres for the study of cultural prestige.

The fragmentation of literary prestige-generating systems is presently increasing, partly as an outgrowth of shifts in the balance of economic power away from the Anglophone world.[357] From one perspective, we could understand this fragmentation as a kind of decolonization. From another perspective, it's more like colonization in reverse—an effort on the part of poets and publishers to assert regional mechanisms of judgment and sacralization that also remaining hooked into global circuitry.

Poetry served as a testing ground for the idea of the nation during the second half of the twentieth century, even as it problematized the idea of the nation through critique and through reinforcing cultural repertoires of evaluation that are not directly generated by the political sphere. But as Benedict Anderson reminds us, nationalisms are, because imagined, inevitably plural, and only some of those nationalisms ever obtain the stamp of officialdom through discursive elaboration and reinforcement.[358] If poetry reminds us that there is yet space for more imagining, poets and advocates are working overtime to make new spaces for poetic imaginings. As Chinua Achebe asserts, "we must not see the role of literature only in terms of providing latent support for things as they are, for it does also offer the kinetic energy necessary for social transition and change."[359] For him, literature enables this kinetic energy because creative works expose us to possible worlds in which symbolic exchanges give new purchase on present reality, and in so doing these literary texts provide a ground of social being as objects of collective

[357] Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First Century* (London: Verso, 2007).
[358] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.
[359] Achebe, "What Has Literature Got to Do with It?," 9.

reflection. Literature, he says, "gives us a second handle on reality; enabling us to encounter in the safe manageable dimensions of make-believe the very same threats of integrity that may assail the psyche in real life…"[360] As he goes on to argue, the safety of the make-believe also enables literature's ability to impact individuals and social structures. Achebe finds that for literary texts, "beneath that admittedly important purpose of giving delight there lies a deep and very serious intent...revealing far more than any number of political science monographs could possibly ever tell us."[361] Poetry embraces abstraction and complexity through the compression and figuration of language rather than offering scientific precision; it provides directed complexity rather than complex direction.

Patterns of creativity and affiliation can be hard to see from the perspective of large-scale institutional or systems theory, because those patterns are most accurately defined from the ground up. From thirty thousand feet, theories of artistic prestige risks losing track of what is going on locally, especially in places where arts surveys do not exist, where histories have been forgotten, where institutional memory must be reconstructed from archives and from the mouths of individuals. As a researcher, doing that work requires a willingness to enter into the strange agency of collective human endeavors and a willingness to enter into the complex repertoires of value that animate our decisions and commitments. As Wendy Griswold exhorted the field of sociology in the early 1990s,

> Sociologists should rediscover that forgotten soul, the author, who has been deconstructed into oblivion. It may seem a sign of theoretical naïveté, but it is a sign of common sense as well, to remind ourselves that human agents create the literary objects

[360] Ibid., 11.
[361] Ibid., 8.

under consideration.[362]

Human agents, such as an up-and-coming generation of poets represented by writers and advocates like Tade Ipadeola (Nigeria), Jumoke Verissimo (Nigeria/Canada), Kei Miller (Jamaica/U.K.), Millicent Graham (Jamaica), Daljit Nagra (U.K./England/India), and Alan Gillis (U.K./Northern Ireland) show us that we are not living in a post-national world, but to be a cultural actor in this world is to enter into a space of structured messiness with immense creative potential. We are culturally and politically constituted within flows of money, culture, and ideas, and we are constantly shifting and seeking for buoyant ideas and experiences amidst those flows and the institutions that channel them. Poetry is sometimes that buoyant thing—a new point of view, a way of being, a space or a name, a form or a value. Sometimes, as literary critics are quick to point out, poetry is also less the buoyant thing than a symptom of failure or failure's prophet—a stretching of language to its breaking point in describing what it might mean to "develop" as collectives and individuals, exposing the fault lines in the notions we take for granted. And from another angle, which is the one I've chosen to foreground, poetry is also an outgrowth of another kind of poetics, that of creative entrepreneurship, or poetic investments, if you will, that fuel new collectives as they bring across new imaginings, and new forms of value.

[362] Wendy Griswold, "Recent Moves in the Sociology of Literature," *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993): 465.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Annual Report Figures

| Year | Total | % Change | Literature | % Change | Literature % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1952-1953 | £675,000 | 22.9% | £648 | | 0.1% |
| 1953-1954 | £785,000 | 16.3% | £2,306 | 255.9% | 0.3% |
| 1954-1955 | £785,000 | 0.0% | £1,129 | -51.0% | 0.1% |
| 1955-1956 | £820,000 | 4.5% | £1,083 | -4.1% | 0.1% |
| 1956-1957 | £885,000 | 7.9% | £1,859 | 71.7% | 0.2% |
| 1957-1958 | £985,000 | 11.3% | £1,868 | 0.5% | 0.2% |
| 1958-1959 | £1,100,000 | 11.7% | £2,073 | 11.0% | 0.2% |
| 1959-1960 | £1,218,000 | 10.7% | £1,745 | -15.8% | 0.1% |
| 1960-1961 | £1,500,000 | 23.2% | £2,905 | 66.5% | 0.2% |
| 1961-1962 | £1,745,000 | 16.3% | £3,115 | 7.2% | 0.2% |
| 1962-1963 | £2,190,000 | 25.5% | £4,331 | 39.0% | 0.2% |
| 1963-1964 | £2,730,000 | 24.7% | £4,192 | -3.2% | 0.2% |
| 1964-1965 | £3,205,000 | 17.4% | £5,148 | 22.8% | 0.2% |
| 1965-1966 | £3,910,000 | 22.0% | £9,443 | 83.4% | 0.2% |
| 1966-1967 | £5,700,000 | 45.8% | £51,550 | 445.9% | 0.9% |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1967-1968 | £7,200,000 | 26.3% | £63,103 | 22.4% | 0.9% |
| 1968-1969 | £7,750,000 | 7.6% | £66,289 | 5.0% | 0.9% |
| 1969-1970 | £8,200,000 | 5.8% | £73,923 | 11.5% | 0.9% |
| 1970-1971 | £9,300,000 | 13.4% | £68,506 | -7.3% | 0.7% |
| 1971-1972 | £11,900,000 | 28.0% | £68,646 | 0.2% | 0.6% |
| 1972-1973 | £13,725,000 | 15.3% | £78,644 | 14.6% | 0.6% |
| 1973-1974 | £17,138,000 | 24.9% | £146,278 | 86.0% | 0.9% |
| 1974-1975 | £21,335,000 | 24.5% | £199,477 | 36.4% | 0.9% |
| 1975-1976 | £28,850,000 | 35.2% | £226,800 | 13.7% | 0.8% |
| 1976-1977 | £37,500,000 | 30.0% | £413,144 | 82.2% | 1.1% |
| 1977-1978 | £41,725,000 | 11.3% | £511,461 | 23.8% | 1.2% |
| 1978-1979 | £51,800,000 | 24.1% | £578,527 | 13.1% | 1.1% |
| 1979-1980 | £63,630,000 | 22.8% | £611,548 | 5.7% | 1.0% |
| 1980-1981 | £70,970,000 | 11.5% | £680,421 | 11.3% | 1.0% |
| 1981-1982 | £80,450,000 | 13.4% | £674,644 | -0.8% | 0.8% |
| 1982-1983 | £91,300,000 | 13.5% | £747,835 | 10.8% | 0.8% |
| 1983-1984 | £96,080,000 | 5.2% | £837,168 | 11.9% | 0.9% |
| 1984-1985 | £101,241,678 | 5.4% | £786,942 | -6.0% | 0.8% |
| 1985-1986 | £106,050,000 | 4.7% | £488,376 | -37.9% | 0.5% |
| 1986-1987 | £135,600,000 | 27.9% | £494,719 | 1.3% | 0.4% |
| 1987-1988 | £139,300,000 | 2.7% | £514,000 | 3.9% | 0.4% |
| 1988-1989 | £152,411,000 | 9.4% | £529,000 | 2.9% | 0.3% |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1989-1990 | £155,500,000 | 2.0% | £629,000 | 18.9% | 0.4% |
| 1990-1991 | £175,792,000 | 13.0% | £950,000 | 51.0% | 0.5% |

# Appendix 2: Poetic Value Codes

| Id | Parent Id | Depth | Title |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | 0 | Economic Value |
| 2 | 1 | 1 | Risk |
| 3 | 1 | 1 | Economic Downturn |
| 4 | 1 | 1 | Growth |
| 5 | 1 | 1 | Literature doesn't pay |
| 6 | 1 | 1 | Lit won't benefit from more money |
| 7 | 1 | 1 | Public Funds |
| 8 | 7 | 2 | Limited Funding |
| 9 | 7 | 2 | Good Stewardship of Public Funds |
| 10 | 7 | 2 | Government support for Charities |
| 11 | 7 | 2 | Difficult to Navigate |
| 12 | 1 | 1 | Encouragement of Tourism |
| 13 | 1 | 1 | Influx of foreign currency |
| 14 | 1 | 1 | Dissemination |
| 15 | 1 | 1 | Increased Sales |
| 16 | 1 | 1 | Efficiency |
| 17 | 1 | 1 | Consumption |
| 18 | 1 | 1 | Distribution |
| 19 | 1 | 1 | Economic Benefit |
| 20 | 1 | 1 | Productivity |
| 21 | 1 | 1 | Market Value |
| 22 | 1 | 1 | Accounting |
| 23 | 1 | 1 | Amortization |
| 24 | 1 | 1 | Property Value |
| 25 | 1 | 1 | Money |
| 26 | 1 | 1 | Deprivation |
| 27 | 1 | 1 | Publication |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | 1 | 1 | Economic Viability |
| 29 | 1 | 1 | Income |
| 30 | 1 | 1 | Brand Identity |
| 31 | 1 | 1 | Advertisement |
| 32 | 1 | 1 | Exchange |
| 33 | 1 | 1 | Labor |
| 34 | 1 | 1 | Inheritance |
| 35 | 1 | 1 | Exploitation |
| 36 | 1 | 1 | Security |
| 37 | 1 | 1 | Loss |
| 38 | 1 | 1 | Investment |
| 39 | | 0 | Political Values |
| 40 | 39 | 1 | Collectivism |
| 41 | 39 | 1 | Patriotism |
| 42 | 41 | 2 | National Pride / International Competition |
| 43 | 39 | 1 | Freedom |
| 44 | 39 | 1 | Equality |
| 45 | 39 | 1 | Representation |
| 46 | 39 | 1 | Justice |
| 47 | 46 | 2 | Proportional Representation |
| 48 | 39 | 1 | Access |
| 49 | 39 | 1 | Art as Critical of the Status Quo |
| 50 | 39 | 1 | Democracy |
| 51 | 39 | 1 | Need (Public) |
| 52 | 39 | 1 | Independence |
| 53 | 39 | 1 | Anarchy |
| 54 | 39 | 1 | Ethnicity |
| 55 | 39 | 1 | National Identity |
| 56 | 39 | 1 | Political Critique |
| 57 | | 0 | Aesthetic Values |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 58 | 57 | 1 | Art vs Not-Art |
| 59 | 57 | 1 | Distinction |
| 60 | 59 | 2 | Exceptionality of Literature |
| 61 | 59 | 2 | Influence of Arts Council |
| 62 | 59 | 2 | Assessment as ACGB Function |
| 63 | 59 | 2 | Posterity |
| 64 | 59 | 2 | Merit |
| 65 | 59 | 2 | Poetry is for the Few |
| 66 | 59 | 2 | Anti-Romanticism |
| 67 | 59 | 2 | Exceptionality of the Good Writer |
| 68 | 59 | 2 | Quality |
| 69 | 59 | 2 | Recognition |
| 70 | 57 | 1 | Stimulation |
| 71 | 57 | 1 | Imagination |
| 72 | 57 | 1 | Creativity |
| 73 | 57 | 1 | Intrinsic Value of Art |
| 74 | 57 | 1 | Breadth / Variety |
| 75 | 57 | 1 | Performance |
| 76 | 57 | 1 | Mystery |
| 77 | 57 | 1 | Difficulty |
| 78 | 57 | 1 | Shock |
| 79 | 57 | 1 | Compression / Density |
| 80 | 57 | 1 | Reality |
| 81 | 57 | 1 | Ambiguity |
| 82 | 57 | 1 | Nature |
| 83 | 57 | 1 | Beauty |
| 84 | 57 | 1 | Universality |
| 85 | 57 | 1 | Discomfort |
| 86 | 57 | 1 | Comfort |
| 87 | 57 | 1 | Transcendence |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 88 | 57 | 1 | Awe |
| 89 | 57 | 1 | Sensuality |
| 90 | 57 | 1 | Literary Tradition |
| 91 | 57 | 1 | Language |
| 92 | 57 | 1 | Purity |
| 93 | 57 | 1 | Discord |
| 94 | 57 | 1 | Harmony |
| 95 | 57 | 1 | Entropy |
| 96 | 57 | 1 | Surreality |
| 97 | 57 | 1 | Renewal |
| 98 | 57 | 1 | Humor |
| 99 | 57 | 1 | Disorientation |
| 100 | 57 | 1 | Disgust |
| 101 | 57 | 1 | Disgust |
| 102 | 57 | 1 | Art for its own sake |
| 103 | 57 | 1 | Consolation |
| 104 | 57 | 1 | Transience |
| 105 | 57 | 1 | Satire |
| 106 | 57 | 1 | Artifice |
| 107 | 57 | 1 | Fantasy |
| 108 | 57 | 1 | Pop Culture |
| 109 | | 0 | Pragmatic Values |
| 110 | 109 | 1 | Privileging Established Entities |
| 111 | 109 | 1 | Response as Mode of Operation |
| 112 | 109 | 1 | Indirect Action |
| 113 | 109 | 1 | Health |
| 114 | 109 | 1 | Security |
| 115 | 109 | 1 | Usefulness |
| 116 | 109 | 1 | Aggression |
| 117 | 109 | 1 | Thrift |
| 118 | 109 | 1 | Determination |
| 119 | 109 | 1 | Protection |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 120 | 109 | 1 | Limited significance of creative literature |
| 121 | 109 | 1 | Art as Basic Need |
| 122 | 109 | 1 | Need |
| 123 | 109 | 1 | Action |
| 124 | 109 | 1 | Decisiveness |
| 125 | 109 | 1 | Mediation |
| 126 | 109 | 1 | Safety |
| 127 | 109 | 1 | Industry |
| 128 | 109 | 1 | Violence |
| 129 | 109 | 1 | Insight |
| 130 | 109 | 1 | Endurance |
| 131 | 109 | 1 | Mutability |
| 132 | 109 | 1 | Travel |
| 133 | 109 | 1 | Skepticism |
| 134 | 109 | 1 | Enterprise |
| 135 | 109 | 1 | Failure |
| 136 | | 0 | Existential Values |
| 137 | 136 | 1 | Success |
| 138 | 136 | 1 | Encouragement |
| 139 | 136 | 1 | Poetry as a Way of Life |
| 140 | 136 | 1 | Excitement |
| 141 | 136 | 1 | Happiness |
| 142 | 136 | 1 | Satisfaction |
| 143 | 136 | 1 | Achievement |
| 144 | 136 | 1 | Relaxation |
| 145 | 136 | 1 | Meaning and Purpose |
| 146 | 136 | 1 | Interpersonal Connection |
| 147 | 136 | 1 | Similarity |
| 148 | 136 | 1 | Politeness |
| 149 | 136 | 1 | Simplicity |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 150 | 136 | 1 | Human Character |
| 151 | 150 | 2 | People Basically Good |
| 152 | 150 | 2 | People Basically Bad |
| 153 | 136 | 1 | Confidence |
| 154 | 136 | 1 | Affirmation |
| 155 | 136 | 1 | Certainty |
| 156 | 155 | 2 | Uncertain Relationship between Art and Soc |
| 157 | 136 | 1 | Moral Values |
| 158 | 157 | 2 | Disavowal of Responsibility |
| 159 | 157 | 2 | Sobriety |
| 160 | 157 | 2 | Trust |
| 161 | 157 | 2 | Respect |
| 162 | 157 | 2 | Responsibility |
| 163 | 157 | 2 | Pride |
| 164 | 157 | 2 | Fairness |
| 165 | 157 | 2 | Regret |
| 166 | 157 | 2 | Sacrifice |
| 167 | 157 | 2 | Moral Absolutism |
| 168 | 157 | 2 | Moral Relativism |
| 169 | 157 | 2 | Moral Standards |
| 170 | 157 | 2 | Faithfulness |
| 171 | 157 | 2 | Love |
| 172 | 157 | 2 | Duty |
| 173 | 157 | 2 | Honesty |
| 174 | 157 | 2 | Patience |
| 175 | 157 | 2 | Self-control |
| 176 | 157 | 2 | Loyalty |
| 177 | 157 | 2 | Obedience |
| 178 | 157 | 2 | Cheating |
| 179 | 157 | 2 | Goodness |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 180 | 157 | 2 | Charity |
| 181 | 157 | 2 | Selflessness |
| 182 | 157 | 2 | Care |
| 183 | 136 | 1 | Isolation |
| 184 | 136 | 1 | Nostalgia |
| 185 | 136 | 1 | Pain |
| 186 | 136 | 1 | Fear |
| 187 | 136 | 1 | Memory |
| 188 | 136 | 1 | Detachment |
| 189 | 136 | 1 | Courage |
| 190 | 136 | 1 | Loss |
| 191 | 136 | 1 | Continuity |
| 192 | 136 | 1 | Comfort |
| 193 | 136 | 1 | Shame |
| 194 | 136 | 1 | Chaos |
| 195 | 136 | 1 | Power |
| 196 | 136 | 1 | Desire |
| 197 | 136 | 1 | Sentimental Value |
| 198 | 136 | 1 | Adventure |
| 199 | 136 | 1 | Despair |
| 200 | 136 | 1 | Uncertainty |
| 201 | 136 | 1 | Frustration |
| 202 | 136 | 1 | Powerlessness |
| 203 | 136 | 1 | Pity |
| 204 | 136 | 1 | Wisdom |
| 205 | 136 | 1 | Mastery |
| 206 | 136 | 1 | Destitution |
| 207 | 136 | 1 | Disillusionment |
| 208 | 136 | 1 | Mortality |
| 209 | 136 | 1 | Vitality |
| 210 | 136 | 1 | Enlightenment |
| 211 | 136 | 1 | Hope |
| 212 | 136 | 1 | Routine |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 213 | 136 | 1 | Banality |
| 214 | 136 | 1 | Deprivation |
| 215 | 136 | 1 | Sadness |
| 216 | 136 | 1 | Discontent |
| 217 | 136 | 1 | Empathy |
| 218 | 136 | 1 | Self-awareness |
| 219 | 136 | 1 | Innocence |
| 220 | 136 | 1 | Class Identity |
| 221 | 136 | 1 | Disappointment |
| 222 | 136 | 1 | Futility |
| 223 | 136 | 1 | Futility |
| 224 | 136 | 1 | Uncertainty |
| 225 | 136 | 1 | Kindness |
| 226 | | 0 | Religious Values |
| 227 | 226 | 1 | Religious |
| 228 | 226 | 1 | NonReligious |
| 229 | 226 | 1 | Atheist |
| 230 | 226 | 1 | Faith |
| 231 | 226 | 1 | Bible Stories |
| 232 | 226 | 1 | Agnostic |
| 233 | 226 | 1 | Superstition |
| 234 | 226 | 1 | Pagan |
| 235 | 226 | 1 | Protestant |
| 236 | | 0 | Public Value |
| 237 | 236 | 1 | Flexibility / Innovation as Value |
| 238 | 236 | 1 | Improvement |
| 239 | 238 | 2 | Art Improves Society |
| 240 | 238 | 2 | Improving Writers' Lives |
| 241 | 238 | 2 | Quality of Life |
| 242 | 236 | 1 | Professionalism as Valuable in an Artist |
| 243 | 236 | 1 | Innovation |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 244 | 243 | 2 | Newness as Value |
| 245 | 243 | 2 | Technology |
| 246 | 236 | 1 | Education |
| 247 | 246 | 2 | Value of Reading |
| 248 | 246 | 2 | Knowledge |
| 249 | 246 | 2 | Curiosity |
| 250 | 236 | 1 | Diversity |
| 251 | 250 | 2 | Internationalism |
| 252 | 236 | 1 | Leadership |
| 253 | 236 | 1 | Order |
| 254 | 236 | 1 | Family |
| 255 | 254 | 2 | Marriage |
| 256 | 236 | 1 | Geographic Identity |
| 257 | 256 | 2 | Local |
| 258 | 256 | 2 | National |
| 259 | 256 | 2 | Regional |
| 260 | 236 | 1 | Participation in the Arts |
| 261 | 236 | 1 | Tolerance |
| 262 | 261 | 2 | Open Mindedness |
| 263 | 236 | 1 | Progress |
| 264 | 263 | 2 | Scientific Progress |
| 265 | 236 | 1 | Unity |
| 266 | 236 | 1 | Individualism |
| 267 | 266 | 2 | Enterprise |
| 268 | 236 | 1 | Appeal (Popular) |
| 269 | 236 | 1 | Trust |
| 270 | 236 | 1 | Community |
| 271 | 236 | 1 | History |
| 272 | 236 | 1 | Myth |
| 273 | 236 | 1 | Acceptance |
| 274 | 236 | 1 | Social Critique |
| 275 | 236 | 1 | Hard Work |
| 276 | 236 | 1 | Power |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 277 | 236 | 1 | Health |
| 278 | 236 | 1 | Instrumentality of Art |
| 279 | 236 | 1 | Witness |
| 280 | 236 | 1 | Praise |
| 281 | 236 | 1 | Inconvenience |
| 282 | 236 | 1 | Social Decorum |
| 283 | 236 | 1 | Intellectual History |
| 284 | 236 | 1 | Ceremony |
| 285 | 236 | 1 | Tradition |
| 286 | 236 | 1 | Continuity |

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