REMOTE INTIMACIES: MULTILINGUALISM IN CONTEMPORARY POETRY

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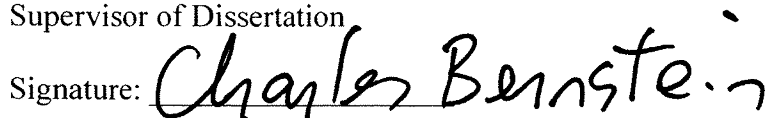

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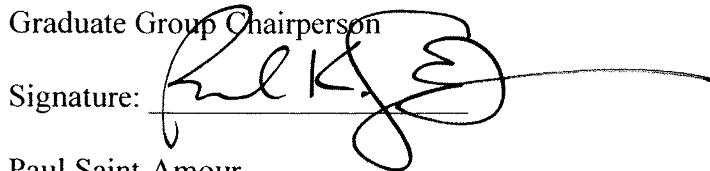

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Lesbian Justice: Erín Moure's *O Cidadán* and Rachel Zolf's *Neighbour Procedure*

Judith Butler decisively unzips her leather jacket. The audience laughs, and Rachel Zolf grins and holds her blazer open. Reading Zolf's poem "Jews in space (a lunacy)," the philosopher and the poet perform a discussion between "*Two women, age fifty to sixty-five, partially clad, in the locker room of the downtown 'Hebrew Y.'*"[166] Affecting stereotypical Jewish accents and intonations, they exchange lines about a trip to Israel, and about Israelis buying land on the moon. Zolf explains the virtues of both spots: while Israel has "great spas and bomb shelters cum guestrooms," the moon is "the only place we're safe from anti-Semitism." "Is it safe to go now?" Butler asks. "Yes," Zolf tells her, "spas are much cheaper — Israelis own ten percent of the moon already." "Then go!" Butler urges, with a glint in her eye, "I imagine it will bring up philosophical thoughts about manifest destiny." Zolf informs Butler that she will travel with her (fictional) daughter and niece, and that she has pitched the story to the *Globe*, "so I can get it paid for." Butler responds enthusiastically:

> That's your angle! Write it from your perspective, your daughter's perspective and your niece's perspective floating and looking at our peaceful planet while eating kosher nosh and reciting Israel's Declaration of Independence!

This reading of the poem, which Zolf declares "the best yet," obviously accentuates the poem's ample potential for comedy. However, the humorous conversation in the locker room of the Hebrew Y is not merely comical; it does evoke "philosophical thoughts." Its

[166] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C50MjBN7a5A The video records Rachel Zolf's reading in the Holloway Series in Poetry at UC Berkeley, 19 October 2010. The text I am quoting is from the written version of "Jews in space (a lunacy)" in *Neighbour Procedure* (Toronto: Coach House, 2010) 58-59.

speakers imagine an other-worldly realm in which our planet looks “peaceful,” a realm beyond anti-Semitism, where one might eat “kosher nosh” and recite Israel’s Declaration of Independence while “floating,” perfectly unaffected. However, the poem’s title declares this extraterrestrial escapism and attempts at its earthly enactments “(a lunacy).” Its speakers’ desires for an unaffected space, and for “a language cleansed of all magic” are disavowed by the larger work of which it is a part, *Neighbour Procedure*.

“Jews in space (a lunacy)” imagines a perfect, distant space, and stages a critique of that space from a perspective that it marks as lesbian. The voices in the text version of the poem do not seem to belong to any specific sexuality; they emerge from bodies that are middle-aged and “partially-clad,” marked by age and religious culture, but little else. A large part of the comedy of Butler and Zolf’s exuberant performance comes from the lampooning of identity categories that have considerable overlap with their own. Playing the role of an overly-earnest, half-dressed interplanetary Zionist, Butler nevertheless nods in acknowledgement, looking down at her own body, when Zolf describes “two women, fifty to sixty-five, … in the locker room of the ‘Hebrew Y.’” The poem’s anti-Zionism becomes visible in performance because Butler and Zolf exaggerate the voices’ presumptive heterosexuality, and thus exaggerate their distinction from these straight ladies at the Y. In this way, although the text does not seem to require it, the lesbian becomes a crucial figure within this poem’s representation of anti-Zionism: because they share so much with the women in the Hebrew Y, Butler and Zolf are uniquely placed to consider these women’s urges and desires; because they are simultaneously so unlike them, Butler and Zolf are uniquely suited to declare these urges and desires “(a lunacy).”

Here I consider two recent poetic projects in which lesbianism occupies this privileged position in relation to ethnonational conflict, and functions as a formal analogy for orientations toward difficult objects, toward the unfamiliar and incomprehensible. In Moure's and in Zolf's poetry, lesbianism is used to explicate the desire or even the imperative to strive away from what is familiar, and as the impetus to develop flexible concepts and institutions of justice that extend particularly toward those unable to access justice through traditional means and institutions. Rather than marking a social or sexual identity, in these texts lesbianism marks an imperative to do justice to others with whom one cannot identify. In Erín Moure's *O Cidadán* (2002)[167] and Rachel Zolf's *Neighbour Procedure* (2010), confrontations between languages signal crises of sovereignty, both of self and nation. Both texts concern themselves with difficult or distant publics constituted through the shared experience of bitter conflict: between Québec and Canada, and Galicia and Spain in Moure's work, and between Israel and Palestine in Zolf's. Rather than the linguistically homogeneous national public sphere, or even the intimate or subcultural publics of queer theory, which by and large have not questioned the presumption of a single national language or of transparent communication within national media, in these works the distance between the lesbian and the hostile public within which she must live becomes a site for identification across the sharp boundaries of ethnonational conflict.

O Cidadán rethinks citizenship through poetry, and here I analyze three ways in which Moure takes on this task. First, she uses minority languages and the small, non-state groupings they signify to open the question of what one might be a citizen *of* — to

[167] Erín Moure, *O Cidadán* (Toronto: Anansi, 2002).

interrogate the relationship between the citizen and the larger political unit of which she is a member. Second, she thinks citizenship through specific and contingent identity categories, asking how the concept of the citizen would change if it were understood as a category of vulnerability to state power, rather as the abstract but presumptively male participant in the life of the state. Third, she conceptualizes citizenship as a set of ethical acts, rather than as obligations or rights, arguing that the consummate act of the citizen is to open the "national soil" and "invite the other onto it" (105). Shifting between lyrics, catalogues and essayistic texts, *O Cidadán*, like *Neighbour Procedure*, begins with a quotation from Judith Butler and is a deep engagement with her works, and with those of Emmanuel Lévinas, Jean-Luc Nancy, and other contemporary theorists of ethics.

Neighbour Procedure, by contrast, is a meditation on the failures of theory and especially of ethics, with Palestine/Israel as the object of its devastating *cri de coeur*. Bringing daily news into collision with histories of Dada, collaging the travel guide with overheard conversation, and pulling together disparate philosophical writings on the duty to one's proximates, *Neighbour Procedure* takes its name from the Israeli Defense Force's well-documented but infrequently noted practice of using Palestinians as human shields.[168] Noting the transformation of proper names into data, the proliferation of Internet chatter and competing translations, and the blank spaces left by violence, Zolf demonstrates the perversion of poststructuralist theory into a military strategy for warrening between homes, forcing people to dismantle the walls between themselves and

[168] In North American popular discourse, we tend to see Hamas and other Palestinian groups accused of using Palestinians as human shields; as my discussion of Zolf's poem "The barber" will illustrate, the reverse is more frequently true.

their neighbors so that the army pass through. This is not a poetics of testimony, but of the "no one, the polyvocal, multi-focal, desubjectified or maybe just 'bad' subject who bears witness for the witness who bears witness for the *Musselmann*."[169] Rather than the "gaze of the witness," *Neighbour Procedure* constellates "an intersubjective non-triangulating 'third' or more remove," a "spiraling out political three. Not one, not two, but *peut-être* a futurity of three or more, in an act of imagination that brings together present absences, absent presences and 'present absentees'" (2).

"Using bent measures to challenge … claims to absolute truth," both texts position the lesbian as subjected to, and therefore as the consummate subject of politics (1). Yet neither is ultimately concerned with this identity, and Zolf even desubjectivizes the term "lesbian," taking it on as a rhetorical figure rather than as a character or persona in her text. Using multiple languages to call attention to the nation-state's exclusions, the fissures torn by nationalist demands for homogeneity and transparent communication, both poets turn to the figure of the lesbian in order to theorize flexible and responsive conceptions of justice. In Moure's work the lesbian *cidadán* is a possible object of justice due to her status as a citizen, and is therefore able to extend justice to more vulnerable others. In Zolf's work, however, the lesbian is a rhetorical figure expressing the promises and the failures of juridical flexibility. Although they incorporate the lesbian in very different ways, both use this figure to foreground the legal and discursive frameworks that make one intelligible as a subject with a complaint. While Moure's lesbian *cidadán*

[169] Rachel Zolf, "No one bears witness," 2. In future drafts I hope to expand substantially on this discussion of the poetics of witness, drawing on theoretical works by Judith Butler, Emmanuel Lévinas, Giorgio Agamben but also on poetry by Paul Celan, Carolyn Forché, Rita Dove, and others.

does justice unto others, Zolf uses a combination of Hebrew and Arabic scripts for writing numbers, along with a complicated system for voicing the poems in order to force repeated confrontations with alterities that fall outside of the bounds of intelligibility, figures who have fallen victim to notorious failures of ethics.

A Language Cleansed of All Magic

Many recent feminist studies of citizenship focus on civil society, and consider the arena in which citizenship is practiced as an imprecise combination of public and private elements, a non- or extra-governmental realm that might include business and the marketplace, the domestic sphere of kinship and the family, and popular culture.[170] Alison Jaggar's recent work epitomizes this concern with the cultural grounds of citizenship, as she demonstrates the importance of recognizing civil society as "an indispensable, though not exclusive arena for citizen activity" because "many areas of citizenship have become global as well as national."[171] Importantly, Jaggar also cautions that "activism in civil society is not an exclusive alternative to traditional state-centered politics," because transnational non-state solutions such as "global feminist citizenship" (108) make it difficult to hold anyone accountable for the suffering of women. Like many recent feminist critics, Jaggar extends citizenship beyond the governmental realm, and

[170] Recent examples of feminist studies of citizenship in civil society include Lauren G. Berlant (1997), Alison Jaggar (2005), Marilyn Friedman (2005), Rian Voet (1998), and Iris Marion Young (2000), among others. These works expand citizenship beyond the governmental realm, and understand it not as a set of rights or obligations, but rather as acts undertaken within a particular cultural, political, and economic context, even as sets of emotional attachments.

[171] Alison Jaggar, "Arenas of Citizenship: Civil Society, the State, and the Global Other." Friedman. 91-110.106-107.

understands it not as a set of rights or obligations, but rather as acts undertaken within a particular cultural, political, and economic context.

Such feminist theories of citizenship arise primarily within the context of wider discussions of the transnational public sphere, or of diasporic public spheres. As Nancy Fraser has recently argued, however, the idea of a transnational public sphere is oxymoronic from the perspective of critical theory, however indispensable the notion may otherwise be.[172] Fraser provides a detailed description of the elements of Habermas's theory that no longer pertain; most relevant to Moure's and Zolf's work are its assumptions of transparent communication in a national language, through a national print media, addressed to a sovereign territorial state that is answerable to public opinion.[173] Moure's and Zolf's linguistic mixtures call attention to exclusions from and fissures within the presumptively homogenous national public sphere; further, both texts challenge traditional notions of the state's accountability to the public, pointing out the ways in which the state tends to function as much as a source of harm as it does a source

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[172] Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World* (New York: Columbia U P, 2010). Fraser points out that public-sphere theory has been deeply informed by a Westphalian political imaginary, and that nearly every subsequent critique of Habermas's work, and of public-sphere theory more generally, has maintained the Westphalian frame.

[173] Fraser explains that Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* "correlated the public sphere with a modern state apparatus," and therefore assumed that public opinion was addressed to a state capable of regulating its inhabitants' affairs and solving their problems"; it conceived of the participants in the public sphere as "fellow members of a bounded political community," "the citizenry of a democratic Westphalian state"; it "assumed that a primary focus" of public-sphere discussion was the "national economy, contained by a Westphalian state"; it "associated the public sphere with modern media that … could knit spatially dispersed interlocutors into a public. Tacitly, however, Habermas territorialized publicity by focusing on national media" and therefore on "national communications infrastructure, contained by a Westphalian state"; it presumed that "public sphere discussion was fully comprehensible and linguistically transparent … effectively assuming that public debate was conducted in a national language"; and it "grounded the structure of public-sphere subjectivity in the very same vernacular literary forms that also gave rise to the imagined community of the nation" (79-80).

of justice, and the ways in which sympathetic outrage tends not to have any political utility. Whereas Moure uses multiple languages to make the seams and boundaries between communities visible and to argue for acts of justice that cross these bounds, Zolf uses linguistic combinations to demonstrate the rigid limit-points of sympathy and the unlikelihood of cross-border justice.

Moure's title, *O Cidadán*, immediately suggests the work's dense and heterogeneous linguistic mixture. In her opening statement, Moure explains that the word *cidadán* is "recogniz[able] though we know not its language. It can't be found in French, Spanish, Portuguese dictionaries," but its near-homophonic link to the English word citizen suggests its similar meaning.[174] What she does not explain in this statement is that *cidadán* — which is the Galician cognate of the English word citizen — is a curiously non-representative term: one can be a Spanish citizen who speaks Galician, but this word does not name a specifically Galician citizenship. To say "citizen" in this "minor tongue" (n.p.) therefore raises a key problem of citizenship: of what entity or unit might one be a citizen?

Moure creates "semantic pandemonium" by speaking of citizenship in tongue that is "historically persistent despite external and internal pressures" (n.p.), a language that has persisted through periods of censorship and pressure from the Spanish state that contains its physical territory. By speaking the "minor" Galician citizenship of the *cidadán* rather than the Canadian citizen or *citoyen/ne*, Moure suggests a citizenship that is radically local, a relationship to an entity much smaller than the nation-state, and a

[174] Erín Moure, *O Cidadán*, n.p.

citizenship under pressure by that state. At the same time, she suggests a citizenship that entails global ties stretching far beyond the nation-state's borders: although the title of *O Cidadán* is linguistically foreign, it sonically and visually evokes a more familiar nationality in its other English-language near-homophone, "O Canada."[175] In this way, Moure establishes the comparison between Spain and Galicia and Canada and Québec that persists throughout her text, and that allows her to explore the possibility of being a citizen of a non-state entity.

O Cidadán is written in English, Galician, French, Latin, and Spanish, and most sections of the book are named for the locations in which the *cidadán* finds herself, whether these are geographical locations (Yorkshire, Vigo, Montréal), or more radically local spaces (roof, Parc Jeanne-Mance, fleuve portal). The *cidadán* questions her social and legal status in each: in Yorkshire she asks, "Am I local *here* in my unease" (7, Moure's emphasis), wondering if the feeling of "unease" will provide a "tie[] of affect," and produce a sense of "My Yorkshire" (7), a sense that she belongs. Later, at home in Montréal, describes herself as one who has

> made myself strange in the *arena* of country and, here, come to Québec where I bear a strange tongue (yet hegemonic), allowed to be foreign. As foreign, to be, paradoxically but sensibly, a part of the body politic. To be a stranger (hospes or advena) here is to faire partie de tout ce qui comporte le civis (82, Moure's emphasis)

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[175] I am indebted to Lianne Moyes's "Questioning Cosmopolitanisms: Erin Mouré's *O Cidadán*" for this observation. 2005. http://www.transcanadas.ca/transcanada1/moyes.shtml#fulltext Last accessed 4 February 2007.

The Anglophone *cidadán* has come to Québec, where as an Anglophone she is a member of a linguistic minority, but one that is hegemonic in the rest of Canada. Her linguistic background makes her a foreigner in Québec, but as a foreigner she is still "part of the body politic," both in the sense that she exists physically as a part of this public and political space, and in the sense that she enjoys the privileges of citizenship throughout Canada. She writes that her being in Québec, either as "hospes," a guest or stranger, or "advena," a foreigner, is to be a part of "tout ce qui comporte le civis," or a part of everything that makes up the citizen. In this convoluted, multilingual definition, the *cidadán* is one who is at once at home and abroad, protected and vulnerable, "a part of the body politic," and yet a "stranger," as demonstrated by the movement between English, Latin and French. Montréal comes to symbolize competing nationalisms and citizenships, for the text acknowledges the possibility of "Québec citizenship," while despairing the possibility of the ethnic-nationalist "*Québec of Michaud raising its head again*" (135, Moure's italics).

Moure argues for a complex form of inclusion, and her text valorizes figures who have directly contested state power by "opening" the "national soil" and "invit[ing] the other onto it" (105). She describes the Portuguese consul-general Aristides de Sousa Mendes who "issued 30,000 visas to refugees, admitting them to Portugal in direct defiance of instructions" in 1940, opening an escape route from Nazi persecution in Bordeaux. Moure writes that de Sousa Mendes worked "for three weeks … day and night, signing papers for anyone who needed them, in his office and in his car" (98). She also writes of Captain Paul Grüninger of Switzerland, who "altered 3600 passports to

permit Austrian Jews to enter his country" in 1938.[176] Moure describes these men's acts as "physically a prosthetic application of 'Swiss border'" in Grüninger's case (42), or Portuguese border in de Sousa Mendes's. Each man made himself an opening, or as Moure would say, a "fenestration" (n.p.) in the border of his country, allowing others access to his "national soil" in order to ensure their protection. Moure considers theirs to be the ultimate acts of the *cidadán*, stating, "To make one's own inviolable seam permeable … is a citizen's act" (42); her movement between languages is motivated by the desire to "permea[te]" such "seam[s]."

Moure therefore advocates a form of citizenship as a "public relation" that is "unsubsumable under the signification of a 'State,' / unless such a state implies a multiplicity and plurilocality of relations / Zones that can overlap" (63) because she sees this as more inclusive. "A multiplicity and plurilocality of relations," she argues, is more adequate to the task of ensuring social justice. For if the state is what binds disparate groups, such as Anglophones and Francophones in Canada, "it is also clearly what can and does unbind," as Judith Butler writes in a recent collaboration with Gayatri Spivak.[177] The state, Butler explains, "is supposed to be the matrix for the obligations and prerogatives of citizenship" (3), and as such it is given the power to define who is a citizen. Because it has this power, it equally "can signify the source of non-belonging, even produce that non-belonging in a quasi-permanent state" (4) "through an exercise of power that depends upon barriers and prisons" (5). While Moure's text emphasizes the

[176] Both men suffered legal persecution as a result of their actions and were not pardoned until the 1988, in the case of de Sousa Mendes (who died in 1954), and 1995, in the case of Grüninger (who died in 1972).
[177] Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Politics, Belonging* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2007).

necessity of "Zones that can overlap," and that can create a "plurilocality" of sources of justice, Zolf's text instead emphasizes the intractability of "non-belonging" and the use of "barriers and prisons" to produce it.

Although it references the desire for a language cleansed of all magic, *Neighbour Procedure* uses languages in explicitly impure and magical ways in its discussion of Palestine/Israel. Drawing on mystical practices such as Gematria and on online Biblical concordances, the poems are full of numbers. Further, because of their extensive use of source texts, the poems frequently refer to the imagery and discourses of Zionism, drawing on the rhetorical power of imagining, for example, the state of Israel as "the golden calf" (8). In addition to these mingled linguistic practices *Neighbour Procedure* also brings together different languages, emphasizing the "common verbal roots and similar phrases in the sister Semitic languages of classical Arabic and Hebrew," and calling attention to English loan words in Modern Hebrew, "partly as an impure gesture to the de-Arabization of the Hebrew language in its modern incarnation" (81).

In addition to these explicit connections to mysticism and religious discourse, however, *Neighbour Procedure* also turns to Arabic in a demonstration of the limits of sympathy, drawing on Judith Butler's concept of "grievability" as it is articulated in *Precarious Life*.[178] In the first section, "Shoot & Weep," Zolf includes a series of three poems, "Grievable," "Did not participate in hostilities," and "Nominal," each of which consists of a list. "Nominal" lists numbers, beginning with Arabic numerals ("14 // 13 // 33") and then writing out the figures on the second page of the list in the Roman alphabet

[178] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London & New York: Verso, 2004).

(“seventeen // twenty five // thirty five”). “Did not participate in hostilities” is a list of circumstances, most beginning with the words “while” or “when.” “Grievable” is a list of Arabic names. The three poems each share a similar final line, referring to the hour of five o’clock in the morning.

As Nava EtShalom points out in a review of *Neighbour Procedure*, “for someone who does not speak Arabic … the names in ‘Grievable’ become an opaque blur, impossible to read aloud. A reader may not even know that the poem is laid out with one name per line.”[179] Unable to tell where a name begins and ends, a non-Arabic-speaking reader, EtShalom implies, may not realize — may not even believe — that the following represents a list of individual, let alone grievable lives. To what do these names attach? How specific are they?

Du’aa Naser Saleh ‘Abd al-Qader

Zaher Jaber Muhammad al-Majdalawi

Ghanem Khalil Muhammad al-Khatib

Jihad ‘Abd al-Majid Isma‘il al-Hayah

‘Aiyadah Dahud Pathiya

Abir Bassam ‘Abd Rab al-‘Alamin

Nizar Raji ‘Abdallah ‘Obeid

Fatma Muhammad Hussein

Ma‘sud Rajab Muhammad Subuh

[179] Nava EtShalom, “‘The Family Playing Host to the Missile’: A Review of Rachel Zolf’s *Neighbour Procedure*.” *Zeek: A Journal of Jewish Thought and Culture* http://zeek.forward.com/articles/117015/

‘Anan Muhammad Ass‘ad al-Tibi

Hamadah Mahmoud Jamal al-Fiyumi

Sarah Suliman ‘Abdallah Abu Ghazal

Rakan ‘Abed Kayed Nsserat

Rizeq Ziad Rizeq Musleh

Hamed Yasin Hamed Bahlul

Islam Hashem Razaq Zaharan

Wahlib Musleh Nayef al-Dik

Bushara Naji Wahsh Barjis

Rami Samir Nayef Shana’ah

Zin al-‘Aabdin Muhammad Mahmoud Shahin

Radeh ‘Iyesha

‘Abd al-Karim Khaled Salem Zaharan

Mustafa Hamdan ‘Abd al-Qader Ramlawi

Irami Ghaleb Nimer Abu ‘Amshah

Ikram Barhum Salman Qadih

Adib Salim Ibrahim Ahmad

Wa‘el Taleb Muhammad Nassar

Iman Muhammad Haju

Kamela Muhammad As‘ad al-Shuli

Sa‘id Salem Suleiman Hajjaj

Najwa ‘Awad Rajab Khalif

Hamdan Muhammad Hamdan Barhum

Muhammad Mahmoud Rajab al-Jarjawi

At five o'clock in the morning (26-27)

In her "Afterthought" at the end of the book, Zolf explains that the names in "Grievable" attach to the circumstances in "Did not participate in hostilities," and that "Nominal" joins ages to these names and situations (81). Knitting together the data from the three poems, we can learn that Du'aa Naser Saleh 'Abd al-Qader, age 14, was killed "when she approached the barrier" (12).[180] However, the book does not knit these details together; instead it disperses factual data across three poems, which in turn are separated by other poems, other details. While the book provides all the information necessary to determine Du'aa Naser Saleh 'Abd al-Qader's fate, it does not communicate that fate directly. A reader somewhat familiar with the conflict, or even just with conventions of Arabic naming might know that Du'aa Naser Saleh 'Abd al-Qader is one person's name, and might realize that "Grievable" is a very, very small list of Palestinians killed in the conflict. However, *The Neighbour Procedure* maintains the status of these names as dispersed data: the title of "Grievable" wagers that the individual names listed in the poem represent grievable lives, but the high potential for reader ignorance — of which the poems are acutely conscious — allows for the possibility that these names will not be recognized as lives, and therefore will not be grievable at all. Although proposes the idea

[180] Indeed these connections are entirely factual: on 19 December 2006, Du'aa Naser Saleh 'Abd al-Qader, age 14, was killed in Far'un when she approached the Wall with her friend. See http://sabbah.biz/mt/archives/2010/04/14/20-palestinian-fatalities-at-demos-against-the-apartheid-wall/ Similar information for all of the other people listed in "Grievable" can be found through the database of Palestinians killed in the conflict maintained by B'Tselem. Eventually, I hope to include a full list of these names, ages and circumstances, with citations as an appendix; for the present, time constraints have prevented me from fully compiling everything.

that a language might be cleansed of all magic, *Neighbour Procedure* refuses to imagine an unimplicated witness, or a conscience cleansed of its willful ignorance.

To illustrate, the short poem “The barber,” which also appears in “Shoot & Weep,” recounts Israeli soldiers’ abuse of Palestinians at a barbershop in Hebron on 3 December 2002, although in this case too the factual basis of the poem is well concealed. Although it offers no names, dates or locations, it is easy to discover that the poem quotes the testimony of twenty-four-year-old Bassem Maswadeh, the owner of the shop, Wa’il Abu Remeileh, a nineteen-year-old barber, and three customers, Bilal Muhammad Daud a-Rajbi, Muhammad Jibril a-Rajbi, and Shaher Sharif al-’Ajaluni. While the incident “behind” the poem is not explained directly, the poem’s testimonial tone seems to guarantee the event’s facticity as well as the personhood of its “I” speakers:

The barber

One soldier danced into the shop, ‘Nice, nice’

Whose faces were painted certain images don’t appear

Cutting in random lines the machine touched my scalp

Can you be gentle I’m not an expert open your mouth

A group of children stones his weapon on my shoulder

Intolerable eruption patting his chest, ‘Now I’ll tell you my name’

Sometimes staccato sometimes continuous

The soldier left the barbershop with the scissors

The soldier left the hair on my lips (15)

The poem reads like redacted testimony, and in its alternation between straightforward narrative and sharply juxtaposed images, it is viscerally evocative. The impersonal and cold "machine" roughly forced against the vulnerable "scalp" immediately guarantees sympathy for the speaker, who begs, "can you be gentle." "The barber," however, does something more than simply evoke sympathy or outrage. When read against its source text, a B'Tselem report from 30 December 2002, it emerges that the poem itself "cut[s] in random lines," combining multiple speakers' testimony. Certain lines make it clear that the poem juxtaposes different voices, for example, "Can you be gentle I'm not an expert open your mouth" suggests at least two speakers, its disjunctive syntax standing in for the punctuation that it lacks.

Other lines, however, appear as the utterances of a single speaker, but in fact combine the testimony of several individuals. For example, "cutting in random lines the machine touched my scalp" seems to describe one specific moment, the experience of one victim. In reality, several men were forcibly shorn by the soldiers: Maswadeh describes how the soldier "cut my hair in random lines," while "the electric razor touched" Abu Remeileh's scalp.[181] Similarly, the demand "open your mouth" refers both to a soldier attempting to force-feed a-Rajbi pieces of his own hair, and to a soldier attempting to force Abu Remeileh to drink shampoo. Rather than guaranteeing the uniqueness of the lyric speaker, then, the testimonial character of poems like "The barber" illustrates that in order to be grievable one must rely upon a framework within which one's grievances may be heard, a framework in which they will be granted

[181] http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article1024.shtml

legibility, if not legitimacy. In other words, for the names in "Grievable" to be grievable, the complaints lodged by the people to whom these names attach, or the complaints lodged on their behalf must have an addressee to whom they are legible.

As Zolf explains in an essay on *Neighbour Procedure*, hers is not a poetics of testimony, but of the "no one, the polyvocal, multi-focal, desubjectified or maybe just 'bad' subject who bears witness for the witness who bears witness for the *Musselmann*."[182] Rather than the "gaze of the witness," who stands as the reputable guarantor of facticity, *Neighbour Procedure* constellates "an intersubjective non-triangulating 'third' or more remove," a "spiraling out political three. Not one, not two, but *peut-être* a futurity of three or more, in an act of imagination that brings together present absences, absent presences and 'present absentees'" (2). Indeed, in "The barber," the testimonial tone of the poem does not guarantee the uniqueness of five speakers whose experiences are detailed in the report; rather, the testimonial tone of the poem undoes this uniqueness, making one experience of subjection not only equivalent to another but actually making them the same. The five men victimized in the barber shop in Hebron become the "present absentees" in the retelling of their own experience: the poem absents these men from their own testimony in order to suggest that these men have also been absented from any legal framework within which their testimony might be heard or their grievances addressed.

The multilingualism of both *O Cidadán* and *Neighbour Procedure* responds to the nationalist presumptions of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, turning to contemporary

[182] Rachel Zolf, "No one bears witness," 2.

examples of linguistic and ethnonational conflict and collision. While Moure interprets the seams and boundaries of the sub- and transnational as opportunities for performing just acts, Zolf lists Arabic names in order to point to the limits of critical and ethical discourses of proximity, belonging, and even grievability. In her "Afterthought" she cites an extreme example of such a limit case: when a journalist asked the philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, "For the Israeli, isn't the 'other' above all the Palestinian?," this most profound theorist of ethics demurred: "My definition of the other is completely different" (83). In the alterity of the Palestinian, he countered, "we can find" not "the neighbour," not "kin," but "an enemy" (83-84). In spite of the differing motivations of their multilingualism, however, both Moure and Zolf turn to the figure of the lesbian, or perhaps more accurately to lesbian figures, in order to describe the flexible ethics that arise from these situations of conflict.

In Normam Lesbiam

Because both *O Cidadán* and *Neighbour Procedure* open with a quote from Butler, they each signal their debt to and participation in the discourse of queer theory, and their respective engagements with that discourse, unsurprisingly, go well beyond the mere citation of a well-known public intellectual. One of the primary differences between Moure's and Zolf's projects, however, is the visibility of the "queer" within each, and especially the symbolic weight that each accords to the figure of the lesbian. Whereas the lesbian *cidadán* is at the center of Moure's project, as I will discuss below, Zolf's text seems not to be directly concerned with any sexuality, least of all her own. Although the book is thick with the "sticky affect" that she associates with emotional and bodily

experiences of lesbianism in her paratextual commentary on *Neighbour Procedure*, the text itself does not narrate any recognizably "lesbian" events, does not seem to represent any lesbians, and only uses the word once, in reference to the "lesbia regula," or lesbian rule.[183] In spite of this difference, however, both use lesbian figures to explore concepts of flexible justice, whether these figures are people and citizens, as in the case of Moure's text, or, in Zolf's case, analogies made literal.

In *O Cidadán*, a critique of the independent, autonomous citizen is developed through an examination of the citizen's desire, which is revealed as non-continuous with the state's in several important ways. Primarily wanting greater porousness in the state's borders, the *cidadán* describes her civic desire through the language and imagery of homoerotic excess: "my hand afterward a border's opened *trait* / … / one leg open in admission of caress" (101, Moure's emphasis). Moure begins her text with the following statement, which can be read as an articulation of her poetics, as well as a description of the tasks of her particular project in *O Cidadán*:

> To intersect a word: citizen. To find out what could intend/distend it. *O Cidadán*. A word we recognize though we know not its language. It can't be found in French, Spanish, Portuguese dictionaries. It seems inflected 'masculine.' And, as such, it has a feminine supplement. Yet if I said 'a cidadá' I would only be speaking of 52% of the world, and it is the remainder that inflects the generic, the *cidadán*. How can a woman then inhabit the general (visibly and semantically skewing it)? How can she speak from the generic at all, without vanishing behind its screen of transcendent value? In this book, I decided, I will step into it just by a move in discourse. I, a woman: o cidadán. As if 'citizen' in our time can only be dislodged when spoken from a 'minor' tongue, one historically persistent despite external and internal pressures, and by a woman who bears – as a lesbian in a civic frame – a *policed sexuality*. Unha cidadán: a semantic pandemonium. If a name's force or power is 'a historicity … a sedimentation, a repetition that

[183] Rachel Zolf, "Poesis by the Lesbia Regula," 8.

> congeals,' (Butler) can the name be reinvested or infested, fenestrated … set in motion again? Unmoored? Her semblance? Upsetting the structure/stricture even momentarily. *To en(in)dure, perdure.*
>
> *To move the force in any language, create a slippage, even for a moment … to decentre the 'thing,' unmask the relation …* (n.p., Moure's emphasis and ellipses)

Moure calls attention to the masculine character of the general (*cidadán* as the masculine-neuter form of the word, and *cidadá* as its specific, contingent feminine equivalent) and questions the designation of the feminine as "minor" by reminding her readers that "52% of the world" is female. Pairing the feminine article *unha* with the masculine-neuter noun *cidadán* to create "semantic pandemonium," she unsettles grammatical gender in order to question the masculine inflection of the general that exists throughout Western society, regardless of the language in which its local formations speak.

In addition to using the Galician term *cidadán* to open "the structure/stricture" of citizenship, she also upsets it "momentarily" so that the concept of citizen will carry "even for a moment" "her semblance." Countering the traditional "masculine identity" of politics,[184] she alters the name "citizen" so as to "reinvest" or "infest" it, to endow it with new power, to invade it with a foreign substance or body: her own. She "fenestrate[s]" the concept of the citizen, furnishing it with small openings like windows so that a body like hers might become visible within it. If the *cidadán* is a woman and a lesbian, and if her social ties emerge from these specific and contingent "minority" categories, then the abstract general, citizenship, Moure wagers, must be reconceived through them. To re-imagine the general category of the citizen on the basis of the experiences of women and

[184] Wendy Brown, *Manhood and Politics*, 4.

of lesbians, Moure concludes, is to imagine citizenship not as a set of privileges, rights, or obligations, but as a set of vulnerabilities to power.

The *cidadán*'s erotic excess specifically opposes the cold rationality and autonomy of the citizen as he is traditionally constituted, and this excess is detailed in a series of lyric poems extending throughout the book.[185] In addition to being visually and sonically rich, these poems posit the speaker's erotic relationship to her addressee, Georgette, as the beginning point of all public relationships:

> Georgette, thou burstest my deafness
> …
>
> because I am not yet full of thee I am a burthen
> to myself
>
> Thou breathedst odours, and I drew in breath and
> did pant for thee, tasted and did hunger, where thou
> had touchedst me I did burn
> for peace (3)

The over-the-top, archaic diction ("breathedst," "touchedst," "burthen"), along with the images of "pant[ing]," "hunger[ing]" and "burn[ing]" recall the ardor of a traditional love lyric, and the accretion of hissing sibilants suggests the *cidadán*'s and Georgette's heavy breathing. The poem is at once comical and sexy – the venerated Thou of lyric poetry is none other than the pedestrian and frumpy Georgette. However, the *cidadán*'s playful approaches to her are directly tied to the *cidadán*'s place in civil society: her erotic relationship to her lover produces a longing "for peace," a public desire. The physical location of this longing in the place "where thou / had touchedst me" suggests that the

[185] In future iterations of this project I hope to link this discussion of excess back to the discussions of excess that I have undertaken in reference to Philip's, Kim's, and Tardos's work.

cidadán's engagement with civil society and political life begins with her erotic relationship, to be more specific, it begins with the "pant[ing]" acts committed within that relationship.

While this relationship inaugurates all political relationships, Moure does not make it a template for citizenship as such. Rather, this relationship motivates the *cidadán* to enter into networks of sympathy with others; once Georgette has "burst" her "deafness," the *cidadán* is propelled outward into the world. However, the basis on which she makes connections with the others that she encounters there is not eroticism but harm, and indeed a large part of the project of *O Cidadán* is to create "Catalogues of Harms" that the *cidadán* encounters in the world. There is certainly a sense that the *cidadán* has suffered harm as a woman and as a lesbian: she writes that "there were places where we were cast aside / our grip was cast aside // irregular" (26), and other, mostly quotidian insults appear periodically throughout the text. Yet the harms that she experiences are comparatively rare, and the larger project of cataloguing harms is aimed at accounting for historical and contemporary injustices in which the *cidadán* is neither victim nor perpetrator, but which provoke feelings of outrage, sadness or shame. She catalogues "(a ditch where they buried the shot children)" (6) and "a torn muscle in the arm" (6); she describes how "they came walking out along the rails, terrified, into the other country, / 200 families, a driven village" (40); and refers to the Dili massacre of 12 November 1991 in East Timor (86), to atrocities committed by the Vichy regime in France, and at Sorbas, Spain, in 1914, and in Rwanda during the 1990s (106). She references "the child dragged outside the car by a seatbelt / during the car theft" (124),

“Rio street children excised by police” (137), and “Villages burnt by the French or Romans” (138).

The harms that Moure discusses are all specific and contingent, either because they are experienced by particular groups, such as “Rio street children,” or in specific situations, like a “car theft” or the Dili massacre. The commonality that Moure draws among these experiences of harm is that they are suffered by citizens, and it is her project to theorize citizenship on the basis of these specific, local and concrete experiences, not on the basis of abstract categories. To assert that these victims of harm are citizens is to assert that they ought to be afforded legal rights and protections, and that they ought to have access to justice through state institutions. However, in creating her “Catalogues of Harms,” Moure demonstrates the ways in which the state restricts access to justice, and does so by curtailing the rights of citizenship or minimizing access to this privileged category.

To illustrate, in one of the book’s most minimalist poems, the fraction “2,564 / 75,721 = 3.38 %” appears in a grey box, followed by a single handwritten word, “borrar,” which means “to erase” or “to rub out” in Spanish (107). The number 75,721 refers to the number of French citizens separated from the general population of France and deported by the Vichy regime “because they [were] Jews” (106), as Moure explains later, while 2,564 refers to the number of those who survived being sent to concentration camps; in other words, a mere 3.38%.[186] Moure emphasizes the deported Jews’ French citizenship

[186] Thomas Lacqueur, “The Sound of Voices Intoning Names.” *London Review of Books*. Vol. 19 No. 11 (5 June 1997) 3-8. Review of Serge Klarsfeld, *French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial*.

not only as a historical fact, but as a detail that is often overlooked in the present. The essayistic poem that follows this equation is written in response to several texts, but especially in response to a 1999 *New York Review of Books* article, in which the author, Robert O. Paxton, "does not seem to notice … that separating citizens because they are Jews and 'deporting' them to work on 'farms in Poland' is already a crime" (106). In other words, the article accepts the Vichy regime's distinction between the categories of citizen and Jew. *O Cidadán* therefore to rethinks citizenship as a set of vulnerabilities to power, and particularly to the power of states: citizenship is the basis for inclusion and exclusion, a way of demarcating and delimiting rights, and becomes the grounds upon which to make demands. Correspondingly, Moure also works to recast citizenship as a series of acts by which the borders of states might be made more permeable in the interest of justice, where the characteristic act of a citizen would be to open state borders and extend the protections of her "national soil" to non-citizens (105).

The pain that the *cidadán* wishes to publicly iterate is not exclusively her own; rather, it is the pain that she encounters socially as she makes networks and forms relationships with other subjects. Her articulation of this pain has some relationship to blame, for she singles out figures such as Paxton and later Madeleine Albright and a "U.S. student," but unlike the politics of Nietzchean *ressentiment*,[187] this is a politics that

[187] Brown writes that the "foreclosure of its own freedom" and the "impulse to inscribe in the law and other political registers its historical and present pain" are "symptomatic of politicized identity's *desire* within liberal-bureaucratic regimes," and that identity politics prefers to take this route "rather than conjur[ing] an imagined future of power to make itself" (66, Brown's emphasis). Brown interprets politicized identity as "predicated on and requiring its sustained rejection by a 'hostile external world'" (70). She argues that politicized identity is formed "at the site of exclusion," which gives a particular direction to suffering by proposing a site of blame (70, 74). Therefore identity politics, in Brown's analysis, constitutes "a politics of recrimination that

emerges from the *cidadán*'s suggestion that the discourses used to cover up twentieth-century harms and atrocities are linked. In other words, this is not a politics based on the *cidadán*'s own identity, although her identity is relevant to it. Instead, this is a politics based on the continuity between her local experience of being "cast aside" and the global "ties of affect" (7) that this experience can forge with those around the world who have also experienced injustice. The *cidadán*, then, begins from her own experience of harm as a woman and as a lesbian, and from this experience moves outward into the broader sphere of politics and public life. It is her experience of harm, and its basis in her particular identity that connects her to this broader sphere, and defines her as a participant — and makes her a citizen — within it.

Unlike Moure's work, where the author's sexuality is explicitly brought to the fore in her opening note, and where the speaker's erotic life is incorporated into the work through addresses to Georgette, sexual imagery, and implicit analogical comparisons between the *cidadán*'s experiences and other kinds of harm, Zolf's work only makes two explicit references to lesbianism, one in an endnote explaining the other: "Lesbia regula can't take it over, it kind of takes over / Let's change one letter only in Palimpstine / You kind of crawl into somebody else's 5315 soul" (64). In fact, the *lesbia regula* turns out not to be a reference to lesbianism at all. Rather, it refers to an obscure architectural tool detailed in the works of Aristotle, Erasmus, Francis Bacon and others: the *lesbia regula* is a stone mason's rule, but because it is made of lead, it is flexible and "changes shape to

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seeks to avenge the hurt even while it reaffirms it, discursively codifies it," and is reliant upon "entrenching, restating, dramatizing, and inscribing its pain in politics," sacrificing any sense of a futurity of power (74).

fit the stone" rather than rigidly measuring the stone according to its own form.[188] This tool comes to represent the difficult principles of justice that *Neighbour Procedure* seeks, as well as the perversions of justice that the work speaks against.

In fact, this is the typical way in which the lesbian rule appears in theoretical discourse: whether celebrated or derided, it is better known as an image for flexible justice than as an instrument of stone cutting.[189] In her paratextual commentary, Zolf cites a passage from Erasmus's *Adages* describing the lesbian rule in terms of the conduct of improper princes and other backward actors, who comport themselves

> By the Lesbian rule (Lesbia regula). This is said when things are done the wrong way round, when theory is accommodated to fact and not fact to theory, when law is suited to conduct, not conduct corrected by law; or when the ruler adapts himself to the behavior of the populace, though it would be more fitting for common people to conduct their lives according to the will of the prince … Aristotle mentions this adage in his *Ethics*, book 5: 'For the rule of what is indefinite is also indefinite, like the leaden rule used in Lesbian architecture; the rule changes to fir the shape of the stone and does not remain a rule. (1)

Zolf also cites the poet Samuel Daniel, who, in a 1601 epistolary poem writes that the law must be applied flexibly, like a "Lesbian square"; just as this soft tool "Plies to the worke, not forc'th the worke to it," the law must bend and adapt to the demands justice (1).

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[188] Aristotle, *Ethics* qtd. in Zolf "Poeisis by the lesbia regula" 1. The point about accommodating "theory … to fact and not fact to theory" also resonates with Moure's work. I hope to explore this connection in future drafts.

[189] Zolf is not the only contemporary queer writer to turn to this rhetorical figure in order to write about desire in the present; the queer/Marxist film theorist Amy Villarejo has also turned to the lesbian rule in a recent book on the value of desire titled *Lesbian Rule: Cultural Criticism and the Value of Desire*. I think that Zolf and Villarejo put the lesbian rule to vastly different uses, but insofar as they both focus on being drawn toward others, and the ambivalence of that pull, there is a connection. Borrowing, perhaps, from the lesbian rule's flexibility, Villarejo defines desire as the propulsive force that compels us toward the other, and toward life itself, but also toward death.

Similarly, she cites an emblem by the sixteenth-century French jurisconsult Costalius, who explains that "the turned Lesbian rule" is like "the meaning of a … law [that] hides within" its written word and is "usually entirely in the hand of the judge" (8).[190] The judge "must carry" this rule "according to the shape of shifting things, [and] / Not always follow one and the same way" (8). The pliable leaden measure from the Isle of Lesbos is therefore a model of justice and governance, whether its flexibility is conceived positively or negatively.

The connection of the lesbian rule to contemporary experiences, iconography and theories of lesbianism is tenuous at best. But Zolf explains that she takes up this figure because her project "us[es] bent measures to challenge human and close readers' claims to absolute truth," and that her "poetic lesbian architectures are … constructed using [her] own pliant tools and rules," and that these "measure and attempt to reshape … via sticky affect" the "rigid and pointy institutional and Ideological State Apparatuses that … can't much bear being bent over and exposed" (1, 8).[191] In this way, the anachronistic lesbian rule, while a figure for flexible justice, is nevertheless a distinctly queer tool. As Zolf explains, her compositional practices are "bent" and "sticky," they do things "the wrong way round" (3); their treatment of texts and institutions is like sex, these are "bent over and exposed," she "penetrate[s]" them "thoroughly up to my elbow" (3). Perhaps because it does not directly represent a witnessing subject, an innocent abroad, *Neighbour*

[190] Probably named Pierre Coustau, this author of emblems went by Petrus Costalius in his juridical and emblematic writings, or Petrus Costus in his rabbinical and biblical exegesis. The title of this section, "In normam Lesbiam," comes from one of his emblems in which he "identifies the good judge as a generous reader" (Zolf 8).
[191] Zolf, "Poeisis by the lesbia regula."

Procedure cannot center a lesbian self or figure; nevertheless, the text is deeply, "thoroughly" queer.

While Moure celebrates the *cidadán* as the opener of borders, Zolf is cautious about the *lesbia regula*'s ambivalent justice: while she revels in its "perversion," she also notes that such flexibility can be an empty value, bending every which way and accommodating itself to every manner of injustice. In one of the most ambivalent passages in her essay she explains that "Israel more than most other states of exception operates according to the lesbian rule, with law suited to conduct, not conduct corrected by law" (6). In fact, the poem in which the term *lesbia regula* appears exemplifies the emptiness of a term like "flexibility," or even "art" or "philosophy." This poem, "L'amiral cherche une maison à louer," responds to the Dadaist Marcel Janco's establishment of an art colony in the formerly Palestinian village of Ein Houd in 1953. The poem begins, "Once there was a single Ein Houd / Now there are many versions / How could any of us escape that deadly layering? / How could we have failed to be grotesque?" (62). Contrasting the "deadly layering" against the false belief in a "tabula rasa Dada" (63), Zolf points to the "new name" that the Dada colony gave to Ein Houd (Arabic: "trough springs"), Ein Hod (Hebrew: "glory springs"), and to the banishing of "words other people have invented," in other words of Arabic, from memory and from "the museum in homage de Duchamp" (63).

The artistic principles of Dada are almost too perfect for this kind of critique: Zolf aptly describes Janco's colonization of Ein Houd using Dada's appropriative multilingual aesthetic — "'Abandoned Arab village' un objet trouvé" (63). The parts of the poem that

criticize philosophical and artistic discourses share the clarity of this line: although it combines two languages and juxtaposes two quotations, its meaning is quite clear: by putting "Abandoned Arab village" in quotation marks, Zolf suggests that the village was not simply "abandoned," but forcibly vacated as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The French phrase "un objet trouvé" evokes (and probably comes directly from) a Dada manifesto, thus the village is equated with other, more well known Dada *objets d'art*, maybe even with Duchamp's famous fountain.[192] This line quickly summarizes the callous blitheness of Janco and his fellow colonists, "An art studio asleep all the gold of earth and sun" (64), "Janco wore the Persian shaykh pants in the former mosque / Cum Café Voltaire" (63).

Where this poem becomes more difficult to read is in its reference to the *lesbia regula*. This figure represents the perversion — or logical extension — of appropriation as artistic technique, and at the same time serves as a "kind of" indicator of queer sexuality, to use the poem's repeated phrase:

> Un graaaaaaaaaand dead neighbour the ideal
> Sexual partner shall pay double 79[tis-'a Tet] of a tolerant
> Lesbia regula can't take it over, it kind of takes over
> Let's change one letter only in Palimpstine
> You kind of crawl into somebody else's 5315 soul
> Leave philosophy in a rage and sharpen
> Your wings and their 64['*ar*-ba'] faces shall conquer
> An art studio asleep all the gold of earth and sun
> And all the people shall say 5[Chet]9 jouissance
> Or thanatourism cursed 7[*sab*-'a]9 the ground
> In sorrow shalt thou eat thy search for India
> Glory Springs in the place of Trough Springs

[192] This poem also quotes liberally and extensively from Tristan Tzara's 1918 "Manifeste Dada."

Distressed creature 5315 panaaaaaakaa
Present absentees like ghosts as it was in Dada (63)

The syntax and enjambment of these lines make the *lesbia regula* very difficult to straighten out, so to speak: is the "dead neighbour" "ideal" because they cannot object to their town being taken over, because they don't persist as an uncomfortable reminder of "Trough Springs" and its former inhabitants?[193] Or is it that the "dead neighbour" is the "ideal sexual partner," "asleep" in the "sun"?[194] The idea of "kind of crawl[ing] into somebody else's 5315 soul" encapsulates the flexibility of the *lesbia regula*: "crawl[ing] into somebody else's soul" could refer to the takeover of a town like Ein Houd, or to the refuge that one might offer a "Distressed creature," whether a lover or a more unknown proximate. While this poem hints at the possibility of providing such kindnesses, the sharp juxtaposition of "jouissance / Or thanatourism," heightened by the line break that separates them, demonstrates that positively conceived emotional ties are never separated from the perverse pleasures that one might take in traveling to a site such as Ein Hod or somewhere else in Palestine where "the ground" is "cursed."

The repetition of the phrase "kind of" in the lines that seem most likely to refer to queer sexuality demonstrates the strange valence of the *lesbia regula*: while its flexibility makes this figure extremely attractive, it also weakens its utility. At best, the *lesbia regula* is a "kind of" approximation. In both *O Cidadán* and *Neighbour Procedure*, then, "crawl[ing] into somebody else's soul" or onto their "national soil" are offered as

[193] In the case of Ein Houd, many of the former inhabitants of the town remain its contemporary neighbours, living only a few kilometers away in Ein Houd al-Jadidah (New Ein Houd). Others live in the infamous Jenin refugee camp.
[194] According to Zolf, in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* (1847) the "dead neighbour" is deemed "tolerably fuckable" (83).

possible routes to justice. However, *Neighbour Procedure* is more ambivalent about the direction in which one might "crawl." While Moure proposes that the lesbian *cidadán* might extend the protections of her own citizenship to non-citizens, granting them access to safety and justice, Zolf considers the possibility that "crawl[ing] into someone else's soul" might entail a colonization of it, as the example of Janco and the Dada art colony "crawl[ing]" into Ein Houd suggests.

Who Tried to Call Out

Michel Foucault's "Lives of Infamous Men" serves as the introduction to *Parallel Lives*, a series of works collecting the memoirs of Herculine Barbin, a nineteenth-century hermaphrodite; *Le Désordre des familles*, a collection of *lettres de cachet*; and an anthology of the archives of the Hôpital générale and of the Bastille.[195] Foucault's description of the *lettres de cachet* and of his own feelings upon reading them resonates quite strongly with Moure's and Zolf's projects. Foucault is drawn to what he refers to as the "intensity" of the *lettres de cachet*: when the infamous attempt to speak in the language of power in addressing the king, they fail to conform to the norms of that linguistic practice: "The rules of this stilted discourse [are] thus upset by a vibration, by wild intensities muscling in with their own ways of saying things" (170). Official discourse is crossed with crude idiom, and the "intensity that sparks through" (157)

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[195] Michel Foucault, "Lives of Infamous Men." *Power*. Ed. James D. Faubion. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: The New York Press, 2000. 157-175. Arlette Farge & Michel Foucault, eds. *Le Désordre des familles*. Paris: Gallimard, Julliard, 1982. In "Lives of Infamous Men" Foucault defines these letters as "king's orders" (167). In *Le Désordre des familles*, a more complete description is provided: "*une lettre écrite par ordre du Roi, contresignée par un secrétaire d'État et cachetée du cachet du Roi*" (Guyaut qtd. n.1, n.p.). "A letter written by order of the King, countersigned by a state secretary and sealed with the King's seal" (my translation).

signals the letters' historical specificity, for they are of a time and place when it was still possible for everyday people to address the sovereign, and the "strange fulgations" of their speech "appear" in the official record (172). Their linguistic oddities show that the letters are relics of a period before the total bureaucratization that would remove the possibility of appealing directly to power, that would make the complaints of the infamous "into 'matters,' into incidents or cases" spoken exclusively in the bureaucratic tongue (172).

In *Parallel Lives* Foucault aims to create a "grid of intelligibility" (169) within which these "obscure men" (162) and their crudely written complaints might appear. Through his parallel alignment of the infamous men of a particular, and particularly significant moment of discursive shift, Foucault is able to create a system for charting and preserving the few remaining relics of this period, of his own encounters with these relics, and his reactions to them. Indeed, "Lives of Infamous Men" gives central importance to Foucault's emotional responses to the letters, and to ways of doing history that do not erase or obscure the historian's investment in the materials, but instead presence the hand of the historian upon the materials — and vice versa — at every turn. He writes that

> The selection [of letters] found here was motivated by nothing more substantial than my taste, my pleasure, an emotion, laughter, surprise, a certain dread, or some other feeling whose intensity I might have trouble justifying, now that the first moment of discovery had passed. (157)

Foucault's approach to compiling his text is ludic and capricious; yet in spite of the language of "pleasure," "emotion" and "laughter," he frames this approach in terms of

constraint. This “rule- and game-based book” (159) explicitly excludes all literary sources in favor of very brief texts concerning “obscure and ill-fated” people who “actually existed” and whose stories “give rise to a certain effect of beauty mixed with dread” (159). He strongly disavows that the work is “mood-based and purely subjective” (159), but allows that its structure is one of “Chance” encounters (163) across time, and “the taste I’ve had for them for years” (164), stressing its overall systematicity. While the caprices of emotion and preference play a role in the selection of the letters, their cold presentation in parallel alignment legitimizes this emotional excess through the compositional logic of constraint.

“Lives of Infamous Men” has two substantial areas of simultaneous overlap with and distinction from Moure’s and Zolf’s projects: while the contemporary letters and testimonies that inform and motivate their work bear some resemblance to the complaints articulated in the *lettres de cachet*, these contemporary letters and testimonies have no one to address who might right the wrongs they describe. Unlike Foucault’s infamous men, who directly address the king, the letters or reports upon which *O Cidadán* and *Neighbour Procedure* rely have no real addressee. The people represented in Moure’s and Zolf’s source texts are unable to directly address anyone empowered to help them; nevertheless, these letters and testimonies exist, and so do their deeply affected, if powerless readers. In this way, Foucault’s description of his own feelings upon reading the *lettres de cachet* also resonates strongly with the authorial figures evoked by Moure’s and Zolf’s works: these readers in the contemporary moment scroll through B’Tselem reports online, or read the heart-wrenching testament of two dead Guinean boys in the

latest issue of *Harper's*, as I will discuss below. Rather than the physical and even sexual stimulation that Foucault feels upon reading the *lettres de cachet*, Moure and Zolf articulate an outpouring of sympathy for the writers of these modern-day testimonies. If Foucault's "grid of intelligibility" allows the complaints of the infamous and the uniqueness of their language to rise to view, Moure and Zolf explore the "grid[s] of intelligibility" that structure the voices and indeed the lives of the contemporary infamous, the rules dictating who might live or die, whose complaints might be heard. Rather than putting the voices of the infamous in parallel to hear them speak across the centuries, Moure and Zolf explore the structures that fail to legitimate and make legible these contemporary voices and their complaints.[196]

In creating catalogues of harm, Moure explores the "ties of affect" that might allow the cidadán to practice an activist citizenship, extending the rights and protections of her own citizenship to non-citizens. The articulation of these "ties of affect," especially her erotic ties to Georgette, make the *cidadán* legible as a citizen — as a person, really. Her voice, speaking ardently to Georgette in the series of lyric poems or vehemently against harm in the catalogues, guarantees her legibility as a person. These "emotive, subjective, and individual"[197] qualities appear alongside and are held in tension with discussions of Moure's legal and linguistic status in the various locations in which she finds herself, discussions of her membership in "the body politic" and in "tout ce qui comporte le civis," as we have seen.

[196] On the jacket of the 1978 Gallimard edition of *Herculine Barbin* Foucault describes his project as "*mettre en parallèle les vies des hommes illustres [pour les] écout[er] parler à travers les siècles*."
[197] Barbara Johnson 550.

However, the work of *O Cidadán* is to consider voices whose legibility as persons is less clear, and who have been prevented them from making appeals for justice, especially outside of their own jurisdictions. In particular, *O Cidadán* is dedicated to

> *two young Africans who tried to call out to Europe,*
> *with the body (mortos) of writing (escridas nos seus petos):*
> *Yaguine Koita and Fodé Tounkara*
> (n.p., Moure's italics)

Moure's text in English states that Koita and Tounkara "call[ed] out to Europe, / with the body of writing," with their bodies as written documents. Her parenthetical additions in Galician clarify that they are dead ("mortos"), and suggest that the writing is on their chests. Their text is their own dead flesh, which "call[s] out to Europe" in a dramatic protest against the exclusion of people like themselves, who can only attempt to access to the protection of European states through extralegal means — the two boys were "found in the cargo hold of a plane in Brussels in August 1998."[198]

In addition to the testament of their flesh, however, when Koita's and Tounkara's bodies were found they had an actual letter addressing the "responsible citizens of Europe." This document exemplifies the extent to which their non-citizenship places them outside of the "grid of intelligibility" that might secure a proper addressee for their complaint and therefore create the possibility of redress:

> Excellencies, gentlemen, and responsible citizens of Europe:

[198] Simon Gikandi, "Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality." *South Atlantic Quarterly*. 100.3 (2001) 627-658. 21 April 2007. 630.

> It is our great honor and privilege to write to you about our trip and the suffering of the children and you in Africa. We offer you our most affectionate and respectful salutations. In return, be our support and our help.
>
> We beseech you on behalf of your love for your continent, your people, your families, and above all your children, whom you cherish more than life itself. And for the love of God, who has granted you all the experience, wealth, and power to ably construct and organize your continent. We call upon your graciousness and solidarity to help us in Africa. Our problems are many: war, sickness, hunger, lack of education. We beseech you excuse us for daring to write this letter to you, important people whom we truly respect. It is to you, and to you only, that we can plead our case.
>
> And if you find that we have sacrificed our lives, it is because we suffer too much in Africa. We need your help in our struggle against poverty and war.
>
> Be mindful of us in Africa. There is no one for us to turn to. (qtd. Gikandi 630)

Following the boys' death, this letter was published in a 1999 issue of *Harper's*, where Moure most likely encountered it, and was subsequently reprinted in a critical article by Simon Gikandi. Describing the boys' "quest" as "an attempt to escape both poverty and alterity … predicated on the belief that their salvation could only come from Europe," Gikandi explains that they "became stowaways" because they "sought a modern life in the European sense of the world [sic?]," because they had a particular vision of "globalization" in mind, most probably the globalization of middle-class lives and human rights (630-631).

While the type of globalization that these boys sought may be one unpopular with many postcolonial theorists, antiglobalization activists and others, their letter makes it clear why they desired greater access to Europe and to its institutions. Without any formal way of addressing the harms that they list, "war, sickness, hunger, lack of education," they must write to an unofficial source of justice, the "Excellencies,

gentlemen, and responsible citizens of Europe." The basis upon which they make their claim, "your love for your continent, your people, your families, and above all your children, whom you cherish more than life itself[, a]nd for the love of God," further illustrates the degree to which they lack access legal institutions of justice. Rather than relying upon some formal legal basis for their arguments, the boys cite "love" as the justification for their demands. What is most heartbreaking about this carefully crafted, painfully formal letter is that unlike Foucault's *lettres de cachet*, which were addressed directly to the sovereign empowered to respond to their concerns, Koita and Tounkara's perfect letter is addressed to everyone and to no one. This impeccably crafted prose was most likely discovered by a baggage handler, and given current stratifications of labor we might wonder whether this person was one of the "citizens of Europe" whom the boys sought to address. Although the boys' letter circulated widely, it did so among audiences without any power to address their concerns; the letter appears as an oddity or a curiosity, an especially troubling document testifying to the inequities of the contemporary moment.

To be a non-citizen is to fall outside the "grid of intelligibility," to have no one who might hear or read one's demand for justice, and therefore, to require a figure like the cidadán, who might "open the national soil," access to a mode of justice that would not depend on citizenship as the determinant of which claims are and are not legitimate. Koita and Tounkara's letter was granted substantial publicity, and according to Habermas, it is publicity that "hold[s] officials accountable and … ensure[s] that the actions of the state express the will of the citizenry" (Fraser 76). But when non-citizens

participate in the public sphere, "the *normative legitimacy* and *political efficacy*" of their participation are entirely without guarantee (76-77, Fraser's emphasis). The state may simply refuse to recognize, let alone to arbitrate their demands for justice — even if their public agrees that demands like the boys' ought to be met, the state is under no obligation to respond to this opinion. States enjoy "the right to exclude non-citizens who wish to live within their borders," and there is a widespread popular perception that "[s]tates and their citizens … have no obligation to devote any of their intellectual and material resources to enhance the well-being of anyone outside their borders."[199] Although some political theorists argue that these exclusions are not legitimate — indeed Koita and Tounkara make the same argument — these nationalistic formulations are widely accepted. According to conventional wisdom, "outsiders have no moral right to make claims upon a state other than their own or upon its citizens except under the laws of that state," and in this sense, "[f]rom a moral point of view, the people of each society are … entirely independent of one another" (238). In this way, citizenship comes to form the grid of intelligibility that guarantees an audience — though not a responsive one — for individuals' complaints.

In her essay "No one bears witness," Zolf offers a related, if not quite similar description of non-participation, explaining that *Neighbour Procedure* constellates "an intersubjective non-triangulating 'third' or more remove" in "an act of imagination that brings together present absences, absent presences, and 'present absentees'" (2). Drawing upon poetics of witness articulated by Giorgio Agamben and Paul Celan, she explains

[199] Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2000) 236.

that unlike poets who find "language as what remains, as what actually survives the possibility, or impossibility, of speaking" (Agamben qtd. 1), she "do[es] not trust the poet as transparent witness … [nor] the 'modest witness' as fieldworker" (1). As opposed to Agamben's *Musselmann*, the "complete witness to the disaster" of the Nazi camps (1), Zolf takes the word "*Musselmann*" more literally, as Muslim, and suggests that "perhaps … we should restore the grotesque face to the faceless *Musselmann* neighbour, whose infinitely vulnerable call is neither legible nor audible, but can only be hauntingly felt" (4). These poems call and are called "to fail well in the catachrestic effort to listen to what is unsaid and beyond knowledge in the testimony of the witness who bears witness for the *Musselmann*'s 'bare, unassigned and unwitnessable life'" (4).

The difficulty of voicing these poems enacts the conceptual struggle of witnessing and especially mourning that which one cannot recognize. If one cannot see the *Musselmann*'s face, pronounce the Arabic names, they become, as EtShalom suggests, "an opaque blur" of uncomfortable or even impossible sounds. The section in which "Grievable" appears, "Shoot & Weep," begins with an epigraph from Judith Butler's *Precarious Life*: "… feel compelled to learn how to say these names?" This fragmented question is taken from a passage in which she contrasts the widely grieved journalist Daniel Pearl, who was captured and murdered in Pakistan in 2002, against the ungrievable lives of other victims of violence in the Middle East. Butler explains the simplicity, even the necessity of mourning Pearl: "Daniel Pearl, 'Danny' Pearl, is so familiar to me: he could be my brother or my cousin; he is so easily humanized; he fits the frame, his name has my father's name in it. His last name contains my Yiddish name"

(36-37). Unlike Pearl, whose name could be that of a close relative, whose name is partially her own, "those lives in Afghanistan, or other United States targets," or "the Palestinians" are not so easily assimilated: in a parenthetical aside, Butler asks, "Will we feel compelled to learn how to say these names and to remember them?" (37). Unlike Pearl's already familiar and even familial name, these other names must be learned before the lives they represent can become possible objects of mourning.

We might, in this way, imagine that Zolf's task in "Shoot & Weep," and particularly in "Grievable" is to take up Butler's challenge and to teach us these difficult names, so that we might behave ethically in mourning their bearers. However, the challenge of voicing the names, and of remembering the troubling information that the poems contain becomes exponentially more difficult after reading the "Afterthought," where Zolf gives instructions for reading aloud that include multilingual voicings of numbers and pseudo-religious, repetitive incantation of some of the poems. Throughout the book, Zolf uses Hebrew letters and Arabic script to represent some of the numbers, which already presents a challenge to voicing, as it is unlikely that many readers would be familiar with either of these systems, let alone both. However, the most profound challenge to voicing actually appears in the conventional Arabic numerals. Where one might expect to pronounce the numbers 1, 2 or 3 as "one," "two" or "three," Zolf specifies that

> For word values with consecutive repeated numbers (e.g., 7725), either the Hebrew letter or Arabic numeral for the repeated number is inserted and voiced. For word values that contain two of the same number, but non-consecutively (e.g., 5787), the Hebrew name for the repeated (Arabic) number is voiced (i.e., 'five-seven-eight-*sheva*'). (Please see the Pronunciation Key on page 85.) (82)

Rather than bringing these foreign languages and names closer, or acting as a salve to the conscience, the poems force repeated confrontations with alterities that are actually impossible to perceive upon first reading, and remain difficult to enact even once their presence has become apparent. Even once a reader knows to say "five-seven-eight-*sheva*," what is produced is not familiarity or sympathy, but a difficult and cumbersome practice of flipping back and forth from the poems to the pronunciation guide in order to read properly.

The first poem in "Innocent Abroad," "How to shape sacred time," contains numbers written in three different ways: conventional Arabic numerals, archaic Hebrew letters representing numbers, and Arabic numbers written in script. The first three stanzas of the poem illustrate its complicated mixture of different notational systems: while the words of the poem are written entirely in English, the numbers move between different notational systems, and even when they appear to be "in English," they are not. Although this is not how the poem appears in the book, I have rendered it so that it can be pronounced, with the Arabic script and Hebrew letters written out phonetically in square brackets, and with the Hebrew names of the Arabic numerals in bold text:

> I can see easily enough that if I wish to profit
> By this tour I must studiously and faithfully
> Unlearn a great many things I have somehow absorbed
> Concerning Palestine will ye render 79[tis-'a Tet] me a recompense?
> And if ye recompense me speedily I will return
> 7[*sab*-'a]25 upon your own head
>
> I have purchased the right to access, must begin a system
> Of reduction the magic recipe is therefore 'Anticipate,
> Approach, Acknowledge, Afterthought' for whatsoever

> Man that hath a blemish, she shall not approach
> A blind 578**[sheva]** or a lame 645[Chet] or he that hath a flat
> Nose or anything superfluous 831[*waa*-hed]
>
> A willingness to endure loneliness, a relaxed way
> With odd growths and unexplained fevers like my grapes
> The spies bore out of the Promised Land everything
> In Palestine on too large a scale separated
> From thy bowels people stand 597**[khamesh]** upon the wall

Rather than reading the appropriated language from Biblical sources, travel narratives, and guides to the Holy Land, what I want to point out about this passage is that the numbers "578[sheva]" and "597[khamesh]" appear in the text as "5787" and "5795." These numbers are conceived as places where the Hebrew and Arabic languages meet, but one might easily read through the book without realizing that. How often does one even remember that Arabic numerals are in fact Arabic? This layered and even concealed system for voicing suggests that rather than creating a readership that can pronounce or remember Arabic names and can therefore find the lives they represent grievable, the demand that the reader "learn how to say these names" is deliberately introduced as a false premise. Voicing a numeral or a name brings one no closer to the conflict or to its victims, and the ethical demand to bring oneself closer founders upon the shoals of its own politics.

Rather than giving an account as witness, in both *O Cidadán* and *Neighbour Procedure* something else takes place. The excess of languages, of discourses, of affects, and of desires opens a space for other, silent voices to speak and to make demands for justice, even and especially to inappropriate institutions or to non-institutional sources. But the opening of this space is not exactly valorized, nor is it presented as a particularly

effective source of justice — as Fraser explains, publicity itself does not guarantee that the state will respond to accusations of injustice, and without the state's provision of a framework for justice, one tends to fall outside the "grid of intelligibility," one tends to find oneself without anywhere to turn. We might therefore call the opening of this space a poetics of "at least": while the voices crying out may not receive the justice they demand, the demand circulates and becomes audible; in Moure's text it at least prompts the imagination of acts that might accommodate the request. In Zolf's work, however, there is a more palpable sense of pessimism; in "No one bears witness" she asks, "can poetry do anything about this tragedy? No. And again I wonder what the hell's the point" (4). If there must be a point, perhaps it is to call into question the purpose of a discourse called ethics whose key thinkers themselves refused to understand their proximates as neighbours, instead preferring the conventional understanding of these people as enemies, and therefore as legitimate targets of exclusion and attack.

If the sign of personhood within the discourse of lyric poetry is typically the interior voice speaking to itself, guaranteeing its presence as self to itself, and rendering this self-address visible through the public form of the poem, in these works, something else takes place. Rather than poetic voice "serv[ing] in its self-evidence as the unquestionable guarantee of presence" and in its self-evident presence being "culturally empowered to define the property of the person,"[200] in these poems, the property of personhood is defined by the listening public, either through the legal framework of citizenship or through an ethical-poetic discourse adjudicating among proximates and

[200] McCaffery, *ibid*.

deciding who will count as having a face, as being a neighbour. It is not the "I" who structures her own intelligibility; rather it is the addressee who hears and accepts or denies it, and thereby acts as the arbiter of personhood. This addressee, this auditor has the capacity either to grant or to refuse personhood; *O Cidadán* and *Neighbour Procedure* point out not only how personhood is threatened by violence, or by callous and wanton disregard, but how often it is passively and unwittingly refused.