'if memory braided with history': Figurations of Nomadic Subjectivity in Marilyn Hacker's Later Work, 1994-2015

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List of Abbreviations

DR   *Diaspo/Renga*

FC   *First Cities*

HCP   *Hayden Carruth Papers, Bailey/Howe Library, Special Collections University of Vermont Library*

JRP   *Joanna Russ Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Oregon University Library*

MB   *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*

MHP   *Marilyn Hacker Papers, The Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University Library*

NE   *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*

NP   *Names: Poems*

NS   *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*

NT   *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti*

PD   *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy*

PH   *The Posthuman*

SC   *Squares and Courtyards*

SM   *A Stranger's Mirror*

TN   *Taking Notice*

TP   *Transpositions*

UV   *Unauthorized Voices: Essays on Poets and Poetry, 1987-2009*

WN   *Winter Numbers*

"PL"   *"Notes toward a Politics of Location"*

ABSTRACT

This study examines Marilyn Hacker's work from 1994 to 2015, exploring how her commitment to an engagement with the historical and political dimensions of contemporary women's poetry develops in response to the work of Adrienne Rich. The study demonstrates the thematic and formal shift between Hacker's seventh book, *Winter Numbers* (1994), and her latest collection, *A Stranger's Mirror* (2015), through Rosi Braidotti's figuration of nomadic subjectivity. Hacker departs from Rich's second-wave feminist poetics to a nomadic relationship with the body, poetic form, space, history, and politics. In the introduction, I examine Hacker's formal poetics, 'nomadism', 'transculturalism', and the metaphor of the 'braid' and how each of these relates to Hacker's developing oeuvre. Chapter One investigates Rich's early influence on Hacker's shift from formal dialogues in the male tradition in *Presentation Piece* (1974) and *Separations* (1976) to a female formal tradition in *Taking Notice* (1980). Braidotti's 'critical nomadic consciousness' provides a useful account of how Hacker's subversive formalism, poetic nonconformity, migration, and feminism showed early signs of nomadic consciousness. The second chapter examines the metaphor of the "body as map" (Hartman 162) in Hacker's breast cancer poetry in *Winter Numbers* (1994). Braidotti's conceptualisations of 'cartography' and the 'posthuman' are useful to view Hacker's postmastectomy scar as a mapping of ethnicity and history and as an embodied "posthuman condition" (Braidotti, "Posthuman Feminist theory" 683). Chapter Three further explores the metaphorical treatment of the female body. In *Squares and Courtyards* (2000), Hacker connects her childhood memories with the history of the Holocaust using the metaphor of the braid. I read the braid as an embodiment of Hacker's nomadic subjectivity and her embedded ethnic and historical location as an expatriate American Jew in Paris. My analysis considers how *Squares and Courtyards* creates an intertextual engagement with Claire Malroux's *Soleil de Jadis* (2000) via Hacker's translation, her adaptation of Malroux's historical narration, and the intertwining of separate memories. Chapter Four proposes that Hacker's latest collection, *A Stranger's Mirror* (2015), is a coherent yet multidimensional testament to two decades of critical nomadic thinking. The chapter examines Hacker's interrogation of the power locations that structure her location as a North American citizen through Braidotti's model of a 'politics of location'. In *A Stranger's Mirror* (2015), Hacker's engagement with wars and massive human displacement is approached to what Braidotti describes as "the posthuman predicament" (*PH* 1). The chapter investigates how Hacker's feminist nomadic thinking becomes conducive to a transcultural orientation that engages with Middle Eastern narratives, poetics, and politics. In the conclusion, I examine the significance of Hacker's new poems in *A Stranger's Mirror* to the current political context, particularly as it responds to the urgent humanitarian and political crisis in Syria. Ultimately, I argue for the importance of the metaphor of the braid to portray a "feminist subjectivity in a nomadic mode" (*NS* 22).

INTRODUCTION

A Shifting Feminist Poetics: Formalism, Nomadism, Transculturalism, and the Braid

> . . . someone else I might have been
> if memory braided with history.
> —Marilyn Hacker, "Squares and Courtyards", 2000

An Emerging Feminist Poetics

Over a period of forty years, Marilyn Hacker's work has been central to the ongoing development of feminist poetics. Between her first book, *Presentation Piece* (1974), and her most recent new and selected volume, *A Stranger's Mirror* (2015), Hacker has published fifteen books of poetry, seventeen translation collections and one novel/memoir from the French, in addition to numerous critical essays.[1] The diversity and range of her work is a testament to a conscious and "constant and process of self-discovery, formal discovery, and historical and political discovery" (''A Tribute'' 4). In particular, her poetry written between 1994 and 2015 overtly employs the metaphor of the braid to articulate a shift in her poetic dialogues, bringing to the fore the connection between the body to female subjectivity as it is shaped by and sits in parallel with her increased commitment to literary translation from 1996 to 2017, and to her dedication from 2001 in engaging with Middle Eastern stories, voices, politics, and poetic forms.[2]

This thesis examines Marilyn Hacker's work from 1994 to 2015, exploring how her commitment to an engagement with the historical and political dimensions of contemporary women's poetry develops in response to the work of Adrienne Rich. The thesis aims to demonstrate that Rich's politics have had a strong influence on Hacker's feminist poetics throughout her career, in what Hacker describes to Hayden Carruth as

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[1] This is the latest list of Hacker's works that she provided on 15 Aug. 2017.
[2] In 2001, Hacker translated Lebanese poet Vénus Khoury-Ghata's poetry collection *Here there was once a Country* from the French. This publication marks Hacker's first engagement with Middle Eastern narratives through translation.

"a constant pull of influence / resistance / assimilation".[3] These words show a personal and literary dialogue with Rich that formed an early paradigm for Hacker's post-1980 poetry of "feeling and form" (*FC* 200). Rich's "influence" shows in Hacker's artistic connection with Rich as a politically and "historically conscious woman writer" ("A Tribute" 3). Hacker's formalism was a type of "resistance" to Rich's advocacy of open forms, which grew out of Rich's feminist convictions that traditional prosody is historically patriarchal. As such, Hacker's formalism was a source of tension in their literary relationship. Hacker sensed that Rich was "not particularly enthusiastic about [her] work", "but that did not diminish [Hacker's] admiration for [Rich's] own [work], nor for what she represents".[4] Realising that she could not consider Rich as a "best friend" or a "live mentor", Hacker was reluctant to take Rich as a "Muse",[5] frequently "assimilat[ing]" Rich's themes and images into her own work, thinking "I'm going to sit down and try something like that" ("A Tribute" 1).

Nevertheless, Rich's work is useful in framing Hacker's feminist poetics and her practice of a 'politics of location', which was a concept originally proposed by Rich in 1984. Rosi Braidotti's nomadic analysis of this notion describes it as a "cartographic method" that creates "politically informed maps of the present" (*NE* 7). This thesis approaches the 'politics of location' through Braidotti's model as it extends Rich's notion by ''accounting for multiple differences within any subject position''; accounting for both spatial and temporal dimensions of one's location; and providing "alternative figurations or schemes of representation for these locations in terms of power as restrictive (potestas) but also empowering or affirmative (potential)" (*NT* 216). Braidotti's emphasis on the importance of language to represent these cartographic figurations proves useful in understanding Hacker's personal and political examinations via the metaphor of the braid.

Through readings of Hacker's letters, including an early correspondence with Rich, this thesis examines the exact nature of Rich's literary influence on Hacker. The examination of this relationship shows how Hacker attempts to build on and move beyond Rich's second examination of her Jewish background in "Notes toward a Politics

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[3] Hacker, Marilyn. Letter to Hayden Carruth. 22 Feb. 1994. Box 73, Folder 32. Hayden Carruth Papers, Bailey/Howe Library, Special Collections, University of Vermont Library, Burlington, Vermont. (Hereafter cited as HCP).
[4] Ibid, 24 Dec. 1994.
[5] Ibid, 3 Sept. 1998. Box 73, Folder 31.

of Location" (1984). Here, Rich articulates, "I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history" (212). As Rich finds difficulty in representing this "history" on a "map", Hacker imagines the female body as a cartography of Jewish heritage and history in *Winter Numbers* (1994). Later in *Squares and Courtyards* (2000), the lines of this map extend into the metaphor of the braid to connect the multiple and diverse aspects of her embodied female experience to her embedded ethnic and historical location. The appeal of the braid is in the way it arises from the female body to powerfully evoke an imaginary personal and collective space, while at the same time producing an affirmative representation of the "multiplicity and complexity" (*NT* 5) of female subjectivity.

Although "pre-feminist"[6] in its detachment from the female experience, Hacker's award-winning debut collection, *Presentation Piece* (1974), enacts a feminist consciousness by subverting traditional poetic forms to engage with complex personal and emotional issues. In her peripheral status as a woman and feminist, Hacker's work enacts second-wave feminism's tenet that the 'personal is political'. However, she also adopts a post-feminist stance in acknowledging her position at the centre as an educated, European-American, refusing to view women as distanced from poetic form as she reclaims a female formal tradition in her third collection *Taking Notice* (1980) to engage with women's experiences that would run through her entire pre-1990 poetry.

Several years later, however, a traumatic crisis of the body engaged her with the crisis of the body politic and enabled her to relocate the body as a site of cultural and historical identification in *Winter Numbers* (1994). Her next collection, *Squares and Courtyards* (2000), marks the intersection between public and private spaces with personal memory and collective history, all of which characterise her post-1990 poetry. Arising from the lived experience of the female and ethnic body, the braid becomes a metaphor of an embodied and ''feminist subjectivity in a nomadic mode'' (*NS* 22). Using the braid, Hacker takes a traditional metaphor of feminine activity and reconfigures it to engage in poetic dialogues and bridge linguistic, cultural and religious divides during an age of increasing challenges of multiculturalism. This current engagement with voices from other cultures and this political commitment to witnessing social injustice suggest her participation in a third-wave feminism that acknowledges differences while

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[6] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 12 Oct. 1976. Box 5, Folder 23. JRP.

showing solidarity to create transcultural feminist links. Her work reflects a personally and politically engaged poet whose writing is necessary, particularly in the political context of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

By examining the connection between gender, writing, the body, location, and history in Hacker's l994 to 2015 work, Rosi Braidotti's work in nomadism, cartography, and posthumanism presents a metaphorical framework for drawing a connection between a shifting subjectivity and an embodied and embedded historical location. Signalling the relationship between the body politic, the female body, and poetic form, Hacker's poetry employs the metaphor of the braid to radically reconceptualise relationships between language, cultural and political borders, and the embodiment of the female subject. The recurrence of the metaphor in various contexts over a period of twenty years serves as a key image in her struggle for a female reconfiguration of subjectivity and cross-cultural communication. I read the braid as an embodiment of Hacker's nomadic subjectivity and her embedded ethnic and historical location as an expatriate American Jew in Paris. This study traces the usage of the braid in Hacker's later poetry, examining each depiction's engagement with constructs of the body, subjectivity, poetic conversation, and location.

Hacker's Formal Poetics

Formalism is the first significant characteristic of Hacker's work. Hacker's reputation as a formalist poet was recognised early in her career with *Presentation Piece* (1974), which 'presented' a young female poet's metrical skill with "complex stanzas and meters invented by medieval French and Italian poets" (Montefiore, "She Can" 52). In almost all of the poems, the form is as much part of the poem's success as the subject matter realised in that poetic form. She uses language to create, as she writes in "Feeling and Form" from *Taking Notice* (1980):

> . . . I do like words,
> which is why I make things out of words
> and listen to their hints, resounding like
> skipping-stones radiating circles, . . . (*FC* 200)

In these lines, Hacker summarises her formal technique. The wish ("like") to create and communicate moves the verse with a drive that is both poetic and formal. Language is

central to the act of her creative practice, as suggested by the repetition and parallel lineation of "words". Her use of the metaphor "skipping-stones radiating circles" creates an image of words, as flat "stones", that are augmented ("radiating") by their semantic and auditory nuances ("hints"), which in their different resonances create subtle patterns in water ("radiating circles"). The internal movement in meter and line is achieved by the continuous sense in "resounding", "skipping", and "radiating". The nuances of words, the flowing patterns, and the line movement articulate a view of poetic form as both malleable and measured, both of which characterise her formal poetics.

Hacker's work is also shaped by her poetic engagements with early and contemporary poets and different literary traditions. She described this poetic engagement in an early essay as a "current of poetic colloquy" (MacRae). In using the term "colloquy", Hacker conveys a complexity of meanings that have linguistic, religious, political, and literary connotations. According to The *Oxford English Dictionary,* the etymology of colloquy derives from the Latin ''colloquium'' to mean ''speaking together, conversation, conference'' ("Colloquy"). In relation to the Christian Church, the OED defines colloquy as ''a church court composed of the pastors and representative elders of the churches of a district, with judicial and legislative functions over these churches'' ("Colloquy").

Drawing on these meanings, Hacker uses the word "colloquy" to describe her poetic vision of an ongoing, flowing conversation with poets both contemporary and long-gone, spanning generations and transcending national boundaries. As such, Hacker's poetry manifests as a multidimensional language used to communicate individual as well as shared emotions and experiences. As religious connotations pertain to her conversations, Hacker perceives writing in any structured form as a form of spiritual contemplation, which she terms as "meditating formally" (Finch, *A Formal Feeling* 87). As such, her poetic conversations act as formal meditations that bring poets together in a way that shows how they influence and engage with each other's work. In this respect, this conversation in form or "writing within the boundaries" of traditional formal structure, as Annie Finch argues, has the paradoxical effect of dissolving borders and freeing contemporary women poets into "boundarylessness" ("Female Tradition" 93).

Given the debates about the gender politics of poetic form, Hacker's strong relationship to metrical verse provides different ways of thinking about formalism in women's poetry. In a 1996 interview with Hacker, Finch asked, "What do you think of the idea that free verse is more 'accessible' than formal verse?" ("An Interview"). Finch's question generally alludes to the controversy over poetic formalism in contemporary American poetry that champions free verse over fixed poetic forms. In the early twentieth century, American poetic modernism made a social and intellectual break with traditional nineteenth-century verse. Modernist poets believed that "traditional English poetry . . . relied on the beauty and melodiousness of its language rather than on the depth or complexity of its thought" (Beach 49). Later in the 1980s, poetic formalism moved away from free verse. This renewal of formal poetry became apparent when a development described as New-Formalism, or Neo-Formalism, sought to "counter the tide of vapid free verse" through "the fairly traditional use of fixed forms to a more innovative use of formal techniques and structures" (151).

Although many American poets wrote in metrical verse in the 1980s and 1990s, Neo-Formalism has had a controversial reputation since its introduction. David Caplan notes that "recent scholarship concludes that literary and cultural history dooms this poetry to failure, irrelevance, or political and aesthetic conservatism" (*Questions of Possibility* 3). Antony Easthope asserts, "[T]he pentameter is a dead form," and "its continued use . . . is in the strict sense reactionary" (76). Ira Sadoff echoes Easthope's criticism by condemning Neo-Formalists for the "hierarchical privileging of meter over other decorations of poetry" as opposed to "poets who have traditionally used received forms as part of the poetic palate in the service of their art"; as Sadoff warns, "therein lies the danger of their aesthetic" (7). He argues that Neo-Formalists fail to "articulate form with vision", and because of this, they are "diminishing the ambitions of the art" by "privileging surfaces"; in short, Sadoff views that "they opt for idealized beauty over a more complex, observed world" (7). Lynn Keller notes that Sadoff's criticism parallels other critics' concerns over the "increasing conservatism of American culture" (157). Diane Wakoski links traditional metrical verse with the "growing conservatism" in America. She argues that the wider political milieu of the 1980s Reagan administration marked people's "need to return to old values"; generally speaking, she asserts that people "cannot deal with anxiety of any sort and thus want a secure set of formulas and rules, whether it be for verse forms or for how to cure the national deficit" (3).

Finch's question to Hacker about formal verse touches upon issues surrounding formalism not only in American poetry in general, but also in women's poetry specifically. "What has passion got to do with choosing an art form? Everything. There is nothing else which determines form" (Ghiselin 170), Gertrude Stein asserted. Her emphasis was on the primacy of form in delivering the writer's feeling and passion. Stein's words prove that although Stein was a modernist, as Finch explains in *A Formal Feeling Comes: Poems in Form by Contemporary Women* (2007), "the lineage of women poets in English is largely a formal one, but since the Modernist period, many have had reason to be ambivalent about form" (1). Finch's comment refers to women poets who have moved away from form, and who Finch names in the same 1996 interview with Hacker when she asks: "When Gwendolyn Brooks was changing her style, when Adrienne Rich was changing her style, why didn't you?" ("An Interview"). Finch's question highlights an important transition in American formalist poetry: poets were either challenging formalist movements or abandoning formalism for open forms. Hacker clarifies this aesthetic move:

> Gwendolyn Brooks, Adrienne Rich, James Wright, Robert Lowell, are all prosodic virtuosi who, in the 1960s, moved decisively, if not permanently, toward open forms, in part as a challenge to the socio-aesthetic climate which had variously formed them, which was in itself a reaction to the earlier explosion of modernism. For a woman who was seventeen in 1960, modernism, re-inflected through Black Mountain and the Beats, was so much in the forefront-- and in such a masculine version--that adherence to its tenets felt as much like conformity as rebellion. ("An Interview")

Hacker's justification touches on the socio-political aspects of the time – the Vietnam War, poverty, minority experiences, and social injustice – as factors that altered these writers' styles to rebel against the conservative movement that produced them.[7] Beach notes that New Criticism ''engendered an academic poetry establishment that was conservative in its literary tastes'' and avoided ''engagement with current social and political issues'' of the Cold War (139). However, of these poets, Rich's transition touched Hacker the most as she considers Rich a literary foremother. "[T]here's no way

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[7] In her introduction to *A Formal Feeling Comes*, Annie Finch believes there is a "return to formal poetics" in "contemporary women's poetry in the United States" and has cited Hacker's formalism as a "direct influence" on the younger poets added in the volume (1-3).

I could not have felt implicated by her [Rich's] decision, in the early 1970s, not only to reject traditional prosody, but to state that she was doing so out of feminist convictions, out of her relationship, as a woman, with the language and the canon", as Hacker explains (Finch, "An Interview").

Rich, who was a "member of a generation who in the 1960s came to see regular metrical verse as emotionally or politically repressive, as incapable of capturing authentic experience or individual speech" (Keller 158), abandoned the formalism of New Criticism in the early 1970s for open forms as an act of feminist politics. *A Change of World* (1951), Trudi Witonsky points out, "explicitly links Rich's exploration of the limitations of gender forms with the limitations of New Critical formalism" (45). Rich's ultimate relinquishing of formalism, Witonsky concludes, results from her "exploration of the limitations of social narratives and forms for women's experiences" (40). In "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" (1972), Rich looks back and openly rejects her use of formal verse in writing "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers", which she wrote as a young woman. Rich considers the formalism of the poem as "distan[cing]" and impersonal as she explains that "in those years formalism was part of the strategy—like asbestos gloves, it allowed me to handle materials I couldn't pick up barehanded" (22). Critics and researches cite this essay, as well as her collection *Diving into the Wreck* (1973), as a rejection of poetic formalism that represents the limitations of patriarchal language (Werner 1988; Witonsky 2002; Kostić 2006). Rich's relinquishment of formal poetics illustrates how literary and cultural politics have affected women's use of poetic form.

Rich's work had a strong influence on Hacker's feminist poetics. However, as Chapter One discusses, Hacker felt neither compelled nor obligated to adhere to Rich's appeal for her, "as a woman and a feminist", in her "personal letter in the 1970s" prompting Hacker to abandon "metrical forms" (*UV* 26). Instead of treating metrical forms and female poetic expression as mutually exclusive, Hacker recognises their interdependence and disagrees with the "idea of contemporaneity in form as a stricture".[8] Hacker writes in "historically powerful poetic forms in order to transform them and claim some of their strength" in innovative ways (Finch, *A Formal Feeling* 5).

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[8] Hacker, Marilyn. Letter to Joanna Russ. 12 Oct. 1996. Box 5, Folder 37. Joanna Russ Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Oregon University Library, Eugene, Oregon. (Hereafter cited as JRP).

For Hacker, formalism is not opposed to women's expression of their experiences through language:

> Traditional forms . . . aren't in any way inimical to women's poetry, feminist poetry, or contemporary poetry. It is important for women writers to reclaim the tradition, to rediscover and redefine our place in it and lay claim to our considerable contributions, innovations, and inventions. Traditional narrative and lyric forms have been used by women for centuries – even if our professors of Western literature never mentioned Marie de France or Christine de Pisan. The language that we use was as much created and invented by women as by men . . . We've got to reclaim the language, demand acknowledgement of our part in it, and proceed from there. (Hammond 22)

However, this unwavering dedication to form cemented her reputation as a "radical formalist" (Barrington 28) first and foremost and overshadowed her role in the feminist movement. Readers identified Hacker more with Bishop's expatriate cosmopolitanism than with Edna Vincent Millay's political efforts. This impression was perhaps due to her distance from women's issues in the 1960s, when she was trying to establish herself as a writer in the male tradition that formed her as a poet, and also for the years she spent in London during the 1970s working as an antiquarian bookseller. As such, she was not included in many of the books on women poets of the 1970s, except to highlight her "subversive formalism" (Honor Moore xvii). She began to be included in 2001 in specialised women's anthologies such as *The Extraordinary Tide: New Poetry by American Women*. Recently, critics have come to recognise her role in the women's movement due to her continuous efforts to celebrate women writers through her work, and they place her alongside other notable feminist writers, as Lisa Moore notes:

> Hacker, currently Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, was also a rank-and-file member of the women's movement — facilitating dialogues about antiracism, publishing in feminist journals with small press runs, and helping to "midwife" (as one no doubt would have said back in the day) the feminist theory texts my students and I are still studying. Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde, Marilyn Hacker: three important American poets, three important contributors to the canon of feminist theory. ("Sister Arts")

Given that Hacker continues to write in metrical verse, it is clear that formalism continues to be an important part of her creative work. It is vital to understand how the fluidity of her poetic dialogues work with and within the fixity of poetic forms not only

in traditional European forms, but also in forms from different cultures and countries, as well as invented forms.[9] Within this discussion of poetic form, a question arises: are the transformative "ethics of nomadic subjectivity" (*TP* 15), which I identify in the metaphor of the braid, at odds with the fixity of poetic form? Close inspection of Hacker's use of European, and increased use of eastern, forms proves that her formal conversations are neither restricted nor limited; rather, the limitations of form provide Hacker with the opportunity to converse freely with past, current, and future practitioners of these forms by sharing the creative experience of expression through them. To Hacker, poetic forms invite "close engagement" and often become "a kind of dialogue with its past and present uses and connotations" (Finch and Varnes 297). Writing with these forms provides her with the opportunity for politically and culturally progressive engagement with both western and eastern cultures.

Braidotti's Feminist Nomadic Subject

The feminist nomadic subject that Braidotti proposes offers a useful framework for addressing the complex tension between a nomadic subjectivity on the one hand and embodied and embedded locations and positions of power on the other in Hacker's work. Braidotti begins by defining a 'new' female subjectivity in *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy* (1991). "Feminism", as Braidotti describes, "has become a form of resistance to the One, against the vision of subjectivity that posits rationality as the dominant mode, in favour of the multiple, the plurality and multiplicity of women's discourse" (278). Here Braidotti is proposing a "set of interrelated 'situated knowledges'" (278), in contrast to a hegemonic or dominant model of thought in philosophical discourse that has its origins in phallogocentric structures. Nomadism has its roots in contemporary masculine, Eurocentric philosophy, mainly connected with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theoretical framework. In his translation of *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987)*,* Brian Massumi explains that "'nomad thought' does not immure itself in the edifice of an ordered interiority; it moves freely in an element of exteriority. It does not repose on identity; it rides difference. It . . . is

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[9] Hacker frequently uses Hayden Carruth's 'Paragraph Form' and her own invented forms, such as the one she uses for "Against Elegies" in *Winter Numbers* (1994).

immersed in a changing state of things" (xii). Braidotti proposes her version of nomadic subjectivity via Deleuze's model of the nomad:

> The nomad . . . is rather a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity. It expresses the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes without an essential unity. The nomadic subject, however, is not altogether devoid of unity: his mode is one of definite, seasonal patterns of movement through rather fixed routes. It is a cohesion engendered by repetitious, cyclical moves, rhythmic displacements. In this respect, I shall take the nomad as the prototype of the "man or woman of ideas" (Spender 1982); as Deleuze put it, the point of being an intellectual nomad is about crossing boundaries, about the act of going, regardless of the destination. (*NS* 52)

Braidotti explains that a ''figuration'' is not a metaphor, but rather "a living map" (10), a "materialistic mapping" of the self in its "situated, i.e. embedded and embodied, social positions" (4). Braidotti seeks to configure a parallel, feminist figuration of nomadism in her theoretical trilogy: *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (2011); *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (2002); and *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (2006). She posits herself as an example of this figuration: "My project of feminist nomadism traces more than an intellectual itinerary; it also reflects the existential situation as a multicultural individual, a migrant who turned nomad" (*NS* 21). As such, nomadism is not only a theoretical engagement for Braidotti, but also an "existential situation" that translates into a way "of negotiating with [her] many languages, acoustic resonances, and cultural affiliations" (Blaagaard and van der Tuin 235).

Braidotti traces nomadic subjectivity back to a mode of thinking that rejects the fixity of social norms that limit and dictate behaviour. She calls this "nomadic consciousness", as it implies "a form of political resistance to hegemonic, fixed, unitary, and exclusionary views of subjectivity" (*NS* 52). This subversive mode of thinking is not necessarily bound by travel, as "[n]ot all nomads are world travelers; some of the greatest trips can take place without physically moving from one's habitat" (28). This is an important feature of Braidotti's notion apparent in Hacker's early writing when she argues against the hegemony of free verse as a popular form in women's writing, which I examine further in Chapter One. Hacker resists the argument that open-form poetry accompanies progressive politics, while fixed forms imply a conservative stance, as

articulated in Adrienne Rich's 1976 letter to Hacker regarding her first two poetry collections. I read this resistance as a post-feminist stance that critically engages with the Anglo-American influences so powerful in the conceptualisation of second-wave feminist discourse. Thinking and writing, for Hacker, is an exercise in negotiating the tension between a woman-centred subject matter and fixed-form, a tension which she finds conducive to her finest writing (Finch, "An Interview").

Braidotti posits nomadic thinking as a critical consciousness that does not take any form of identity as stable but makes choices based on what the nomad deems necessary. In this respect, Hacker's "polyglot hybridity" (Ramazani x) – moving seamlessly in and out of English and French, and more recently Arabic – illustrates a nomadic consciousness in that her choice of language is meant to serve a specific poetic expression. As a person in between languages and cultures, Braidotti considers the polyglot as "a linguistic nomad" who understands the inconsistent, precarious nature of languages that "come and go, pursuing preset semantic trails, leaving behind acoustic, graphic, or unconscious traces" (*NS* 30). A nomad, therefore, is as much a multilingual individual as a multi-cultural one.

To imagine her figuration of a feminist nomadic subject, Braidotti structures her critical vision around a number of key concepts that this thesis explores in tandem with the different stages of Hacker's later literary output. Braidotti's first concept is "cartographic accuracy" (*PH* 164). "A cartography", according to Braidotti, "is a theoretically based and politically informed reading of the process of power relations. It fulfils the function of providing both exegetical tools and creative theoretical alternatives" (*NT* 4). Braidotti finds it useful because it addresses two essential factors of her work: "to account for one's locations in terms both of space (the geopolitical, social, and ecophilosophical dimension) and time (the historical and genealogical dimension)" (*NS* 4).

Braidotti also emphasises the need to find suitable representations for the mapping of these locations. Foucault's ideas about the body, power, and subjectivity inform her cartographic notion in the way that locations are both "restrictive" and "empowering" (*NS* 11). Margaret McLaren argues that the "social, relational, embodied subject embedded in specific cultural" and historical practices is useful for the goals of feminism (15). This philosophical mapping is helpful to understand how the postmastectomy body becomes an embodiment of one's ethnic and historical location,

such as when Hacker herself transforms the scar into a sign of ethnicity, bearing the mark of her breast cancer experience as well as the marks stamped on Holocaust victims. The geographical representation of the body connects female subjectivity to the body's ethnic identity in the way Braidotti defines subjectivity as a "socially mediated process . . . 'external' to the self while it also mobilizes the self's in-depth and singular structures" (*NS* 21).

Following from "cartographic accuracy" (*PH* 164), Braidotti's second concept in her theorization of nomadic subjectivity is a "corporeal materialism" of the subject that is sexually differentiated (*NS* 24-25). The methodology for this embodied subjectivity is the 'politics of location'. Thus, bodies and locations are the two starting points for Braidotti's conceptualization of nomadism. Stemming from the social movements of the late twentieth century, this "embodied materialism" (*NS* 15) paved the way for a shift away from the classical notion of the 'Human' towards a critical view of the diversity among women, as first articulated by Adrienne Rich's 'politics of location'. Rich originally developed her concept to articulate her awareness of power variances "within the category of sexual difference" (*NT* 216). She is conscious "that as marginal as white, Western women appear to be in relation to the real movers and shakers in this world – white men – there are others made marginal by white, Western women themselves" (Caren Kaplan, "The Politics of Location" 140). From a nomadic perspective, Rich's 'politics of location' is developed into a:

> cartographic method as well as a political tactic that aims at accounting for the diversity and complexity within any given category . . . The politics of locations combines epistemological with political accountability by concentrating its methodological efforts on the analysis of the multiple power locations one inevitably inhabits as the site of one's subjectivity. (*NS* 19)

Hacker's later work is examined through Braidotti's model of a 'politics of location' in the way Hacker negotiates her diverse and intersecting identity constructions, as explored in Chapter Three. Chapter Four examines in more detail how the diversity of her identities allows Hacker to move in-between centre and marginal subject positions, accounting for her "multiple power locations'' (NS 19). Braidotti considers such self-critical reflection as "the first methodological move toward a vision of subjectivity as ethically accountable and politically empowering" (*NT* 216).

Time and nomadic memory are both connected to the awareness of a person's embodied and embedded position. According to Braidotti:

> a location is an embedded and embodied memory: it is a set of countermemories, which are activated by the resisting thinker against the grain of the dominant representations of subjectivity. A location is a materialist temporal and spatial site of co-production of the subject, and thus anything but an instance of relativism. Locations provide the ground for accountability. (*NE* 29)

For Braidotti, a temporal sense of place is a corporeal memory in a mode of "countermemory", which she adopts from Foucault as politically activated "discourses of resistance" for "those who forget to forget injustice and symbolic poverty" (*NS* 54). Countermemories allow for the creation of a "historical memory of oppression" through tracing women's lineations: "[a] crucial element in this process is the sense of women's genealogies, which I read with Foucault as politically activated countermemories" (*NS* 89).

Echoing Braidotti's countermemory is Marianne Hirsch's theory of "postmemory", which "characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated" (*Family Frames* 22). Hirsch maintains that postmemory is an effective and specific kind of memory "because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation" (22). Although Hirsch's analysis is primarily concerned with the "children of Holocaust survivors, she also expands" (Vees-Gulani 125) it to "second-generation memories of cultural or collective" trauma (qtd. in Berger 150). Along with countermemories, Hirsch's postmemory is useful to Hacker's exploration of memory because it is an "intergenerational act of adoption and identification" ("Projected Memory" xii) that is closely connected through familial or group relation, here specifically with Hacker's Jewish European grandmother, Gísela, acting as her connection to Jewish history. Chapter Three examines how both forms of memory – Braidotti's and Hirsch's – provide opportunities for preserving memories of trauma not through recollection, but through imaginative recreation from a deep and personal connection.

In addition to the 'politics of location', re-examining the embodiment of

subjectivity is the other basis for Braidotti's nomadic project. This proposition starts ''by defending female feminist specificity in terms of a new, relational mode of thought'' (*PD* 282). Braidotti draws on T. de Lauretis's new understanding of the female subject to support her project:

> What is emerging in feminist writings is . . . the concept of a multiple, shifting, and often self-contradictory identity, a subject that is not divided in, but rather at odds with language; an identity made up of heterogeneous and heteronomous representations of gender, race and class, and often indeed across languages and cultures; an identity that one decides to reclaim from a history of multiple assimilations, and one that insists on as strategy. (12)

Braidotti's view of the multiplicity of the female subject draws on French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray's view of the feminine as "a complex and mulitlayered location and not an immutable and given essence" (*NS* 91). Irigaray, as Tina Chanter notes, "brings the body back into play, not as the rock of feminism, but as a mobile set of differences" (qtd. in *NS* 87). Braidotti acknowledges Irigaray's contribution to a feminist version of nomadism in "combining issues of embodiment with an acute awareness of complexity and multiplicity and defend[ing] a nonunitary vision of the subject in general and of the feminine in particular" (92).[10] As such, this new feminine subjectivity revalorises embodiment as the lived experience of the female subject and "gives a positive value to the embodied self as a material-symbolic agent of change" (*PD* 282). As such, Braidotti's reconceptualisation of nomadism stresses the origins of corporeality: ''I stress the issue of embodiment so as to make a plea for different ways of thinking about the body. The body refers to the materialist but also vitalist groundings of human subjectivity'' (*NS* 27).

Emphasizing the importance of embodiment and the differentiated nature of the subject, there is potential for a feminist nomadic project, as Braidotti argues. "Braidotti's feminist appropriation of the Deleuzian model", according to Małgorzata Myk, "emerges as nomadism with a (sexual) difference that aims at acknowledging an alternative form of a hybrid and adaptable subjectivity while accounting for women's lived embodied existence" (94). Braidotti's feminist nomadic subject is an empowering figuration that,

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[10] Braidotti cites other feminist theorists who have also contributed to diverse representations of feminine subjectivity as mentioned in *Nomadic Subjects* p. 26.

through the articulation of gender differences, can serve the "process of reclaiming a political subjectivity for women'' (Richerme 90), and as such helps make clear the different dimensions and phases of Hacker's commitment.

As Chapter Three shows, Hacker's braid arises from the "overlap between the physical, symbolic, and the sociological" (*NS* 127) that Braidotti's notion of embodiment proposes. "A nomadic vision of the body", as Braidotti argues, "defines it as multi-functional and complex, as a transformer of flows and energies, affects, desires and imaginings" (*NS* 27). Similarly, the braid is an embodied, multi-layered, and complex structure that moves across boundaries of time and space, connecting the female body to the social, historical, and political. Braidotti draws on Deleuze and Guattari's figuration of the rhizome to signify nomadic consciousness and the movement of the feminist nomadic subject.

It is important to understand what the rhizome is in order to understand how it is useful to Braidotti. The rhizome is a root that grows parallel to the earth's surface. Deleuze and Guattari explain that the rhizome is a "subterranean stem [that] is absolutely different from roots" (6). They show that the rhizome is different from the vertical "tree diagram that has dominated humanist theories of sociality and subjectivity" (de Freitas 592). Deleuze and Guattari adopt the rhizome because of the stems' movement in a nonphallogocentric way as opposed to the movement and system of the roots. This expresses a subversive form of thinking that is "secret, lateral spreading as opposed to the visible, vertical ramifications of Western trees of knowledge" (*NS* 52). As Braidotti explains, Deleuze is challenging the "dominant paradigm of linguistic mediation" in a move towards a "nonunitary, radically materialist and dynamic structure of subjectivity" ("Affirming the Affirmative"). In Braidotti's adaptation of the rhizome, the "rhizome stands for a nomadic political ontology that . . . provides relational foundations for a posthumanist view of subjectivity" (*NS* 52). Nomadic consciousness, like the rhizome, works against dominant premises.

Braidotti's figuration of the nomadic subject, however, is different from the rhizome. Like the rhizome, the figuration of the nomadic subject is characterised by connection. However, the rhizome according to Deleuze and Guattari plots "no points" or fixed "positions"; "there are only lines" (8), creating the image of an "open system" (x). In other words, it has no main point, or rather, every point is main, as "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other" (7). This means that the ''rhizome is an

anti-genealogy" (11). Deleuze and Guattari contrast a genealogy with the metaphor of the map. To them, a map is "detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification" (2). This stands in contrast to Braidotti's cartographic method of acknowledging differences that is conducive to tracing "female embodied-genealogies" (*NS* 51). For Braidotti, "[g]enealogies constitute a cumulative scale of female embodied and embedded experience that, for [her], are a symbolic legacy" (89). Braidotti also cites Irigaray's attention to "the maternal roots of genealogies in order to locate them in feminist political practice, the starting point for which is the enfleshed location of the body" (89). Consequently, ''the rhizome is a map and not a tracing" (Deleuze and Guattari 2), while figurations "express materially embedded cartographies of different nomadic subjects" (*NS* 11).

Braidotti's work on nomadism and nomadic subjects as a way to understand the human condition "amidst the transmutations of the capitalist present and especially its massive production of disposable forms of life" ("Posthuman, all too human") led her to the concept of the posthuman. She explains that the posthuman condition

> clearly displays inhumane features in that it introduces ruthless power relations. Globalisation encompasses many dire aspects, such as increase in poverty, especially among women, the disparity in access to the new technologies, world migration and massive human mobility . . . there are also renewed forms of vulnerability for the human body. For example, epidemics have returned in the form of Ebola, TB, and HIV . . . Wars and the uprooting of millions of people who turn into stateless asylum seekers are constant features of our social landscape.
> (''The Posthuman Predicament" 74-75)

The "posthuman turn" in critical theory, according to Braidotti, conflates two bodies of theory. The first is poststructuralist ''anti-humanism'', which focuses "on the critique of the humanist ideal of 'Man' as the universal representative of the human"; the second is ''anti-anthropocentrism'', which "criticizes species hierarchy and advances ecological justice" ("Posthuman Feminist Theory" 673-4). In her work, Braidotti defines the posthuman subject

> within an eco-philosophy of multiple belongings, as a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity, that is to say a subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated, but still grounded and accountable. Posthuman subjectivity expresses an embodied and embedded and hence partial form of accountability, based on a strong

sense of collectivity, relationality and hence community building. (*PH* 49)

Braidotti explains that the radical critiques of humanism from "post-colonial, and critical race theory, and especially feminist critique, illuminate how certain kinds of bodies have historically been excluded from the category of 'Human'" (Wiet). These ''other modes of embodiment that are cast out of the subject position'' are the ''non-white, non-masculine, non-normal, non-young, nonhealthy, disabled, malformed or enhanced peoples" (*PH* 68). Braidotti calls this marginalisation of other forms of embodiment a "dialectics of negative difference" and criticises it as being "inherently anthropocentric, gendered and racialized in that it upholds aesthetic and moral ideals based on white, masculine, heterosexual European civilization" (68). "The posthuman body is", as Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston explain, "a technology, a screen, a projected image; it is a body under the sign of AIDS, a contaminated body, a deadly body, a techno-body" (3).

In this respect, Hacker's aging, postmastectomy and scarred body is viewed as a posthuman body that is of the "posthumanities", not of the category "Human" (3). Her posthuman condition shows her evoking her breast cancer experience to connect with other victims of history and illnesses, which I will highlight throughout this thesis. According to Stephen Katz and Barbara Marshall, "the defining characteristic of the posthuman body is its connectedness, not only to reproductive technologies, intelligent machines, and prosthetic extensions, but also to changing informational patterns" (6). However, posthuman bodies cannot show signs of age and aging if they are to be connected. If biotechnology creates "posthuman bodies that are never really born and cannot die" (Katz and Marshall 6), then they are "not necessarily bound by time either" (6). However, theorists of age/aging find potential in conversations with posthuman studies. Cynthia Port argues, "[i]n a scholarly context that is increasingly turning to the posthuman . . . explorations of the embodied experience of age and its cultural resonances offer crucial insights into the uniquely human awareness of the experience of living through time" (2014).

To understand the posthuman condition, Braidotti argues for a ''new materialism and nomadic subjectivity that [she] revisits with the feminist politics of locations'' (''Posthuman, all too human'' 2017). Hacker engages with the posthuman predicament through her political concerns which have taken her through the course of her oeuvre

from New York to Paris, and recently to a poetic engagement with the political conflicts in the Middle East. She illustrates a feminist 'politics of location' through accounting for her country's injustices towards the rest of the world; this concept is explored in Chapter Four. Moving beyond the perceived problems of the posthuman predicament, Braidotti finds potential in the posthuman condition. She draws on "Baruch Spinoza's concept of monism as a basis for an affirmative ethical, political project of sexual difference" ("Posthuman, all too human"), which she refers to as "the affirmation of the positivity of difference" (*PH* 11).

The posthuman, for Braidotti, is a way of reconfiguring the human that is conceptualised in different ways. For some it is a "return to some form of neo-humanism coupled with human enhancement - another mode of participation in the posthuman turn. For others, it's about a downsizing of human arrogance coupled with acknowledgement of solidarity with multiple others" ("Posthuman, all too human"). She explains that we are subjects in the action of becoming other than the Renaissance Man of Humanism and the "anthropos" of anthropocentricism. Ultimately, Braidotti describes her posthuman subject as "We-are-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-One kind of subject", articulating a complex, non-binary view of subjectivity ("Posthuman, all too human").

In Braidotti's article ''Becoming-World'' from *After Cosmopolitanism* (2013), she proposes a "radical mutation" of "cosmopolitanism" by renouncing the "unitary vision of the subject" and embracing diversity to account for the political and social reality of our world (9). Her proposal encapsulates my argument of Hacker's affirmative engagement with history and politics as an accountable, nonunitary, and relational nomadic subject. Braidotti writes:

> Beyond unitary visions of the self and teleological renditions of the processes of subject-formation, a nomadic cosmopolitan philosophy can sustain the contemporary subjects in the efforts to relate more actively to the changing world in which they try to make a positive difference. Against the established tradition of methodological nationalism, a different image of thought can be activated that rejects Euro-universalism and trusts instead the powers of diversity. It also enlists affectivity, memory and the imagination to the crucial task of inventing new figurations and new ways of representing the complex subjects we have become. The key method is an ethics of respect for diversity that produces mutually interdependent nomadic subjects and thus constitutes communities across multiple locations and generations. This humble

project of being worthy of the present world while also resisting it aims at constructing together social horizons of hope and sustainability. It expresses an evolutionary talent, that is to say a commonly shared commitment to social infrastructures of generosity, which might enable 'us' to be affirmatively in *this* together. (24-25)

Hacker as a Transcultural Writer

To understand the transcultural engagement in Hacker's later work, it is important to differentiate between these two phenomena: transculturalism and nomadism. Transculturalism, according to Arianna Dagnino, is "the cultural dimension and orientation (a mode of cultural identity) and the imaginary or literary horizon that characterizes nomadism" (*Transcultural Writers* 104). Dagnino notes that it is a means of identity construction that for the most part derives from a physical and cultural life-experience in transit. In her essay, "Transculturalism and Transcultural Literature in the 21st Century" (2012), Dagnino summarises the main tenets of transculturalism to include

> a refusal to think of cultures as pure and holistic essences: cultures are not seen as fixed (stable), autonomous and insular (separate) entities located exclusively or mainly in the context of ethnicities or nations but as hybrid formations characterized by interconnectedness, permeation and ongoing transforming dialogues between/among them . . . the focus on human agency, "with an affirmative position by the individual" (Banauch 2009: 188) and the right of personal cultural choices, allegiances, plural affiliations and multiple, multi-layered identities . . . a cosmopolitan approach which does not deny the relevance of one's primary cultural and national origins but does not accept the oppositional dynamics of fixed, self-enclosed cultural, ethnic and national identities/ allegiances. (36-37)

Dagnino argues that the nomadic, or "neonomadic", as she terms it, way of life, thought, and consciousness is "conducive to the modes of expression of a transcultural orientation and imaginary" (*Transcultural Writers* 3). Although Hacker has lived between New York and Paris most of her life, it is not sufficient, according to Dagnino, "to have lived in many countries to acquire a (neo)nomadic penchant; it all depends on one's disposition towards a certain errant status, a certain way of interacting with other people, other cultures, other mental geographies" ("Contemporary Transcultural" 97). Hacker's ethnic articulation of "an unimportant Jew / who lives in exile" articulates a conceptual, emotional and psychological rootlessness that runs through her earlier

poetry and that has echoes of the metaphor of the Jew's exile in literature.

The nomad, however, is not always in a state of movement: they need temporary periods of stability and chances for retrospective thinking to grasp their nomadic subjectivity. Braidotti explains that she was only able to contemplate nomadism through the stability of a permanent job and a happy marriage. Similarly, Hacker was not able to understand the connections in her life until she started living permanently in Paris in 1989 and tried to reconnect to her Jewish roots there. As she explains, "it's almost making imaginary roots for myself in Europe, where my people came from" (Gardinier 1). This sense of belonging transfers Hacker from a state voluntary exile to voluntary nomad, or "hypernomad", as Jacques Attali terms it, namely "a constitutionally peripatetic class of creative individuals whose discoveries and art works influence their sedentary counterparts" (Dagnino, "Contemporary Transcultural" 97).

As Dagnino notes, in the field of literary studies the traditional notion of "'migrant writers' is giving way to a new category of mobile, postnational transcultural writers" (99). Jahan Ramazani indicates that "cross-national migration and modernity's geospatial stretch have been affected and reimagined by modern and contemporary poets" (xi). "Modern Western culture", according to Edward Said, "is in large part the work of exiles, émigrés, and refugees" (qtd. in Ramazani 24), which may include contemporaries like John Ashbery and Hacker as well. These exiles and émigrés, Ramazani explains, "translated their frequent geographic displacement and transcultural alienation into a poetics of dissonance and defamiliarization, and this hybrid and strange-making art also defies the national literary genealogies into which it is often pressed" (25). Dagnino describes these writers as

> imaginative writers who, by choice or by life circumstances, experience cultural dislocation, live transnational experiences, cultivate bilingual/pluri-lingual proficiency, physically immerse themselves in multiple cultures/geographies/territories, expose themselves to diversity and nurture plural, flexible identities. (*Transcultural Writers* 1)

It is at this point in Hacker's oeuvre that much of her work begins to take on a transcultural orientation as it is shaped and informed by her translations of French and Francophone poetry. I read Hacker as a transcultural writer in that she promotes and engages with a wider multicultural literary landscape, initially through her translations

and later through her use of eastern forms and poetic collaborations. Broadly understood as an "interlingual, literary, and transcultural practice", Ignacio Infante notes that translation is "closely related to the transatlantic circulation of modern poetics" (1). As such, Hacker's translations are primary and essential for an understanding of her personal and poetic cross-cultural exchanges, which engage her with other literary traditions, different languages, and cultures.

Feminist history and literature have been increasingly engaged in investigating transnational and transcultural connections across national, geographical, and cultural borders, as well as exploring women's materialistic experiences in many different geographical and historical settings. However, Caren Kaplan argues that women's creative practices have not have not addressed the spaces that separate cultures. The practice exists as a cross-cultural effort that attempts to address the racialized and gendered representations of oppression, yet it does not interact with people and cultures beyond these borders. Addressing the differences in power based on race, ethnicity, and faith is more effective when its purpose is to show resistance to hegemonic narratives of distress. Kaplan warns of "hegemonic formations" that persist in the field of transnational conversations:

> We should be suspicious of any use of the term to naturalize boundaries and margins under the guise of celebration, nostalgia, or inappropriate assumptions of intimacy. A politics of location is also problematic when it is deployed as an agent of appropriation, constructing similarity through equalizations when material histories indicate otherwise. Only when we utilize the notion of location to destabilize unexamined or stereotypical images that are vestiges of colonial discourse and other manifestations of modernity's structural inequalities can we recognize and work through the complex relationships between women in different parts of the world. ("The Politics of Location" 139)

Therefore, in analysing and theorising "difference" in the context of feminist cross-cultural work, what kind of feminist practice acknowledges the diversity of feminisms within a framework of transnational movements? Most transnational theorists discuss this definitional issue by excluding homogenising terms such as "global feminism" and "international feminism", which they argue have "elided the diversity of women's agency in favour of a universalized Western model of women's liberation that celebrates individuality" (Grewal and Caren Kaplan 17). Manisha Desai notes that

"academic feminism is increasingly transnational" as a result of "global feminist movements" (333). She explains that writers prefer the new articulation "transnationalism" to "global" because "it does not claim the presence of all nations"; rather, it describes "the presence of activists, organizations, and issues from more than one country" (334). Ramazani explains that his use of "transnational is meant to highlight flows and affiliations not among static national identities, as sometimes suggested by 'international,' but across the borders of nation-states, regions, and cultures" (181).

However, Hacker complicates Ramazani's transnational paradigm by moving beyond both cultures – her native and adopted – to the cultures of the Middle East. Therefore, the inclusionary notion of "transculturalism" that Dagnino espouses by drawing on Mikhail Epstein's "transculture" is more suitable to Hacker's complex and lived experience ("Transculture" 327). Epstein describes the "dissolv[ing] [of] the solidity of one's natural identity and to share the experience of 'the other'" as "transculturalism" (340). For Epstein, "transculture" is "the site of interaction among all existing and potential cultures" and of a transcultural dimension which "lies not apart from, but within all cultures, like a multidimensional space that appears gradually over the course of historical time. It is a continuous space in which unrealized, potential elements are no less meaningful than 'real' ones" ("Culture" 299). Epstein argues that a transcultural identity frees "fixed cultural identities based on race, ethnos, religion, or ideological commitments" ("Transculture" 328).

Epstein's argument is based on the consideration of "difference", as "differences complement each other and create a new interpersonal community to which we belong, not because we are similar but because we are different" (328). There are, however, moral considerations: does Hacker's distance from these political events allow her to engage with these diverse voices and narrate their struggles? Epstein takes a transcultural approach and argues that "it is not only our aesthetic right but in fact our moral duty to go beyond our biographical identity in an attempt to speak (and listen) on behalf of cultures other than our own" (345). The hegemonic overtones of Epstein's words are balanced out by the ''transpersonal and transcultural dissemination of authorship'' (345) that characterise Hacker's poetic collaborations. In light of this discussion on transculturalism, I believe that this emerging transcultural space provides writers the opportunity to move beyond an essentialised and limited approach to

literature imposed by each separate culture.

Conceptualising the 'Braid'

The importance of Hacker's use of the braid in her later work is best understood alongside an examination of other spatial metaphors used in feminist discourse. Spinning and weaving are common metaphors that have long been used to describe female practices and activities. "Figures of women at the loom and needle, women weaving, crones spinning'', according to Susan Friedman, ''these became central tropes of women's creativity during the rise and heyday of second-wave feminist theory and criticism in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s" ("Weavings" 215). With feminists like Mary Daly and Adrienne Rich being drawn to such traditional feminine images, these metaphors serve to express how female experience can be both exterior and interior in the way they are woven together.[11] These images, Kathryn Kruger notes, "portray women weavers transforming their domestic activity of making textiles into one of making texts by inscribing their cloth with both personal and political messages" (13). Weaving as a metaphor and textile language, however, are not as closely related to the body, especially the female body, as the metaphor of braiding, which suggests the relationship between creative practice and biological experience.

The metaphor of the palimpsest has also been used in women's writing to suggest multiplicity and movement back-and-forth, from 'here' to 'there'. Layers of human experience are created that point to a sense of continuity between past and present, public and private, as in H.D.'s palimpsestic treatment of the contemporary, mythical and the historical through city space (Skoulding 13-16). The palimpsest in Hacker's work identifies open, public spaces of detached exploration, loaded with meaning while extremely anonymous. As the palimpsest suggests a sense of time – past and present texts at once – through a layering of place in urban space, Hacker employs it to explore how moments from the past are related to events in the present. In "Street Scenes II" from *Winter Numbers* (1994), the urban space is closely related to the archaeological excavation of ethnic heritage; this closeness is accomplished when the

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[11] Kerstin Shands notes that Mary Daly employs images of "spirals and water". For Adrienne Rich, "the female body is metaphorised as a house and poetry as a place" (30).

new Tunisian Jews of present day Paris are seen on a temporal palimpsest of the French
Jews of the 1942 Vel d'Hiv roundup.

The key to this palimpsestic layering is in Hacker's emphasis on "the street" as
both the hub of activity in urban space and the witness of both time and the city's
inhabitants as in "Canzone" from *Desesperanto* (2005). The street's structure resembles
the palimpsest's horizontal layering, and it functions as a temporal "palimpsest / of
hours, days, months and years that came before" (21), as Hacker describes in "Glose"
from *Names* (2010). The palimpsest is an incorporeal form useful to Hacker to access a
time and a place that is historically relevant but personally ambiguous. Structurally, the
palimpsest and the image/practice of weaving share the category of mixing, where the
mixing does not obliterate the distinct strands or layers; however, the palimpsest is
based on a process of layering rather than a simultaneous plaiting of different strands.

Deleuze and Guattari's figuration of the rhizome is a useful way of thinking about
the multiplicity of thought and movement; however, the braid's structural and spatial
characteristics are different from the rhizome in two important ways. First, although
both are organic forms, the rhizome does "not have the central trunk of the tree" to
grow from, like "roots and branches" (Munday 43). Rather, it "mov[es] between the
roots", implying that it is always "on the outside" with no origin or purpose (43), it "has
no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*"
(Deleuze and Guattari 25). In contrast, the braid grows from the central location of the
body and enacts nonlinear movements in a specific pattern that gives it directional and
teleological purpose, suggesting both fixed and flowing strands of signification. Second,
this connection to the body creates a single structure that metaphorically connects to
one's origins. In this respect, the braid considers how some memories and feelings are
produced from childhood and past experiences, while the "rhizome is not amenable to
any structural or generative model. It is a stranger to any idea of genetic axis or deep
structure" (2).

In addition, the braid differs from the rhizome in growth and movement in a
number of ways. First, "rhizomes grow by a process of cloning or lateral spreading"
(Munday 43); they are "characterised by the line as opposed to the point, by intensity
rather than structure" (43) as a "rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but
it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" (Deleuze and Guattari 10).
Because hair normally grows downward, the braid moves in a vertical direction,

uninterrupted and unseparated, suggesting the continuity and interconnectivity of identity and experience. Second, the rhizome is "flat" and spreads in gaps and available spaces; the "dimensions of this 'plane'" expand with the "number of connections that are made on it" (9). In contrast, the braid is an embodied structure endowed with past and present, physical and emotional experiences. Third, while the rhizome's movement erodes its path and leaves no trace behind, the braid engages with form, creating a pattern as it is plaited and leaving a different pattern behind when the strands are undone, suggesting the effect can be undone but not completely removed. Fourth, the rhizome is considered in its group form, such as "grass and the ant colony" (Munday 51), while the braid is thought of in terms of its individual strands and its coherent structure, suggesting both individual and group identity.

Hence, when thinking about gender, writing, and the body in Hacker's writing, the relationship is imagined in terms of a three-dimensional "materialism of the embodied and embedded kind" (Braidotti, *NS* 129). It is a nonunitary conception of a multiple female self, identifiable as "self" and "selves", "self" and "other", subject and object, not simultaneously, but in alternating voices, and mediated through language and imaginary constructions. In this respect, Hacker's writing is viewed from the lens of Braidotti's feminist nomadism in its ''capacity to be both grounded and to flow and thus to transcend the very variables— class, race, sex, gender, age, disability— that structure us" (*NS* 27). With the metaphor of the braid held in tension between the female body and the political body, we can see the possibility for a different kind of association of events that takes the body as the site of accountability for its spatiotemporal and geopolitical locations. Hacker employs the braid as metaphor for a redefined, feminist, and body-oriented creative writing.

From her seventh collection onwards, Hacker evokes the metaphor of the braid using the verb "braided" and the noun "braid". The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the noun 'braid' as a form: ''A plait of human hair''; and the verb 'braid' to convey a technique: ''To twist in and out, intertwine, interweave, plait; to embroider; to make (a garland, cord, fabric) by intertwining, twisting, or plaiting'' ("Braid"). In its figurative sense, the noun is "[a]pplied by the poets to things that show or suggest interweaving of colours, or embroidery, esp. to the prismatic colouring of the rainbow" ("Braid"). As such, two discrete characteristics of the braid emerge from these definitions. First, the braid's structure and process. Second, the braid as a female activity.

As an object, the braid presents several characteristics. First, the braid has an intricate diagonal structure; it is not simply a linear, one-layered structure. Second, it is a complex process of intertwining many separate strands that come in and out of focus and that are not necessarily of equal thickness and value. Third, it is not a static figure; it is a process of repetition and continuation that enables growth and development, moving forward chronologically in time, yet still connected firmly to its source; striking a balance between adhering to the matrix and negotiating a new set of environmental and cultural circumstances. Fourth, the strands are made from organic matter that is dead with no nerve endings. Therefore, it is bodily matter that has no feeling. It also leaves the body, regularly, as it sheds. Ultimately, the braid in its growth suggests life, and in its dead fibres suggests death. It is a metaphor that paradoxically embodies life and death at the same time, both themes that are in constant tension throughout Hacker's work.

Braiding hair creates a solace network in female communities. Inherently feminine, the braid evokes a communality in the act of braiding. A female culture of communication is created when women gather around to braid their stories and experiences as they take turns twisting and intertwining each other's hair with the utmost precision and attention to detail. The bonding that develops from this act is durable yet accommodating like the tensile strength of the hair. In the closeness of the strands, the braid is a sign of intimacy between these women and, as it is held by different hands, becomes a physical form of interconnectivity. Hacker attempts to capture this sense of community and female culture when she writes about how women's ''lives are braided together'' in ''Year's End'' from *Winter Numbers* (1994).

For Hacker, the body is central to the image of the braid, which she conceptualises within the context of an embodied female genealogy. In the poem "Squares and Courtyards", from the collection *Squares and Courtyards* (2000), Hacker writes the following:

> . . . Speech and touch invoked
> my grandmother, the bookkeeper from Prague,
> who died as I emerged out of the fog
> of infancy, while lives dispersed in smoke
> above the camps (and Dresden, and Japan)
> and with them, someone else I might have been
> if memory braided with history. (43)

The last two lines of the above quote, which this thesis takes its title from, show the speaker attempting to create a connection with her past. The conditional "if" highlights the lack of connection between "memory" and "history", but at the same time "if" creates a tension in the contingency for the possibility of this connection. It is a problematic situation, as the speaker has no recollection of history as she was spared the horror of war because her Jewish grandparents were not there to witness them. Time and geography separate her from this "history" that is not hers to claim. In a 1993 letter to Hayden Carruth, Hacker bemoans the difficulty of identifying with poetry of historical tragedies:

> Most poetry about "events far away" doesn't work (for me, at least) – I could never respond more than politically to Denise Levertov's Vietnam poems, or to June Jordan's poems about the Palestinians:[12] I was always painfully aware that the poet hadn't been there: I was looking at "color photographs of the atrocities".[13]

In these words lies the key to Hacker's use of the metaphor of the braid. She is unable to "respond more than politically" to Levertov's and Jordan's poems because, simply, "the poet hadn't been there". In other words, the poets did not witness these tragedies themselves; they were "witnesses-through-imagination" (Kremer 8), leaving the reader with a third-hand experience of the events. Reading their poems felt like "color photographs of the atrocities" to Hacker, not personal renderings. Thus, the speaker in the poem is aware and unwilling to create a personal account of the Holocaust by providing a third-hand narration. Nevertheless, she posits a situation as it "might have been", which echoes Adrienne Rich's contemplation: "Had I survived Prague, Amsterdam, or Lódz and the railway stations for which they were deportation points, I would be somebody else . . . Or I might be in no body at all" ("NP" 216). While Rich does not develop these ethnic inquisitions, Hacker pursues imaginary roots for herself in Europe through her grandmother from Prague. Tracing a female genealogy using the corporeal metaphor of the braid, in an act of connecting her "memory" to her

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[12] Unlike Levertov, Jordan visited Lebanon twice, once in 1982 to "Palestinian refugee camps after the massacre of Sabra and Shatilla", and again in 1996 after a UN refugee camp was attacked by Israel (Saliba 2016). I believe that Hacker is implying that Jordan was not there when the massacres happened.
[13] Hacker, letter to Hayden Carruth. 17 Feb. 1993. Box 73, Folder 30. HCP.

grandmother's "history", the poet imagines being "someone else", a Jew in Europe. She has crossed the spatiotemporal obstacle of "events far away" through the embodied metaphor of the braid that links her body to her grandmother's and creates a corporeal, personal, and filial relationship with the tragedies of her people.

Elizabeth Grosz is another theorist of materiality who is useful in understanding the connection between body and space in Hacker's work. In the way she examines the relationship between bodies and cities, Grosz sees the relationship between the body and the social relations as not an inflexible one; rather, it is a "two-way" relationship of "interface" that proposes "the practical productivity bodies and cities have in defining each other" (*Space, Time, and Perversion* 301). The act of "cobuilding" suggested by the concept of "interface" clarifies how, for example, the speaker in "Squares and Courtyards" exists in symbiotic relationship with urban space, each constituted as separate entities that are nonetheless necessary to each other. However, this notion does not justify why this speaker establishes this connection with the physical and material location of the Parisian square that has historical as well as ethnic connotations to the speaker. The cultural and historical context, as well as where Hacker locates herself politically, is imperative to understanding what the braid signifies in her human, political, and literary conversations.

Grosz limits the body to being "socially inscribed" ("Notes Towards" 2) while, as Braidotti notes, "it is disembedded from contextual, historical, and geopolitical concerns" (*MB* 106). Braidotti concedes that

> though issues of corporeality are thematically central to her [Grosz's] corpus, they suffer from a systematic neglect of the geo-politics of their own power-locations. In this sense, I consider Grosz as a utopian writer, caught in the 'no-place' and the 'not-yet' of poststructuralist theories of difference and quite contented with this position. (106)

Therefore, as a politically and historically based theory, nomadism is a relevant and useful framework for approaching the innovative way Hacker develops the braid as a key metaphor for a dialogue with personal and collective history. The interconnections that the braid creates are conducive to transcultural affiliations and the politics of an engagement with different cultural narratives. In choosing the form of the braid, Hacker brings into play communicative associations and interpersonal expectations. It offers her a template to work from where she may satisfy the feminist theme by using it to

connect women; modify it to connect different aspects of the female self, past and present, public and private; or subvert it by adopting the plant form of the braid, 'a braid of garlic', to connect diverse cultures. Particularly, for a formalist poet such as Hacker, the braid allows her the tension of both movement and fixity that she finds useful to her creative practice. For a woman poet, the braid offers the benefit of creating a female community alongside the continuity of a female formal inheritance.

Hacker's use of the metaphorical braid first occurs in "Year's End", from her collection *Winter Numbers* (1994), where she meditates on women's struggles with cancer and the interconnectivity of women's experiences and relationships: "how lives are braided / how those women's deaths and lives, lived and died, were / interleaved also" (75). This collection marks the shift in focus from the body as the active agent of love, depicted in her previous collections, to the body as the site of historical and ethnic identity. She evokes the braid again in the title poem, ''Squares and Courtyards'' (2000), to explore an embodied space that connects personal to collective history: "if memory braided with history" (43). The exploration of Jewish identity reappears in the same poem when Hacker imagines a Jewish schoolgirl across the street at her window writing and "chewing her braid / tracing our labyrinthine / fragments" of memory (44).

In *Diaspo/Renga* (2014), Hacker engages in a political, cultural and literary braiding of voices using the Japanese renga form. Her collaborator, Deema Shehabi, responds to Hacker's first renga with "Oh outspread Indian nation / Let's braid our hair / with the pulverized / gravel of Palestine" (9). Hacker's choice of the renga suggests that the structure of the poem shapes and resonates with the cross-cultural dialogue and illustrates the many struggles of political victims as new voices and stories are folded in the narrative. At times decoration and at others a cooking ingredient, a garlic-braid in the Middle East signifies Hacker's elegiac tribute to Mahmoud Darwish in "A Braid of Garlic": "In a basket hung from the wall, its handle / Festooned with cloth flowers from chocolate boxes, / mottled purple shallots, and looped beside it, / A braid of garlic" (104). The liminal yet central position of the braid suggests both her central and marginalised identities, which she uses to connect to her Anglophone reading public and other politically and culturally marginalised groups.

Hacker's use of the braid reflects interconnectivity, complexity and affinity, which are sources of her political, social, and historical dialogues. The braid is useful in allowing Hacker to think through how different voices intertwine with her own voice

and experience and to connect different themes. The braid helps to sort out complicated emotions, values, and locations that may seem contradictory but can be productive when brought together, as in Braidotti's positive view of how "the nomadic subject negotiates successfully the complex tension between the multiplicity of political forces on the one hand and the sustained commitment to emancipatory politics on the other" (Baraitser 125).

A Survey of Hacker's Shifting Poetics

The nomadic state that defines Hacker's nonlinear mode of thinking, living-in-transition, and changing relationship to language finds its roots in her early life and work. Growing up as a second-generation American Jew in an ethnic-working-class borough of New York City, Hacker had a sense of multiple cultural and ethnic belongings. In addition to ethnicity, Hacker was equally aware of gender and its limitations, as her mother had a PhD in psychology and worked in a job far below her intellectual capacity. As Hacker explains, "She was told she couldn't go to medical school because she was a woman and a Jew. So she became a teacher in the New York City public school system" (qtd. in Campo, "About Marilyn Hacker" 195). Marrying African-American science fiction novelist Samuel R. Delany when she was eighteen made Hacker alert to issues of race. Moreover, it indicates her resistance to mainstream conceptions of relationships in the 1960s, moving across established social categories in a progressive act at a time when interracial relationships were rare and miscegenation laws existed in only two States.[14]

Her work during the 1960s and 1970s shows clear signs of changes in poetic form and subject matter that parallel her movement across America and the Atlantic. While she was in New York, her early modernist poetics showed an influence of modernist poets like Hart Crane (Reed 81); when she moved to San Francisco in 1965, she joined a group of poets who followed Jack Spicer and she espoused their aesthetics (Gardinier 5);[15] her move to London in 1970 saw her experimenting with revising myths (Ostriker 89) in the poems she sent to journals in America and Britain, such as the *London Magazine* and the *New American Review*. Although her work during these

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[14] Hacker's tense relationship with her mother became more stressed after Hacker married Delany.
[15] Before moving to San Francisco, Hacker lived alone for four months in Mexico.

years derives mostly from the male literary tradition, there was a "feminist consciousness in the work", as Hacker explains, "but in what you might call the imaginative dimension – in what's imagined about other lives, and past lives, and historical lives" (Dresser 50-51). In 1976, she returned to the U.S. for a teaching fellowship at George Washington University, when second-wave feminism was at its peak. The women's movement provided Hacker with the cultural context to become freer and bolder as a feminist, and to write a feminist poetics about real people and places and women's relationships. As she divided her time between America and France, Hacker began to lead a woman-centred life, and the themes of loneliness, isolation, and exile that characterised her first two collections, namely *Presentation Piece* (1974) and *Separations* (1976), shifted towards an integration of feeling and form in *Taking Notice* (1980), as she worked to express her own experiences through language and to find her own forms for expression. Chapter One examines this shift. Her earlier writing shows Hacker engaging more with women's issues in general and with feminism in particular. Parallel to her geographical and emotional move, there is a shift in her poetic diction towards informal and colloquial constructions as she attempts to bring new energy to the sonnet sequence (Reed 82).

These nomadic movements in Hacker's early life and work therefore illustrate a state of settling in between cultures and countries while paradoxically creating temporary stable and structural bases using formal poetry, a practice that allows her to maintain dialogues with the histories of the form and the poets who wrote with them. These diverse experiences prove positive for Hacker, as she is able to affiliate her feminist poetics with different literary traditions and political stances. Braidotti argues that, "the nomadic state has the potential for positive renaming, for opening up new possibilities of life and thought, especially for women and, even more specifically, for female feminists" (*NS* 29).

When Hacker became a permanent resident in Paris in 1989, she had her first experience of translating Claire Malroux's French poetry at a conference in Grenoble. After the conference, she was taken with Malroux's poem and the experience of translation and continued to work on it when she returned to Paris. The birth of the poem "Last Truths" in English led to Malroux and Hacker's 1996 book-length poetry publication called *Edge*. Having succeeded with this first book of translations, Hacker was drawn to translate the poetry of other French and Francophone poets, a transition

that reflects a literary and political shift in her ideology, as she explains in a 2010 interview with Ruth O'Callaghan:

> It is because of the relative success of literary feminism in the United States and, I think I can safely say, in the Anglophone world in general, that I now feel free to hesitate at positing a separate 'female' line from which I might descend as a poet, or on which my own work might influence others. (76)

Her departure from mainstream feminism into a kind of transcultural engagement can be seen as a response to her engagement with other languages and literary traditions through her translations. With the Anglo feminist debate dwindling in the West, it seemed possible to Hacker for these experiences to be transferred to another time and place when she begins translating in Paris in 1996. In the last century, many legal and institutional rights have been granted to women in the U.S.; however, the contentions within U.S. feminism that identify women's different experiences that make contemporary feminism a more diverse and more global movement. Hacker attempts to introduce the experiences of contemporary French and Francophone poets to the attention of American poetry in order for them to join more recent discourses on class, race, and gender. She explains this project in her 2014 interview with me in the Appendix, ''I think that [my translations] have participated more in bringing [French and Francophone poetry] to the attention of Anglophone readers'' (249). As such, Hacker continues with her feminist poetic project, but does so as secondary to her central project of transcultural alliances. As she says about her translations,

> I don't think it's by accident that I was first attracted to translating two French women poets, in a field which is still, so much more than the American or the British, dominated by men, and in which the specificities of women's poetry are not discussed, whether to be illuminated or melded into the larger field . . . it's apparent to me as well that each of these poets deals with the interpretation of individual experience by those macro-events that we call "history" – changes in government, wars, migrations, changes in language itself. (Dick 2002)

Hacker's quote here sheds light on the state of contemporary French women's writing, which surged as a result of the political debates of a new French feminist criticism. This can be viewed in comparison to American women's writing, which shows more representation of women's voices in mainstream literature, and even more so shows

how these French women's voices demonstrate an increasing reflection upon "the interweavings of change, memory, and words" (*UV* 10). Here, Hacker stresses the pattern of events on the macro-level of political movements and micro-level of personal childhood memories that she explores in her work to come.

In 1993, Hacker encountered a personal trauma that she continues to wrestle with in her work: fighting breast cancer, undergoing chemotherapy and a mastectomy. As Chapter Two reveals, the sense of physical and emotional alienation returns again in *Winter Numbers*: "I'm still alive, an unimportant Jew / who lives in exile, voluntarily / or not: Ohio's alien to me" (83). As she meditates upon the irony of her existence as an alien in her homeland, her "self-betraying body" conspires against itself and "needs to grieve / at how hatreds metastasize" (85). No longer the site of love, the cancerous, androgynous body takes on a new relationship with history and identity.

Chapter Three shows how this increasing theme of "history braided with memory" occurs within a larger context of transcultural and translingual intertextual involvement between *Squares and Courtyards* (2000) and *A Long-Gone Sun* (2000), Hacker's English translation of Claire Malroux's *Soleil de Jadis*. The simultaneous publication date of both books raises expectations of the influence that translating from the French has on Hacker's creative practice.[16] In the "Paragraphs" sequence in *Squares and Courtyards*, Hacker mentions a writer who she was "balancing fine points of translation with'', after which she was "handed a new manuscript" and Hacker "turned a page and read the dedication / to her father, who died at Bergen-Belsen" (72). This, alongside many other allusions, embedded images, and scenes, shows replication and influence as an intertextual form of artistic connection. The reconfiguration of relationships and dialogues that Hacker seeks through the metaphor of the braid is multidimensional and complex; it is a way of rethinking and problematising the relation between self and other, between individual and collective experience and memory, by showing not the separateness of self from environment but how creativity and political and social responsibility feed into one another.

As the trajectory of Hacker's writing grows increasingly autobiographical and historical, it becomes apparent that her work is shaped by her translations. Similar to

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[16] In an email to me on 27 Jan. 2016, Hacker confirmed that she had finished her translation of Malroux's *Soleil de Jadis* (*A Long-Gone Sun*) before working on *Squares and Courtyards*.

Malroux's narrative of history, Hacker's *Squares and Courtyards* (2000) weaves a story from her personal experiences of love, friends dying from AIDS, fighting breast cancer, and voicing the pain of her Jewish ancestors. Hacker finds in Malroux's retrospective narrative the poet's ability to bear witness and write in a dialogue with the past. In Malroux's writing, this sense of history is part of her consciousness as she relives the years up to her father's arrest, deportation and death at the start of the Second World War, when France was occupied by (French-assisted) German forces. This influence uncovers a connection of histories and memories between Hacker and Malroux, creating a cycle where Hacker as the writer becomes reader, then translator, then writer again, influenced and inspired by the works of other writers. According to Jan Montefiore,

> A change comes in the poems Marilyn Hacker has written from the late 1990s onwards, whose great subject is not love (though she still writes about her affairs), but death. Her themes are increasingly loss, bereavement and especially the tragedies of European history, of which as a Jewish American living in Paris she has a deep and constant historical awareness. (''She Can'' 53)

Paradoxically, Hacker is influenced by the anonymity Paris grants her and the heightened consciousness of being an American and a Jew ("A Few Cranky" 124); the distance provides the necessary perspective to contemplate the past. Her awareness of Jewish history – fused into her personal history – is further seen in the proximity of her current living address to the Vel' d'Hiv Roundup,[17] which despite perhaps being a coincidence, I interpret as a sign of identification and connection to her Jewish roots. As such, Hacker's representation of her location shows her nomadic thinking to be marked by her imaginative and geographical wanderings, both being motivated by a need to displace herself in a foreign culture to reconnect to her roots — in order to become as Lillian Kremer describes, a "witness through the imagination" (8). Using memory intertwined with imagination to evoke the social and cultural circumstances of her childhood, Hacker is able to explore the complex overlaying of identities in time and

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[17] On July 16, 1942, French police arrested thirteen thousand Jews in Nazi occupied Paris in an attempt to eradicate the Jewish population in France. Hacker lives in 33 Rue de Turenne in the third arrondissement which is seven kilometres away from the stadium where the French Jews were collected.

space. In the imagined space of the past, she examines her Jewish identity alongside her other identities.

I propose that it is Hacker's intention to look back and reflect on these different dimensions of her identity in her latest collection, *A Stranger's Mirror* (2015). Chapter Four reveals that the selections in this book create a cartography of her nomadic consciousness from the mid-nineties through the present day: *Winter Numbers* (1994) is an embodied geography of her history and ethnicity; *Squares and Courtyards* (2000) creates spaces for the intersection and interaction of boundaries in the constitution of nomadic subjectivity; *Desesperanto* (2005) articulates the paradoxical hope for an 'in-between' language that would transcend political and cultural borders; *Names* (2010) provides a metaphor for relationships with new places, traditions, and people; and new poems and translations act as sites of influence and translingual and transcultural engagement. *A Stranger's Mirror* is truly a summation of her nomadic vision over the last twenty-one years, with a deeper engagement with political and cultural narratives of the Middle East through writing with eastern literary traditions, which are foregrounded in the collection.

As a transcultural writer, Hacker's latest collaborations move far beyond her native and adopted cultures and languages to work with Syrian writers in exile. She has translated short-stories by Zakaria Tamer from Arabic that were published in Islamic magazines and magazines that disseminate current world literature such as *Critical Muslim*, *Words Without Borders*, and *Jadaliyya*. She has also translated poetry by Golan Haji, Noury Al-Jarrah, and Fadwa Soleiman to be published in *The Wolf* and *Rusted Radishes*.[18] Her translations promote a transcultural mode of identity construction by rethinking and responding to the paradox of a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected while continuing to encourage conservative politics and inflexible identity constructions: a "posthuman predicament", as Braidotti puts it.

Critical Interest in Hacker's Later Poetry

Critical interest in Hacker's poetry mainly revolves around certain areas of her work. An unpublished PhD thesis was awarded in 2005: *Marilyn Hacker's Editorship of*

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[18] Hacker provided me with her latest publications in an email dated 15 July 2017.

The Kenyon Review 1990-1994.[19] This work concentrates on only one of Hacker's identities: her role as an editor. Other research on Hacker connects her to different contemporary poets regarding her formalism and her exploration of Jewish identity; less research investigates the interplay of text and the body, and none exists on her emerging transcultural sensibility. Recently, there have been attempts to analyse certain aspects of Hacker's representation of bodies within her poetry. The first of these studies is a 2006 PhD thesis by Ann Wallace entitled *Inscribed in Skin: The Marked Body as Site of Witness in Contemporary Women's Literature.*[20] Examining metaphorical representations of the scarred body in Hacker's cancer poetry – alongside similar representations by contemporary women poets such as Audre Lorde's *The Cancer Journals* (1980) – Wallace argues that images of the disfigured body create narratives of memory and resistance. The second, and most recent, is Catherine Cucinella's book *Poetics of the Body* (2010), which develops Wallace's examination of imagery by engaging the image of the female body in relation to Hacker's use of language.

While Cucinella's *Poetics of the Body* explores the relationship of Hacker's poetry to the body, it includes three other female poets – Edna St. Vincent Millay, Elizabeth Bishop, and Marilyn Chin. Like Wallace, Cucinella's analysis covers a limited range of Hacker's work. However, Cucinella concentrates on two representations of the female body: postcancer bodies from her collections *Winter Numbers* (1994) and *Squares and Courtyards* (2000), and amorous bodies from *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons* (1986). Cucinella is concerned with how illness and intense emotion create narratives of living and loving. Although this kind of positioning in Wallace's and Cucinella's examination of the body within American women's poetry proves useful in understanding how Hacker defies and challenges traditional representations of embodiment, a more comprehensive examination of poetic depictions of the body that covers the whole of Hacker's oeuvre is much needed to understand the female body's evolving relationship to language, thus shedding light on the social, historical, and political sources of her creative practice.

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[19] Harvey, J. "Marilyn Hacker's Editorship of the Kenyon Review 1990-1994." Dissertation, University of Glasgow, 2005.

[20] Wallace, A. E. ''Inscribed in Skin: The Marked Body as Site of Witness in Contemporary Women's Literature." Dissertation, City University of New York, 2006.

To date, there has been no comprehensive, extended examination of Hacker's conception of language as seen through the representation of the body in her work. In particular, there are no studies that focus on her post-1994 literary production, which include translations from French to English, new twenty-first century poetry collections, an essay collection, and a cross-cultural poetry collaboration. The shift to a political and historical engagement in her later poetry has not been studied in relation to the shift to a feminist poetics in her earlier poetry. Increasingly, her poetry has turned to issues of fate, mortality, and her Jewish heritage. As her poetry becomes more intertwined with Arab diasporic narratives, Hacker is better able to examine her position as an American and a Jew in relation to the U.S., and to the political situation of the Arab diaspora in relation to the Middle East.

This study incorporates unpublished material from Hacker's collection at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library and her letters from the Joanna Russ collection at the University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives, as well as her letters from the Hayden Carruth collection at the University of Vermont, Special Collections and University Archives. Although Hacker's poetry is the main source of analysis, these secondary sources offer many insights into Hacker's emerging feminism, the relationship of women writers to the canon in the 1960s and 1970s, her connection to other formalist writers, and feminist writing and politics.

The significance of this later work is that Hacker's exploration of her Jewish ancestry is more pronounced when she translates and assimilates the work of writers who draw on personal memory and collective history to distil their experiences. Hacker calls this interpersonal process a "current of poetic colloquy" (MacRae), where she engages with the poetic traditions and narratives of other writers to develop her own poetic forms and themes. This intertextual and nomadic process creates a metaphorical braid that allows her to identify with and relate to other histories and memories from other cultures in order to express her own transcultural orientation and imaginary.

Chapter One examines the process of Hacker's emerging feminist poetics from 1974 to 1980. Hacker's early work reveals how her early formalism is a product of and in dialogue with the male literary tradition that shaped her as a poet. I draw extensively on a 1976 letter from Adrienne Rich about how Rich believes that Hacker's formalism

conflicts with her feminism. I examine this document alongside and against Hacker's letters to Joanna Russ, in which Hacker defends her aesthetics. In drawing a comparison between poems from *Presentation Piece* (1974) and *Separations* (1976) (both published before Rich's letter) to *Taking Notice* (1980), I show how the first shift in Hacker's poetics appears in a turn from male to female literary precursors for inspiration, while continuing to write in formal verse. This shift also reveals the female subject's changing relationship to the body from one of distance and separation in ''Villanelle'' and "Somewhere in a Turret" to a feminist poetics that integrates female feeling into poetic form in the poem ''Feeling and Form''. She depicts this integration as a metaphorical mapping of love onto the female body in the title poem ''Taking Notice''. This chapter takes as its premise Braidotti's notion of 'critical nomadic consciousness' to exemplify that Hacker's subversive formalism, migration, poetic nonconformity showed early signs of nomadic consciousness. Hacker's rejection of Rich's generalisation about women's writing being opposed to formal verse illustrates a critical consciousness towards traditional views of women's writing.

Highlighting the issues of identity and community in breast cancer narratives, Chapter Two looks at Hacker's poetry and prose regarding her experience with breast cancer in *Winter Numbers* (1994). Hacker questions the truth of conventional elegies and breast cancer metaphors to write a new identity and create a story of illness and recovery in ''Against Elegies''. This is the first collection in which Hacker introduces the metaphor of the 'braid' as a metaphor of female intimacy and interconnectivity in ''Year's End''. There is a personal and thematic shift in the representation of the body from an agent of intimacy to a location of Jewish history and identity in ''August Journal''. The chapter examines how the image of the postmastectomy body in crisis can be used as a historical and political metaphor in ''Cancer Winter''. Braidotti's conceptualisation of 'cartography' offers a metaphorical lens for reading Hacker's postmastectomy scar as a "cartography of the body". Hacker begins to develop and articulate a Braidottian model of nomadism through her metaphorical treatment of the scarred and aging female body as a map of historical and ethnic identity. Braidotti's notion of the 'posthuman' is useful to understand Hacker's embodied posthuman condition. The posthuman view of the body is seen in Hacker's description of her altered body as partial and incomplete. Also, I read her postmastectomy body as a posthuman body in the way she uses this experience to connect to other victims of

illness and history. I believe that this second shift is conducive to the political and transcultural orientation in her later poetry.

Chapter Three develops this metaphorical treatment of the geographical representation of the scarred body initially explored in Chapter Two when Hacker seeks to find connections between her childhood memories and Jewish history through imagining the metaphor of the braid in *Squares and Courtyards* (2000). Drawing on Braidotti's figuration of the nomadic subject, I read the braid as an embodiment of Hacker's nomadic subjectivity and her embedded ethnic and historical location as an American Jewish woman writer in Paris. Examining Hacker's translation of Claire Malroux's *Soleil de Jadis* (2000) as an exploration of memory and history, I illustrate how Malroux's memory of her rural childhood under the Vichy government and during France's occupation by Germany becomes a point of entry for Hacker to explore her location in Jewish history. Hacker begins this exploration by imagining herself as a Jewish boy and girl trying to write the history of their Jewish heritage by "crossing" spatial, temporal, and geographical lines in a characteristically Braidottian manner as in the poem ''The Boy''. My analysis focuses on how *Squares and Courtyards* creates an intertextual poetic engagement with Malroux's book through Hacker's translation, her adaptation of Malroux's historical narration, and the intertwining of separate memories. However, as Hacker did not experience this history, she creates a female genealogy through her grandmother from Prague when she enacts Braidotti's ''countermemory'' that allows her to imagine the experience of a Jewish child during the Vel' d'Hiv ''if memory braided with history'' in ''Squares and Courtyards''. The braid is a useful metaphor to understand Hacker's nonunitary thinking and the links it creates between public and private spaces, past and present, and self and other.

Chapter Four examines how Hacker's feminist nomadic thinking proves useful to the development of a transcultural poetics. Hacker's latest and fifteenth poetry collection, *A Stranger's Mirror* (2015), is a compilation of her last four collections *Winter Numbers* (1994), *Squares and Courtyards* (2000), *Desesperanto* (2005), and *Names* (2010).[21] It also includes twenty-five new poems and translations of French and Francophone poetry. I examine how the title poem, "A Stranger's Mirror", explores

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[21] Poems from *Desesperanto* will not be included in this examination as the book mostly examines a woman's loneliness and recollections of her childhood that overlap with poems of personal contemplation in Hacker's other collections.

questions of time and intense emotion while trying to break free from the stasis of old age. Using the metaphor of the mirror, the speaker destabilises the self to reassess the meanings of her feelings and memories in light of an older and estranged reflection. Braidotti's conceptualisation of the posthuman subject is useful to understand how Hacker's engagement with the posthuman predicament of wars and massive human displacement contributes to her later work, particularly in terms of her handling of cross-cultural affiliation. I examine how she draws on eastern poetic forms, particularly the ghazal and renga, to engage in dialogues with different poetic traditions.

"Ghazal: *dar al-harb*" is important to understand how Hacker engages in a feminist 'politics of location' that accounts for and resolves the multiple positions of power that structure her location as a North American citizen. It is also important to understand how Hacker relocates the self in a Deleuzian manner of "deterritorialization", moving beyond the borders of her national identity to critically examine her country's international policies. I explore ideas of transcultural interconnectedness and the nonfixity of cultural boundaries in *Diaspo/Renga*. I am particularly interested in how the dialogic form and content of the renga signifies a larger conversation between the East and West. I find that the structure of the renga can serve as a metaphor for the kind of interconnection that Hacker seeks to create in her later poetry. Hacker's strongest articulation of transcultural interconnectivity appears in the final poem of the collection, "A Braid of Garlic", an elegy for Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. Returning to the braid as an organic metaphor of interconnectedness, Hacker uses a garlic braid to engage with Middle Eastern culture as well as to create potential for braiding with new voices. Ultimately, *A Stranger's Mirror* stands as a coherent, yet multidimensional testament to a critical nomadic thinking over the past two decades.

Marilyn Hacker's commitment to an engagement with history and politics in her later poetry reveals a feminist nomadic subjectivity that moves across spatial, temporal, literary, cultural, and political borders. In my final chapter, I reiterate this interpretation and look briefly at the importance of Hacker's transcultural and political literary engagements that respond to the current political events in the Middle East. I believe that Hacker's poetic vision of ''a current of poetic colloquy'' characterizes an oeuvre that is continuously exploring new themes, forms and poetic dialogues.

CHAPTER ONE

Nomadic Consciousness in Hacker's Early Poetry, 1974-1980

Every day our bodies separate,
exploded torn and dazed.
Not understanding what we celebrate
— Marilyn Hacker, ''Villanelle'', 1974

heraldic plants and animals
alive on our tender cartography,
— Marilyn Hacker, ''Taking Notice'', 1980

Introduction

This chapter examines the first shift in Hacker's feminist poetics and female subjectivity from 1974 to 1980. In *Taking Notice*, Hacker's third published work, she writes a new poetics that integrates female feeling into poetic form. She depicts this integration by metaphorically mapping love onto the female body, and as such rethinks the connection between gender, writing, and the body in "Taking Notice". This reconceptualisation of the body moves her away from a sense of "separat[ion]" and feelings of uncertainty and frustration that she explores in her two earlier collections *Presentation Piece* (1974) and *Separations* (1976).

Instrumental to this shift is Adrienne Rich's appeal to Hacker in a personal letter in 1976 to abandon formal verse for free verse that was widely practised by feminist writers of the 1970s. Although Hacker responded to Rich's call and began to write a poetics that was feminist in its raw engagement with women's experiences, unlike Rich, she did not stop using metrical forms. In fact, Hacker moved from a pre-feminist consciousness, in dialogue with the male poetic tradition, to a feminist reclamation of the tradition of women's formal poetry. This engagement with poetic form is conducive to the aesthetic and formal structure of the braid that she imagines in her post-1994 poetry. I read this repossession of formal verse in a Braidottian manner as a 'nomadic consciousness' that counters dominant assumptions about formal poetics.

Hacker breaks with her earlier poetry's sense of loneliness, isolation, and exile in ''Villanelle'' and ''Somewhere in a Turret'' and writes of her growth as a woman through her experiences and her feminist activism. As her life becomes more woman-centred, her poems grow in "depth and individual strength",[22] becoming less obscure, and her mixture of ordinary language and fixed verse seem less artificial and more organic (Reed 82-3). These thematic and formal changes reveal a shift in her poetics that underscores the origins of nomadic thought in her early poetry. This feminist poetics would define her work for the next fourteen years – until the publication of *Winter Numbers* (1994).

Marilyn Hacker's Pre-Feminist Poetry: 1974-1976

In his review of *Taking Notice*, Stanley Plumly of *The Washington Post* states that "with *Taking Notice*, Marilyn Hacker has written what constitutes the last volume in a trilogy''; this is because she is engaged in the same artistic and emotional experiences she was in *Presentation Piece* and *Separations* ("Of Lyricism"). Publishers of Hacker's work also share Plumly's view of this connection between the three collections. W.W. Norton & Company, for example, published these first three books in the recent 2003 collection *First Cities: Collected Early Poems 1960-1979*. This connection may prove useful for understanding Hacker's early poetics and the importance of her formalism and feminist poetics to women's poetry. However, it would be an oversimplification to connect *Presentation Piece* (1974)*, Separations* (1976), and *Taking Notice* (1980) on the basis that they were all published by 1980; all illustrate a mastery of formal poetics alongside a concern with the personal experiences and relationships of a young woman living between New York and London. Critical interpretations of Hacker's early poetry also reveal a shift in her conception of language, from a position of distance and separation in her first two volumes to a position of integration of feeling and form from her third collection onwards.

This shifting conception of language parallels a shifting relationship to the body as Hacker's work develops. The intersection of gender and the body with language in her writing offers a productive way of thinking about the importance of the body in

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[22] Rich, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 21 Aug. 1984. Box 3, Folder 7. MHP.

writing poetry. As Catherine Cucinella states, "[c]reative and intellectual expressions do not occur separate from the body" (1). The language of exile and distances in Hacker's poems written during the 1970s speak of her marital disappointments and a body that takes refuge and becomes "hidden in words" ("Geographer" 5). In these poems, the word ''exile'' appears nineteen times, with ''distance'', ''travel'', ''voyage'', ''Journey'', and ''separate'' occurring as indications of spatial variations that suggest the ambivalence of the body in relation to its physical and emotional surroundings. Poems written during this time contain Hacker's perennial topics of love, separation, and alienation, which reviewers like Ben Howard described as having a tone of ''incipient despair'' (47).

These dark emotions find their expression through fixed verse forms inherited from Hacker's male literary precursors. Poems such as "Untoward Occurrence at Embassy Poetry Reading", "Apologia pro opera suo", and "Villanelle" from *Presentation Piece* pay debt to Auden (Ricks), as Hacker was an ardent follower of his poetry and had the opportunity to meet him in the 1960s (Wasley 121). Though Auden was an English poet, his presence in the literary scene in America influenced a generation of formalists that emerged in the 1940s and 1950s (Beach 139). In addition to a renewal of poetic form in America at the hands of the New Critics, Auden's "formal, casually ironic, and technically accomplished" work had an effect on a young generation of American writers such as Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Lowell, Richard Wilbur, and Richard Howard, among others (144). These poets "turned away from free verse [and experimentation of modernism] and developed a technically complex, rhetorically difficult poetry modelled on the values of the New Critics" (Greene et al. 1490). "Many poets", according to Christopher Beach, ''preferred to remain within the relative safety of fixed forms like the sonnet or rhymed quatrain; the social and political conservatism of the period was reflected in the poems themselves, which often avoided taking stylistic, thematic, or formal tasks" (145).

Hacker was trained in this tradition of neatly contained aesthetics and was drawn to the paradoxical style of coherence and internal dramatic tension in the poem. "I like the tension in a poem", Hacker explains, "that comes from the diction of ordinary speech playing against a form. When there is an internal or external form to be worked with and worked against, unexpected and illuminating things can happen in the piece of writing'' (Hammond 23). However, as a nonconformist, Hacker side-stepped the spirit of conservatism of the poetry of New Critical formalism and engaged in current social

and political issues such as death, the Vietnam war, and a dissatisfaction with women's traditional roles. She stood out from many of the poets in the late 1960s and early 1970s due to the organic treatment of form in her poetry: her form derives from the theme of the poem rather than being artificially imposed, as she explains in a recent interview, "the idea usually comes first, then the rhythm of the first lines suggests the form" (Hirschorn). The structure and texture of Hacker's "Villanelle" conspicuously illustrates an influence from Auden and the New Critical formalism of the time. In "Villanelle", Hacker depicts a troubled relationship to explore the anxiety and despair of trying to articulate the pain of loneliness and isolation:

> Every day our bodies separate,
> exploded torn and dazed.
> Not understanding what we celebrate
>
> we grope through languages and hesitate
> and touch each other, speechless and amazed;
> and every day our bodies separate
>
> us farther from our planned, deliberate
> ironic lives. I am afraid, disphased,
> not understanding what we celebrate (89)

From the outset, "Villanelle" deceptively presents a complicated relationship that is struggling to survive in the guise of a simple title. Yet, at the same time, the title of the poem is indicative of her treatment of the adoring nature of the relationship. The structure of the villanelle, as Annie Finch and Marie-Elizabeth Mali explain in *Villanelles* (2012), reflects the momentum of a love relationship:

> The key to a good villanelle is to come up with two lines that are genuinely attracted to each other but also wholly independent of each other, so that their final coupling will feel both inevitable and surprising. With its roots in dance, a good villanelle is like a good romantic relationship. The two lines that structure it are dying to get together; there is a period of suspense before they do get together; and in the meantime, a changing context provides a series of new discoveries about the lines each time they appear. The form keeps the lines close but apart through six stanzas of mounting tension until they join in the last two lines of the poem. (17)

Hacker subverts the joyous attraction in Finch's metaphorical description via an attraction that veers on obsession. While the smooth cyclical structure of the European form creates infinite ("every day") revolving structures of parting ("separate") and uniting ("celebrate"), the aggressive and anxious tone ("exploded", "torn", and "dazed") raises doubts about conciliation. The discrepancy between form and tone generates an irony that is also produced when they – confused and "not understanding" their relationship – are drawn "farther from" their "planned, deliberate / ironic lives". Through the unevenness of its form – nineteen lines of five tercets followed by a final quatrain – the poem demonstrates the way in which imbalance can perversely prolong a relationship instead of ending it, as well as shroud it in "haze". Sound, and especially rhyme, reinforces this circular pattern as the separation of the two end rhymes ("hesitate" and "separate") with one counter-rhyme ("amazed") keeps the couple separate in a vortex of ambivalence and ambiguity.

Through Hacker maintains the rhyme scheme in the third tercet with "disphased", this word does not appear in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, suggesting that she invented the word to ensure the form. More importantly, however, it serves to depict the speaker as not in "phase" in the relationship, which in its occurrence in the middle of the poem seeks to break the repetitive sequence of distance and festivity. This strain is further expressed in the irregular enjambed and end-stopped lines, which create a tension between lines that show the couple functioning as individual entities at times, and as coherent rhythmical units at others. The even end-rhymes in the tercet serve to balance the pain and the accountability for the pain. Formally, then, the poem mirrors the very kinds of imbalance it describes.

Paradoxically, however, the form and content do not reinforce the subjectivity of the female speaker in the poem. The speaker's constant use of the plural pronouns "our", "we", and "us" expresses a shared perspective, indicating an interdependency in the relationship. Depicting this emotional commitment negates the tone of ambivalence that the poem seeks to create, as if the speaker is reluctant to confront the truth of their disunity. Yet during this uncertainty, in the third tercet, the subjective "I" admits to her fear and frustration when she says, "I am afraid, disphased", revealing a helplessness and vulnerability that she finds difficult to put into words. As the speaker "grope[s] through languages" to describe the pain, language creates a "speechless", "unlettered", and "wordless" "distance from the world of the body" (Diggory 151).

In the speaker's struggle to articulate her feelings, "the available, masculine-determined forms of representation", as Jan Montefiore argues, "victimize women by endowing us with a language incapable of articulating our meanings and thus alienating us from our psychic identities" (*Feminism and Poetry* 142). Distancing herself from her emotions, Hacker is, as she describes in "Forage Sestina" from the same collection, a "body hidden in words / moving through a crumbling structure" (67), which sketches the deterioration of a relationship in the image of a crumbling building suggested by the end-word repetition: "words", "structure", "wire", "beams", "wall", and "room". Then, in the fourth stanza, it becomes apparent that the male and female are the destruction depicted in the poem: "I want to touch you, but you are the wall/ crumbling, the report over the wire/ service that there were no survivors" (67). Like "Villanelle", this poem shows Hacker creating tension against the sestina form with the speaker "forag[ing]" for something among the ruins, struggling to express the emotional experiences of despondency and doubt. Yet "words cannot be trusted" (68), as language is described as "falling words" pointing towards the damage "in the nearer wall" (67). The damage depicted in the poem shows the speaker's fear that her anger will destroy the addressee, the speaker herself, or any possible communication between them. Every aspect of this poem suggests that uncertainty is preferable to the loss of the relationship.

The theme of ''Villanelle'' is depicted with a quality of "pre-political"[23] emotional frustration, loneliness, and rage that comes with the female being the "eternal supplicant".[24] Surrounded by women who were in similar circumstances, Hacker lacked the political community of women in England that existed in America at the same time. Writing about a visit to Colorado in 1975, a year before she returned to the U.S., Hacker tells Russ:

> It was great to see you and talk to you, and to meet so many sympathetic and interesting people, and to get, for the first time in many years, a sense of some sort of community, especially community among women, with a kind of mutual energy and interest and impetus at its center.[25]

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[23] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 10 Nov. 1975. Box 5, Folder 20. JRP.
[24] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 4 Nov. 1975. Box 5, Folder 20. JRP.
[25] Ibid.

Moreover, in an earlier letter Hacker writes, "Becoming a feminist in England is . . . rather theoretical, and doesn't make it easier to get in touch with anybody".[26] In a covert-form of consciousness-raising, Hacker placed in writing what she did not find in community.

Writing with a pre-feminist outlook, the reader can see and hear the speaker trying to make sense of her emotional muddle, but the self-doubts drive her to seek out a community to fill this void. Thus, the theme is not disengaged or removed from its time, but the helplessness of the speaker is. Moreover, although Hacker's villanelle focuses on a relationship, her specific treatment of a love reveals a dormant feminism and nomadic consciousness in a Braidottian manner in her resistance to hegemonic free verse formations. This poem, and her earlier writing as a whole, shows Hacker thinking about feminism in the abstract; however, it does not make the "leap into [her] writing"[27] until her third collection, *Taking Notice*.

"Images of the body" separating shows the speaker trying, as Ben Howard explains, to configure and understand "a language of instinct and feeling – of a woman's bodily awareness – and to express the body's longings, including its 'inadmissible longings' as they are shaped and repressed in personal relationships" (47). The incommensurability of body and language characterises most of Hacker's work during the 1970s. William Pritchard notes that Hacker "writes urgently, sometimes delicately, about separation, a state peculiarly interesting for the poet who not only-as woman or as man-is separated from somebody else, but must also write about being separated from somebody else" (457). These themes of separation and alienation foreshadowed the poems that were to come in the next collection, *Separations* (1976). For example, in "Somewhere in a Turret", the pain and disappointment of an unsuccessful relationship continues to be articulated, but with less self-preoccupation and instead with a distinctly mature sense of concession. In the third stanza, the speaker is defensive as she addresses her husband's doubt of her departure:

> Don't think I'm trying to ignore the time
> I piled my things into a cab and left
> a note for you and one for the dinner guests.
> Those rooms have new tenants. You and I

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[26] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 4 Aug. 1975. Box 5, Folder 20. JRP.
[27] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 10 Nov. 1975. Box 5, Folder 20. JRP.

> may never share a closet or a towel-rack
> again. We contrived it. I am still
> surprised waking up without you every morning,
> but I can't camp out in your house or you in mine.
> People would ask me to leave. People would send you
>   away. (41-42)

Here, the speaker has a similar tone of helplessness to the speaker in "Villanelle", as reflected in the varying line lengths to suggest the irregularity of the speaker's emotions. However, there is a realistic certainty and acceptance of the end of the relationship in the emphasis on the word "away" in its place at the end of the stanza as a separate line. There is an awakening as the speaker realises that her husband has moved on and the "rooms have new tenants".

In Rich's letter to Hacker, which is discussed in more detail later in the chapter, Rich looks back and praises these early attempts at "very short, curt sentences [that] embody the pain more than anything else in the poem".[28] Here, the poet is writing in opposition to the form by emphasising the line as individual units of meaning to compress her feelings. Rich explains that she followed this method herself to understand how she felt as a woman:

> I began cutting words out of my poems . . . they had to become shorter, sharper, blunter, more irregular, to make fewer logical connections because the real connections I was seeking between things were not logical at all, and I could no longer pretend they were.[29]

As opposed to the indecisive addressee in "Villanelle", however, the male in this poem shows indifference about the end of the relationship and expects the female speaker to depart without delay. While the voice of the plural "we" stresses the 'twoness' of the relationship in its prime, the predominance of the subjective "I" creates a 'oneness' that is distinct in its loneliness, which at the same time "suggests female recognition of [her] capacity for selfhood and the potential for a feminist poetics of female experience" (Craddock 95). Hacker maintains the plural voice but uses it only for imaginary and past instances. Here, Hacker challenges the traditional image of the woman as muse and object as she becomes subject and poet, as well as more assertive in her voice ("don't

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[28] Rich, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 3 Oct. 1976. Box 1, Folder 4. MHP.
[29] Ibid.

think" and "I can't") and expressions, much as she proclaims in an earlier poem, "And here I am, / a small, redheaded, pungent woman, not / your bloody Muse" ("Like Aschenbach in Arizona" 84).

The entire poem takes on a mythic and ancient character that is removed "Somewhere in a Turret" and "catacombed in" with memories and nostalgic reminiscences; it is a life that is distant even to the speaker. The twoness of the married couple's relationship is no longer physical or tangible as the body disappears from the equation to be replaced by objects that they used to share: "rooms", "pictures", "books", a "cat", "closet", and "towel-rack". Foregrounding of the word "time" as the line-break of the first line, alongside temporal variations of it in the same stanza ("left", "still', and "morning"), sets up the temporal framework of this poem as more pressing and urgent in its finality. As the poem comes to an end, the speaker comes to terms with the end of their relationship:

> But you know about words. You have had time
> to figure out that hardly anyone
> came back to bed because of a poem.
> Poems praise and protect us from
> our lovers. While I write this
> I am not having heartburn
> about your indifference. We could walk
> into any room.
> You wouldn't ask me to leave. I wouldn't send you
>   away. (42)

The male in this poem who "know[s] about words" seems to refer to Hacker's ex-husband Samuel Delany, as he was a writer and would understand the power of words, but also their ineffectiveness after a relationship has been finalised. Contemplating the connection between language and lived experience, Hacker is able to illuminate how the relationship was "contrived", which shows that the coupling was forced and did not develop organically. With this realisation, the speaker is able to face him with no distress ("We could walk / into any room. / You wouldn't ask me to leave. I wouldn't send you / away"). Reflecting on her reactions and temperament during those years, Hacker later writes, "resignation is not the appropriate stance in those situations".[30]

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[30] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 12 Oct. 1976. Box 4, Folder 5. MHP.

Not overtly feminist in its examination of the depth of the woman's experience, and still lacking individual strength, the poem is nevertheless coming closer to women's rejections of male expectations and apathy, as well as the rejection of constraints over female behaviour.

These early poems were written during the thirteen years that Hacker was married to Delany, from 1961 until the birth of her daughter Iva in 1974. As depicted in the poems, the marriage was both a convenience and an inconvenience, perhaps doomed to end as it was in many ways theoretical and non-traditional. To a significant degree, their relationship reflects the social and cultural context of New York's Lower East Side's bohemian literary scene of the 1960s (Delany "Heavenly Breakfast" and "Motion of Light"). As a young and talented, yet overlooked female writer, who was lonely for some ideal poet-friend to share her work with, Hacker turned to the world of male literary poets to resolve her social and artistic anxieties. Hacker's early poetry looks back to these earlier male poets as inspiration or as model as these modernist poets provided young women writers with themes and poetic devices (Reed 81).

Her letters during the 1970s show her intent on establishing literary connections and publishing in literary magazines in the U.S. and UK. She began a correspondence with Richard Howard when he was poetry editor of the *New American Review*, aiming to publish her poems (Campo, "About Marilyn" 196). Although thirteen years her senior, Howard modestly recalls that Hacker had a presence in the literary world long before he discovered her (her early pieces were published in magazines such as *Epoch*, *Ambit* and *The London Magazine*) (196), and credits her with teaching him how to become an editor of a diverse magazine that would attract a wide audience (Howard 262). Howard's discovery of Hacker would serve as a vehicle for the inclusion of a young twenty-eight-year-old emerging writer into the company of an older, well-established and distinguished literary group. Standing alongside literary giants including Richard Howard, James Merrill, and John Ashbery at the 1983 tribute to W.H. Auden, Hacker's precociousness and potential prominence as a poet is foreshadowed in the photo below.

Marilyn Hacker *(fifth from the left)* and Richard Howard *(second from the left)* in attendance at the W. H. Auden Tribute[31]

In "The Young Insurgent's Commonplace-Book: Adrienne Rich's Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law", Hacker explained this early influence on her writing as well as on other women poets:

> Like Rich herself at twenty, my literary dialogues on and off the page were largely with men: on one hand, Auden, Lowell, Berryman, on the other, the acolytes of the 'San Francisco Renaissance' talking of and reading the work of Jack Spicer and Robert Duncan to their East Coast juniors.
> (*UV* 18)

Yet Hacker was not totally cut off from the women poets of her time. Unsurprisingly, she read Sylvia Plath's *Ariel* in 1963, which explains the "Plathy echoes" (18) in the tone of helplessness and discontent in Hacker's subsequent poems. Hacker identified with the pressure and anxiety of being a 'woman' and 'poet' in a mid-century, male literary world, and would pursue Plath's gift for metrical verse, which was strongly influenced by her male mentors.

At the time, Hacker did not identify as being a feminist. Looking back, however, she realises that her political activism and unconventional marriage posited her as "an isolated feminist, a Jew who'd married Black, who had not yet heard the sentence 'The Personal is Political' but who was insisting on it, had had it insisted upon [her], in [her]

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[31] "From the Archive: W. H. Auden Tribute." *Poets.org,* Academy of American Poets, https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/archive-w-h-auden-tribute.

own life" (Hacker, "A Tribute" 1). In this respect, Hacker's early work posits her as a "feminine" (Juhasz 4) poet who wrote about the female experience without political undertones. Apart from the poems that were written during the 1960s, both *Presentation Piece* and *Separations* are what Hacker calls "pre-feminist" books, in that they reveal feminist connotations.[32] In his biography, *The Motion of Light in Water*, Samuel Delany reiterates how gender played an important part in Hacker's conversations with him before the women's movement made it widespread:

> We had discussed what was necessary in fiction to portray characters of both sexes accurately . . . [as] they needed to be presented by purposeful, habitual, and gratuitous actions . . . some six years later, the women's movement was to provide in a clearly articulated critique. (101)

This feminist consciousness can be found in some early poems, such as "To the Reader" from *Presentation Piece*, when Hacker subversively juxtaposes everyday housework with non-feminine actions that challenge expectations of women's behaviour:

> Pacing from room to room trimming the plants,
> I walk heavily on my heels. I smoke
> foul-smelling French cigarettes. Invoke
> that portly bluestocking in gardening pants. (76)

Hacker's early engagement with the sonnet and her modification of the form seems out of place at a time when the female authored sonnet was non-existent. According to Jade Craddock, British poet Elizabeth Jennings was the only female poet to write sonnets during second-wave feminism, while Muriel Rukeyser and Anne Sexton scarcely wrote them, and Gwendolyn Brooks wrote them from time to time (88). Craddock goes on to conclude that "the sonnet and feminist poetry then seem to be two separate, even mutually exclusive, entities in the period" (88). Hacker offers the sonnet in her first collection in the guise of order and normalcy while trying to challenge and subvert male criteria for female behaviour. Therefore, there is a pro-feminist element to the poem in its disengagement from patriarchal thinking, beginning in the sonnet's audacious and direct title, "To the Reader", which impudently addresses her audience and demonstrates that she is a woman and can also write in form.

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[32] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 12 Oct. 1976. Box 5, Folder 23. JRP.

The poem sees the female speaker explaining her interests and quotidian daily habits. The activity of female plant trimming, however, becomes an image of women's subversion of masculinist prescriptions and assumptions. This challenging of traditional behaviour begins with the act of ''pacing'' in a way that gives the image of a fast, calculated movement; this does not reflect the supposedly leisurely movement of a woman that is even further developed with the adverb ''heavily'' to reflect a complete lack of the grace expected of a female. The putrid smell of the cigarettes adds to the drudging movement and seeks to further defy feminine representations. The poem is building up to the ''blue stocking'' lady, an early feminist symbol of the mid-eighteenth century learned woman who held literary conversations with male and female aristocrats.[33] In evoking this image, Hacker aims to position herself in the matrilineal tradition, while she reclaims a formal inheritance.

Therefore, while she is writing in the language of the father she is calling into question the logic of masculine discourses; the impudent woman's voice seeks to articulate a specifically female experience that refuses patriarchal modes of thought. The twist comes when these "blue stockings" are revealed in the guise of unflattering "gardening pants", further subverting and modernising the twentieth-century feminist. The theme of tending to plants in its overt gender stereotype risks undermining a "feminine" poetics of Hacker's earlier work; however, as Hacker weaves her "feminine" politics into her daily life, these "strong patriarchal association[s] create the opportunity for the staging of an 'everyday rebellion' that" (Craddock 138) foreshadows her feminist activism in the work to come. Using a theme that works against the tone of the form, Hacker seems to be testing herself against this masculine tradition.

The remaining lines of the sonnet show a subversive poetic practice in the changing of end rhymes, so that the poem starts out following the Petrarchan sonnet rhyme in the first four lines abba ("plants-pants" and "smoke-invoke"), but then disrupts this pattern with a different variation – cddc ("cook-cruise-lose-book") / effe ("rooms-disease-please-moon's"). The last two lines form a couplet in line with the structural division of the Shakespearean sonnet gg (''Mom-bomb''). Varying the pattern of end rhymes illustrates how Hacker's sonnet contributed to reclaiming the form. Writing within a male literary form ''places the female in a dialectical relationship with

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[33] "Bluestocking." *Encyclopædia Britannica* (2014): *Research Starters.* Web. 11 Dec. 2016.

the male'' (Craddock 139) in the rest of the poem as "Boys will be boys and wonder in their rooms" against "I'll sleep alone and murder whom I please / and find another lover when the moon's / in Scorpio" (76). As the patriarchal relationship is interwoven in the rhyme, Hacker negotiates the female's impudent voice with the male-dominated tradition of the sonnet, proving her subversive strategy to write as a woman in a patriarchal form. Finally, in the couplet, the speaker affirms the subjectivity and empowerment (though also brutality) of the female, as the country is symbolised as a mother with destructive qualities: "Be grateful to our Mom. / She let you off with cancer and the bomb" (76). Although this sonnet does not particularly align with the feminist poetry of the second wave, in articulating a female voice, it nevertheless examines women's traditional roles in a patriarchal society.

Many feminist critics and poets have taken a stronger position towards Hacker's formalism. Norma Procopiow argues that "The poems seem created, not with urgency or commitment, but to display craftsmanship" (qtd. in Riley and Mendelson 155). Yet more radical is Adrienne Rich's critique of Hacker's use of formal verse in a personal letter dated 8 October 1976 that followed the publication of Hacker's first two collections.[34] This is an unpublished letter from Hacker's collection from the Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Although mention of this letter comes in "The Mimesis of Thought: *On Adrienne Rich's Poetry"*, thirty-four years after Rich sent it to Hacker, it is an important letter that tells of Rich's feminist poetics during the 1970s and her high and stern expectations of successive generations of women writers. Yet, even more importantly, Hacker's single reference to it after so many years and the fact that Hacker wrote a reply that she did not send reveals a hidden tension and silent conversation that she has been engaged in since she received the letter in the late 1970s. Even in her heavy correspondence to Joanna Russ in the 1970s-1980s, Hacker did not mention that she did not mail the response.

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[34] Hacker, letter to Adrienne Rich. 8 Oct. 1976. Box 2, Folder 7. MHP.

Female Poetic Influence: Marilyn Hacker and Adrienne Rich

In an article in the *AWP Chronicle*, "A Tribute to Adrienne Rich" (1994), Hacker wrote of Rich as a model, yet distant mentor, who had a strong political and literary influence on Hacker as a poet:

> Adrienne Rich's work has changed my world. Whatever some may think, there is no inner circle of feminist poets . . . Rich and I have barely ever lived in the same city at the same time, have met perhaps four times in twenty years. But her work has been a constant influence on how I look at what's around me, read poetry – and the newspapers – write, examine my own actions and insofar as I can, choose them, since sometime in 1972. ("A Tribute" 1)

What is most significant about this quote is that Hacker clearly points out that the only relationship between Rich and Hacker is an artistic one, a one-sided admiration from Hacker's side. Hacker's first two collections were recognised and reviewed by many poets in the American scene because of the publicity that the National Book Award had created, but as it appears, these collections were not reviewed by Rich. In a 1998 letter, Hacker tells Hayden Carruth how she felt as if she "was being 'checked out'" by Rich when they first met after the publication of Hacker's first book and got the impression that she "didn't pass muster".[35] Hacker constantly agonised over the lack of attention that Rich gave to her. In September 1976, Hacker was elated and relieved when Rich finally approached her enthusiastically at a poetry reading about Hacker's second collection, *Separations*, and promised to write to her about it in a letter.

To Hacker's relief and annoyance, in a three-page letter Rich expressed her discontent with Hacker's poetics and questioned Hacker's motives as a woman and a feminist for writing in metrical form. The letter was clearly significant in Hacker's project of developing a critical nomadic consciousness that rejects the dominant literary view that formalism and feminist poetics are mutually exclusive. Rich's letter, as well as Hacker's response to it, is examined in this chapter alongside the personal, narrative discourse in her correspondence with Joanna Russ, as these correspondences are necessary to the understanding of the development of Hacker's feminist consciousness. Because this is an unpublished letter, it needs quoting in full. The letter begins as follows:

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[35] Hacker, letter to Hayden Carruth. 3 Sept. 1998. Box 73, Folder 31. HCP.

> When I first read your poetry my reaction was: But we did all that in the
> '50's, and struggled out of it – why is a clearly gifted, intelligent, <u>woman</u>
> doing it again? Why am I hearing again the accents of Auden, of Wilbur, of
> midstream Lowell, in the poetry of a woman writing in the 1970s?[36]
> (underline in original)

Without using the word "formalism", it seems that Rich is stating the obvious. "That"
and "it" (stated twice), suggesting a bondage of some sort that they "struggled out of", is
to be a source of tension within Rich and Hacker's personal and literary relationship: an
unspoken anxiety that they work through in their own writings. Focusing on her
formalism, Rich identifies her own history with Hacker as a young woman writing in
formal verse, but at the same time resents that Hacker's early thought and poetics are
an emulation of hers. Furthermore, like Hacker, in the 1950s, Rich aspired to be
accepted by the male literary scene. During this time, the general atmosphere was
conservative and ''many women were pursuing traditional roles as daughters, wives,
and mothers'' (qtd. in Craddock 89), as can be seen in the "deliberately groomed
metrical verse of [Rich's] first two books" (*UV* 19), with her second collection
''published after her marriage in 1953 to Alfred Conrad and in the year of the birth of
her first son'' (Craddock 91).

      The "we" that Rich is referring to are the mid-century women poets whose work
springs from the masculine literary tradition, such as Sylvia Plath and Denise Levertov
(Juhasz 4). As Hacker explains, these poets, including Rich, "had in common a strong
background in and gift for metrical verse and 'received' forms upon which they built,
elaborated, expanded . . . their mature work seems to me much more of an 'extension' of
this initial achievement" (*UV* 18). As a young poet, Rich "accepted the models provided
by her patriarchal world and literary tradition" (Juhasz 187). Looking back at her early
poetry, Rich writes in "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision": ''I know that my
style was formed first by male poets: by the men I was reading as an undergraduate –
Frost, Dylan Thomas, Donne, Auden, MacNeice, Stevens, Yeats. What I chiefly learned
from them was craft'' (21). However, as Rich became involved in the Civil Rights
Movement, anti-Vietnam activism and the New Left, her poetry started to reflect the
feminist belief that the 'personal is political' and began to explore the private
experiences of women's suppression within a society that is patriarchal in its

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[36] Rich, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 3 Oct. 1976. Box 1, Folder 4. MHP.

convictions (Chametzky 417). Rich's particular form of feminism stems from these political and social events, as well as the personal pressures to perform as a wife, mother of three children, and a practicing poet.

In underlining "woman", ("why is a clearly gifted, intelligent, <u>woman</u> doing it again?") Rich is connecting Hacker's feminist politics to her creative practice as a writer, because for radical feminists like Rich, the freedom of their poetry was necessary for the freedom of women to write about personal and socially restricted topics. For Rich, formalism was ''like asbestos gloves" as "it allowed [her] to handle materials [she] couldn't otherwise pick up bare-handed" (Rich, "When We Dead" 22). The "asbestos gloves" acted as the barrier between self and words, body and language, experience and poetry. For Rich, to write as a woman, language must be connected directly to the female body and experience. She explains this in "Blood, Bread, and Poetry": ''To write directly and overtly as a woman, out of a woman's body and experience, to take women's existence seriously as theme and source for art, was something I had been hungering to do, needing to do, all my writing life'' (182).

Free forms allowed Rich to break free from the patriarchal constraints associated with metrical verse. Her rhetorical question to Hacker has the tone of discontent and displays a troubled literary mother who believes that she, and others from her generation, "struggled" and paved the way for younger women poets such as Anne Sexton so that they could write as females without having to prove themselves to gain recognition from the male literary world. Sexton "begins where the others leave off, with an involvement in her own experience of womanhood" (Juhasz 4).

In the same letter, Rich refers to a "still indistinct but available women's tradition" created by modern and contemporary women poets who worked to express their own experience and find their own forms for expression. For Rich to see Hacker writing in form seems to Rich as though she is not acknowledging these struggles and sacrifices. After commenting on Hacker's formalism, Rich turns to language and tradition as the second non-feminist aspect of Hacker's work:

> It troubled me even then that you made your home in England
> and that much of your tone and rhythm seemed influenced not
> simply by English literary tradition but by a whole contemporary
> English way-of-being-in-the-world (low-key expectations,
> resignation) which has been, I think, peculiarly damaging to
> English women poets (only Stevie Smith, I think, was able to turn

it into something keenly and uniquely her own, and even she
doesn't always escape preciosity). England has never been able to
deal with (critically or as influence) the American tradition
which includes Whitman and Dickinson, H.D. and Williams; the
English have either written phony imitations of Olson or
maintained a willed ignorance about the complex development of
American poetry throughout this century. But more than
anything we have to recognize that there are two different
languages, and that American poetry can only be written in the
American language.[37]

As the quote above shows, Rich goes on to object to the influence that living in England
has had on Hacker's poetics.[38] Rich begins by explaining that the style of English poetry
that American poets moved away from since the mid-nineteenth century is being
recreated in Hacker's verse. "American poetry is formulated", as Beach explains, "as a
rejection of the tradition of self-consciously literary writing associated with English
poetry. Whitman exemplified this anti-traditional stance, calling for a 'national,
idiomatic' poetry free from the 'genteel laws' of Anglo-European verse" (4). Beach goes
on to explain that Whitman, Dickinson, and Pound created traditions that successive
generations of American poets followed in:

We often speak of a Whitmanic tradition (open, democratic, celebratory),
a Poundian tradition (modernist, experimental) or a Dickinsonian
tradition (woman-centered, personal, formal), using these terms as a
short-hand for an entire stance toward the writing of poetry. (4)

Reading Whitman and Dickinson against the poets and women poets of the American
nineteenth century, one understands what a departure they made from the writers of
that time. The innovation and experimental modernism of H. D. and Williams were
especially influential on the free-verse poetics of the 1950s and 1960s. By adopting free
verse and colloquial language, Rich, like other younger poets of the 1960s, contributed a
space for American poetry that was distinct from the British poetry endorsed by Eliot
(Brooks-Motl).

The "low-key expectations" and "resignation" that Rich describes characterise
first-wave feminism's campaign for women's legal equality. Later, radical feminism in

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[37] Rich, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 3 Oct. 1976. Box 1, Folder 4. MHP.
[38] At the time Rich wrote the letter, Hacker had already retuned from her six-year expatriation in London
and was teaching two graduate courses in women's studies at George Washington University.

America argued that this proposition of equality prompted women to measure themselves using male standards, ultimately calling for difference and higher expectations for women. "The assimilation of woman to man", according to Sylvie Gambaudo, "and the subservience of her feminine condition to the advancement of man soon became the target of criticism for a second wave of feminists" (95). In light of this 'equality vs. difference' debate, Rich views Hacker's writing as influenced by a British tradition that embodied anxieties concerning the constructions of female voice and experience in post-World War II women's literature. Rich, however, makes the connection between this submissive attitude and the English way of life that Hacker also recognises when complaining in her own correspondence to Joanna Russ when Hacker was living in London: "I've come to have such low expectations of the level of communication I can have with my friends, of the amount of emotional and intellectual energy that people I know are willing to invest in friendship".[39] Hacker also identified this characteristic as a general trait in England (not just with women) when sympathetically supporting her English friend's emotional problems, believing that "his problems might have to do with the emotional poverty of the English upper middle class and perhaps he should get to know some other people".[40]

Later in the letter, Rich cites Plath as an example of a poet who suffered as she strived for public recognition in a masculine tradition: "[t]he world Plath for example was so unfortunately in but not of, the world of male approval. I don't think it was a necessary or a good way of escaping that world; it's just that that was what happened and there was nothing else available".[41] Rich's reference to Plath as a tragic figure who could not cope with this "double bind" (Juhasz 3), writing "a poetry of engagement and integration between self and world . . . as she prepares to end her life" (4), serves as a warning to Hacker of what might become of the woman poet if this strain is not settled.

Yet, Rich excludes modernist poet Stevie Smith from having to adhere to this masculine tradition. From 1934, when she first started to publish, Smith's poetry was described as both "eccentric" and "quirky" by critics of both genders (Huk 1), or as Rich states "something keenly and uniquely her own". Later, using feminist theory, Smith's readers were able to deconstruct and understand this eccentricity. Thus Rich, like

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[39] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 25 Nov. 1976. Box 5, Folder 24. JRP.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Rich, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 3 Oct. 1976. Box 1, Folder 4. MHP.

recent feminist critics, views Smith's "eccentric" writing ''as *ex-centric*", that is ''a liminal position in society and language most famously described by Virginia Woolf and shared by other female modernists in England" (1). Romana Huk continues to explain that ''such positions often produce fractured sightings of the self in the shadow of ascendant cultural forces even as both conspire in the construction of identity" (1). As such, Smith succeeded as an English woman poet due to her digression from the patriarchal norm. Yet, if Smith's unconventional and unorthodox poetics achieve a female transgression from tradition in Rich's view, why then is Hacker's formalism, which challenges the conventional free forms of the 1970s, not feminist? The answer lies in the relationship of the complexity of language and tone of hopelessness to the experience of the female body. Halfway through the letter, Rich underscores the main reason for her disapproval of Hacker's poetics:

> But one thing your use of iambic pentameter and end-rhyme does, it seems to me, is force you toward verbosity and away from compression, toward a kind of forgone conclusion as to where the poem is headed and away from surprise, the fortuitous turn, the unforeseen discovery. And more than anything your body becomes "hidden in words" . . . "a carapace of words / crystalled opaque over your eyes". The strength of those lines in "Geographer" suggests that somewhere you knew you were talking about yourself.[42]

In the above quote, Rich goes on to argue that formalism leads to literariness, as the poems seem "diffuse and discursive when they should have been condensed and direct".[43] The "forgone conclusion" recalls the suffering that repeats itself over and over with a lack of resolution in expressions of indeterminate relationships, as in the cyclical inextricable connection between the couple in the "Villanelle" poem discussed earlier. Without the "unforeseen discovery", the reader is left with no sense of how the theme is resolved or what the speaker learns from this experience. The "body hidden in words" is a reference to both "Forage Sestina" from *Presentation Piece* and "Geographer" from *Separations*, where excessive attention to technique provides a mask or serves as a barrier between the woman speaker and her emotions, in that it represents masculine discourse that is unable to articulate women's experiences and emotions – again, as

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 28 Sept. 1976. Box 5, Folder 22. JRP.

discussed in the poem "Villanelle". In her writings, Rich encourages thinking about the importance of a new women's language as she argues in "When We Dead Awaken", because "for women writers in particular, there is the challenge and promise of a whole new psychic geography to be explored . . . as we try to find language and images for a consciousness we are just coming into" (19).

For Rich, formalism occludes raw expression of bodily experiences, and Hacker's usage of form suggests that this concealment arises from her experiences. Indeed, Hacker's lack of assertiveness in her personal life was part of a general anonymity and seclusion when she lived in London, being distant from poetry readings, women's groups, and even British feminist publications such as *Spare Rib*. Despite the success of the book business, Hacker complained that the "London landscape doesn't have the necessary edges on it, for me . . . a certain kind of intersection, or abrasion with the landscape has always been an active part of what I write & why I write".[44] "Landscape" to Hacker is not only "architecture", but also "nature" and her "human interactions".[45] In fact, her social intercourse suffered during this time as the few people she saw regularly or with any frequency were two women acquaintances, Delany, and David. As such, the geographical, physical and emotional exile that Hacker's verse embodied – depicted by the separation of body and word – also distanced women readers like Rich. If Hacker's early poetics was a product of her male literary environment, one speculates that her intended audience might not have been specifically female.

Rich ends her letter with words of advice that urge Hacker to consider her use of "formal technique" and reflect on her "self-definition", both of which she identifies as crucial to a feminist poetics of women's poetry:

> suppose you were to refuse all the forms of wit and skill you've been given and have exploited so dazzlingly, suppose you were to start listening for the sound of your own voice, naked, would it sound like the poems you have been writing or would it have a deeper pitch, a rougher tone, without sacrificing accuracy, fine ear, love of the sounds of words?[46]

As Rich makes formalism the focus of her criticism, she offers to Hacker women's voice and true emotion as an alternative. For Rich, women poets must move on from a poetry

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[44] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 21 Oct. 1975. Box 5, Folder 20. JRP.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Rich, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 3 Oct. 1976. Box 1, Folder 4. MHP.

of existence and "surviv[al]" to a necessary poetry of female subjectivity, as women poets such as "Anne Bradstreet", "Emily Dickinson", and "H.D." did. By drawing on a tradition of women's poetry, Rich is recognising that Hacker's "work is fundamentally female in the sense that it is part of a tradition of American women poets" (C. Walker 250) in the way it pays "homage indirectly to poets like Louise Bogan and Elinor Wylie".[47] Reviewing *Separations*, however, Cheryl Walker warns of the risks of a poetry set in verse forms that can sound "too literary" when "[a] woman poet who chooses to reify the past tradition of female formalists stands in an uneasy position given the shift of our poetic diction toward the conversational and colloquial" (250).

This occasional precocity and disorientating use of voice that Walker identifies in Hacker's work is what Rich believed hindered a true expression of personal experience. "Those poets who were widely recognized as feminist in the 1970s", L. Keller and C. Miller explain, "typically wrote in a relatively accessible free verse and offered bold first-person testimony to such female experiences as childbirth, menstruation . . . along with celebrations of under-recognized female achievement in the past" (Greene et al. 482). The similarity of their beginnings, as well as their creative abilities, direct our attention toward the strong connection and influence Rich had on Hacker as a woman and as a writer, all of which Hacker explained in her reply to Rich's letter:

> my first reaction [to the letter] was sheer relief: relief at being acknowledged by a woman whose mind and art have been so important to me in these past few years. Also relief on a much less noble scale; the few times we've met in the last year in New York I'd convinced myself that for the same obscure reason, or some reason clear to everyone but me, something I'd done or left undone, said or not said, written or left unwritten, you couldn't extend to me the obvious interest and affection you have, in general for ~~other~~ women writers. I felt hurt, even a bit envious ~~of others~~. I've carried your <u>Selected Poems</u> over two continents, and given a half-dozen copies away, and yet I felt peculiarly cut off from being able to communicate with you.[48]
> (strikethrough and underline in original)

Here, the younger poet outlines her vulnerability in seeking the approval of the older poet, which she confronts in writing but fails to resolve with her literary mother by not

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[47] Ibid.
[48] Hacker, letter to Adrienne Rich. 8 Oct. 1976. Box 2, Folder 7. MHP.

sending the letter.[49] Both Rich's intellect and poetry are qualities that Hacker not only admired in Rich, but also wished to appropriate as she came across her work in the early 1970s.[50] In a 1976 letter to Russ, Hacker raves about Rich, "I envy you Adrienne Rich! She's one of the five people in the world I'd most like to get to know. I carry her *Selected Poems* around like a prayer book. No, like a scouting manual – showing that the fusion of technique, emotion, political acuity and intelligence can be accomplished".[51] Yet this immense reverence was subdued when Hacker received Rich's letter. The tone of Hacker's letter reveals both affection and hurt that Rich would notice or give attention to younger female poets such as Joan Larkin but not to Hacker. Hacker writes of her envy of Rich's review of Larkin's work in the feminist magazine Ms.: "I thought, here is Adrienne praising Joan to the skies for all the things she took me to task for in that letter: technique, use of form with modern diction . . . I was envious".[52] Revising the letter by crossing out "other" and "others", Hacker tries to conceal her reference to specific poets so as not appear spiteful and envious.

Hacker's letter, and her correspondence to Russ, reveals Hacker's thoughts on Rich as a talented and revered yet unfair mentor. The letter presents the discourse of the child that strives but is unable to achieve the approval of the mother. One might examine Hacker's relationship to Rich as a counter reaction to Hacker's earlier relationship with her own mother, who like Rich only makes an appearance in writing after Hacker's first two collections (i.e. post-1976 writing). Hacker describes her mother as a "bad-tempered", "narrow-minded", and "bigoted" woman who disapproved of Hacker, especially resentful of her marriage to Delany, which caused Hacker to fear and dislike her mother for her entire life.[53] Her mother is first mentioned in her third collection, *Taking Notice*, as she understands her motives and forgives her injustices. Hacker comes to terms with her childhood after she returns to the U.S. and becomes

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[49] Because the letter was not signed and did not have a concluding remark, I deduced that it must not have been sent. I also emailed the Adrienne Rich Collection in the Schlesinger Library, at the Radcliff institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University. I made a query about a letter to Rich from Hacker dated 8 Oct. 1976, but they replied that the collection does not have any correspondence from Hacker.

[50] Although Adrienne Rich's *Selected Poems* was published in 1967, Hacker was not aware of it until she settled in London in 1972.

[51] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 25 Feb. 1976. Box 5, Folder 21. JRP.

[52] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 2 Mar. 1977. Box 5, Folder 25. JRP.

[53] Many of Hacker's writings contrast her mother, Hilda, to her mother-in-law, Margaret Delany. Though Hacker separated from Delany in 1976, she maintained good relations with Margaret who she describes as "comfortable, intelligent, food-and-theatre-and-travel-and –friend-loving-middle-aged woman" (Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 1 June 1977. Box, 5, Folder 25. JRP).

aware of the importance of women's relationships and women's community. It is with the help of these groups that Hacker was able to relate to other women who had similar experiences with their mothers as she writes to Russ:

> sometimes I think we are the only two feminists in the world who are not having deep and rewarding relationships with our re-discovered mothers: Adrienne, Honor, June Jordan – well, two of these mothers are dead, but some of the work is about all that reconciliation, rediscovery, acceptance, even gratitude. I'm glad I'm not the only one with an awful one.[54]

Hacker's letter reiterates Rich's explanation of Hacker's relationship to the male literary world, in which Hacker, like many of her female predecessors, mostly looked on at what was going on around her:

> I've been writing for a long time, and, like you, though not for identical reasons, didn't spend my twenties in the poet's world. I was a woman, and what I wrote didn't go down too well in St. Mark's Place or Bolinas. Nothing of mine was published, outside of undergraduate magazines, before 1969, when I was twenty-six. In short, there were (are, even) a lot of unpublished poems around. And some of those early poems went into the two books, especially into *Separations*; perhaps sheer egotism, perhaps an attempt by me aged thirty-three to rescue and justify the lonely girl of twenty whose art had to be self-sustained.[55]

Referring to St. Mark's Place and Bolinas, Hacker illustrates how the cultural and literary scene was gendered during the 1960s. St. Mark's Place was considered the main cultural street in New York's East Village, which was earlier named the Lower East Side. In the 1960s, it was the cheapest neighbourhood in Manhattan and the origin of many literary figures, such as Auden.[56] Not only was it a place that nurtured creativity, but it was also home to many immigrant communities – Jewish, German, Italian, Polish, and Ukrainian.[57] Like St. Marks's Place, Bolinas was also a site of a youth counterculture, but on the West Coast in California instead of the East Coast. Hacker's experience with the

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[54] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 18 June 1977. Box 5, Folder 26. JRP.
[55] Hacker, letter to Adrienne Rich. 8 Oct. 1976. Box 2, Folder 7. MHP.
[56] Samuel Delany provides this sociohistorical context in his book *The Motion of Light in Water* (1988).
[57] Owen, Paul. "St. Mark's Place: is this the coolest street in America?" *The Guardian*, 27 Oct. 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/oct/27/st-marks-place-the-many-lives-of-americas-coolest-street.

literary scene there comes from her days spent with the Spicer Circle in 1965. Becoming
a writer during this time, Hacker strived for public recognition and found it easier to
identify with a distinct male literary inheritance to help her succeed; nevertheless, she
was overshadowed by the attention her husband received for his science fiction novels.
Anecdotes from his autobiography, *The Motion of Light in Water* (1988), mirror
accounts in Hacker's letters about her anxiety over his recognition and her
marginalisation in these circles, as she explains in the letter to Rich:

> For most of my life, the reaction to my being a poet was "well, that's nice
> dear," coupled with the fact that almost everyone who knew me as a
> precocious adolescent artist, or twenty-year-old artist, or twenty-five-
> year-old-artist also knew Chip, and anything I did became meringue
> compared to the enormity and solidity of his multi-volume achievements.
> I've always, apart from that, gotten into, even sought out, non-supportive
> people and environments: Link, who a potentially fine poet himself, made
> a great point of laughing at, ignoring, or trivializing everything I wrote
> (even and especially when it was about him).[58]

In her writings, however, Hacker argues that the difference in their engagement with
the masculine tradition points to the different roots of their feminism. Rich's feminist
poetics was a necessary "survival" strategy against the patriarchal context of marriage
and having three children shortly afterwards, by which poetry was the lifeboat that was
to throw her "back into mere survival, taught [her] that poetry was not something about
fame or gossip or reputations or criticism, but simply the only way of staying alive".[59]
Hacker, on the other hand, was not anti-male as she wrote in a male tradition in the
midst of a male literary group among what she calls a "comfortable male circle" in which
women were "invisible" and "isolated" from each other. The atmosphere was congenial
and "in terms of conversation and cooking, agreeable surroundings, a lifestyle that was
a comfortable hybrid of high-civilized & alternative society (on a low budget), it was a
nice way to live".[60]

     As such, this early male-centred experience nurtured an affinity toward the
masculine tradition without being part of it as an artist: "I find it easier to read Auden –
or Richard Howard – than Muriel Rukeyser: and, often, disturbingly, find there more

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[58] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 6 July 1977. Box 5, Folder 26. JRP.
[59] Rich, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 3 Oct. 1976. Box 1, Folder 4. MHP.
[60] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 28 Sept. 1975. Box 5, Folder 20. JRP.

that I can use".[61] Hacker's life reflected in her early work, therefore, is a product of her choice of artistic and social environment, not of a passive victimhood of patriarchal circumstances. In this way, Rich's early polemics against a male dominated society were not part of Hacker's. Though Hacker agrees with Rich's critique of her tone of voice and language, she disagrees and argues to Russ that her formalism is not obsolete and defends herself as a highly competent verse technician, even better than Rich, who might out of envy of this mastery have criticised the younger poet. Hacker's letter to Russ is a clear indication of Hacker's emerging nomadic consciousness:

> I took umbrage, in my mind, with "but we did all that in the '50s, and struggled out of it again." I don't know who "we" are, and I really don't believe what I've written was all done before in the 50's! In the 50's and in the 60's, I was always being told that I couldn't do what I did; it wasn't contemporary, it wasn't fashionable, in fact. I agree with a lot of what she says. I also heretically think, that, for what it's worth, my formal poetry is better than what Rich did when she was writing formal poetry – that my first two books, on re-reading, are more successful than her first two; which is not such a terrible arrogation of credit to myself, as her first two were published before she was 26. I resist the idea, almost as much coming from Adrienne Rich as from Clayton Eshleman or Ted Berrigan, that there is a certain form of poetry that is 'current' or 'Contemporary' and that other forms are outdated. I haven't always written formal poetry, and I've no idea if I'll continue to write it at all, but the idea of contemporaneity in form as a stricture is bothersome![62]
> (underline in original)

This literary correspondence between two highly individual writers reveals a literary relationship that was not reciprocal, even though they have much in common. They both shared a love for metrical verse, and though Rich moved away from it, "the shadow of the sonnet sequence informs important poems at every stage of her career" (*UV* 132). Both began with a poetics that was indirectly feminist, then approached the political project of women's experience and writing within social, cultural, and historical contexts. Yet, as this discourse about formalism reveals, both were aiming at different kinds of politics through two different visions of women's poetry: the radical, and the transformative or subversive. Hacker attempts to achieve a poetry that integrates content into form, in that she sees that women's use of poetic form is to transform, not

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[61] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 2 Nov. 1976. Box 3, Folder 3. MHP.
[62] Ibid. 12 Oct. 1976.

conform, to masculine traditions, or to recall her words to Karla Hammond, "reclaim the tradition, to rediscover and redefine our place in it and lay claim to our considerable contributions, innovations, and inventions" (22). From this 1980 interview with Hammond onwards, Hacker openly identifies with her matrilineal heritage as potential female role models.

Since Hacker was not involved in the movement in America, or even in England, she was "lacking" in practical "knowledge",[63] and her pre-feminism was illustrated in reviving a tradition of female formalists. Rich, however, represents the American radical feminists that insisted on the unity of the female self as the ideal for a feminist identity. To Rich, it would be more understandable for Hacker to conform to contemporary American women's poetry, espousing free verse in the articulation of women's experiences, given that form invokes patriarchal standards and is limiting as the language of the oppressor. In Rich's view, a true expression of experience necessitates moving beyond formal aesthetics for a woman writer's life and work to become an integrated whole. The all-inclusive, universalist feminism of the second wave leaves Rich making generalisations about poetic form being part of the male literary inheritance that women writers must cast off. The hegemony of Anglo-American feminism, as is discussed later in the chapter, was challenged by succeeding generations of diverse feminists who rejected its dominant and colonising voice.

Interestingly, before Rich advised Hacker on her poetics, Hacker was already contemplating returning to America. With the relationships to the men in her life faltering, Hacker turned to friendships with women to share her experiences as a lonely and isolated expat woman writer and mother. Simultaneous to her thoughts on returning, also before Rich's letter, Hacker's "feminist outlook"[64] began to develop as she became aware of how women and their experiences were invisible and ignored by the art industry. In many of her letters, she expresses feminist thinking and a desire to engage in women's issues in a move away from an interior self-preoccupation and what she calls a "sturm und drang",[65] as she writes to Russ in a 1975 letter:

> Most of my strongest emotional & intellectual reactions these days seem
> to be to political situations that is, the feminist question, whether it's a

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[63] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 30 June 1976. Box 5, Folder 21. JRP.
[64] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 10 Feb. 1976. Box 5, Folder 21. JRP.
[65] Ibid. 28 Sept. 1975.

> reaction to a book or film or piece of journalism, or to a situation I or
> someone else gets into . . . I must . . . devise a way to forge polemic into
> poetry. Sputtering, inarticulate rage doesn't help anyone.[66]

Although these sentiments did not yet surface in Hacker's writing, Rich's reasoning struck a chord with Hacker at a time when she needed external validation and effective stimulation in the right direction. Indeed, her following collection, *Taking Notice*, illustrates how she modified her poetics to allow the reader to focus more on her political message. This change in her poetics reflects the larger post-feminist shift that emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a backlash against the hegemony of second-wave feminism. In *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (2000), Ruth Rosen explains how many young women in the late 1970s "felt conflicted and ambivalent about feminism" (274). She goes on to explain that these women wanted to enjoy all the freedom that resulted from the movement – "freedom, career, marriage, and motherhood"– without the support of a movement and without "the tyrannical scrutiny with which feminists judged other women" (275-276). Rich described this time as a "laid-back" decade in comparison to the activism of the movement.[67] The feminist Susan Bolotin, who coined the term "post-feminist" in the 1982 article "Voices of the Post-Feminist Generation", found that her "activism [had] become more of the money-giving, letter-writing sort" (275). Feminist writers of the 1980s, such as Cora Kaplan, described this change as a move away from patriarchal attack to a woman-centred vision: "All my published writing has been within and for feminism. These days, however, . . . I write for women, rather than as in my early work, constructing a polemic directed against men" (60). Because Hacker was committed to the feminist cause but not inimical toward men, she reflects the "post-feminist" conditions of the transformative 1980s.

"The consensus of second wave feminism", according to Ann Brooks, "was increasingly challenged from both within and outside feminism" (8). The pressure from inside stemmed from "the political impact of women of color's critique of the racist and ethnocentric assumptions of a largely white, middle-class feminism" (8). As for Jewish American women writers, Susan Gubar notes that "those publishing during the last

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[66] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 21 Oct. 1975. Box 5, Folder 20. JRP.
[67] Rich, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 3 Oct. 1976. Box 1, Folder 4. MHP.

decades of the twentieth century – tended to use their artistry to critique American prejudice by emphasizing its commonalities and differences with anti-Semitic bigotry" ("Jewish American" 235). This sense of connection stems from American Jews' critique of the privilege of being white in an attempt to return to a racial category, allowing them to forge "a deep connection to a Jewish history of discrimination and otherness . . . an experience of prejudice and awareness of the contingency of whiteness" (Rosenbaum).

The diversity and difference that characterised post-feminism permitted Jewish American women writers like Hacker to criticise the injustice of racism through autobiographical writings of Jewish mothers of black children, as in Hacker's poems about her biracial daughter. Giving birth to, breastfeeding, and nurturing a black child in the 1970s raised Hacker's awareness of blackness and racism in the U. S. "Bearing the multiracial child", according to Gubar, "delivers the mother into a new conception of not simply admitting or acknowledging but embracing and loving difference" (*Racechanges* 226). In "1973" from her collection *Assumptions* (1985), Hacker writes a sonnet about reactions toward the birth of her biracial daughter:

> "I'm pregnant," I wrote to her in delight
> from London, thirty, married, in print. A fools-
> cap sheet scrawled slantwise with one minuscule
> sentence came back. "I hope your child is white."
> I couldn't tear the pieces small enough.
> I hoped she'd be black as the ace of spades,
> though hybrid beige heredity had made
> that as unlikely as the spun-gold stuff
> sprouted after her neonatal fur.
> I grudgingly acknowledged her "good hair,"
> which wasn't, very, from my point of view.
> "No tar brush left," her father's mother said.
> "She's Jewish and she's white," from her cranked bed
> mine smugly snapped.
>   She's Black. She is a Jew. (19)

Being a non-conformist, Hacker takes "delight" in shocking and upsetting her mother with the news of her pregnancy. Against the wishes of her mother, she is away in "London, thirty, married" to a black man. Her mother's racism is clear in her response, "I hope your child is white", which sets Hacker off, wishing that "she'd be black as the ace of spades", but conceding that with a light-skinned father ("hybrid beige") that would be

very "unlikely as the spun-gold stuff / sprouted after her neonatal fur". She ends the sonnet by defiantly confirming her daughter's two identities, "She's Black. She is a Jew".

By the same logic, Hacker's formalism is innovative in its nomadic, subversive potential by defining "itself in opposition to existing aesthetic assumptions" ("Female Tradition" 92). Hacker's formalist practice, therefore, is not a conformation to the tradition of the father. Rather, it is transformation and development of an indistinct women's tradition, as Finch argues, "embracing the female poetic tradition has been, for [women formalists], a meaningful form of feminist innovation" (93).

Taking Notice: A Model of Feminist Nomadic Consciousness

Taking Notice is the first of Hacker's collections to articulate and forge links with the female poetic tradition through integrating women's experiences and feelings into poetic form. This is the first of her collections that addresses the different women in her life and her relationship with them. The book can be read as one extended taking and giving of notice in six formally diverse yet thematically connected sections: "Feeling and Form"; "Living in the Moment"; "The Hang-Glider's Daughter"; "Occasions"; "La Fontaine De Vaucluse"; and "Taking Notice".

The opening poem, "Feeling and Form", is an announcement of this new direction. The articulation of personal "feeling" answers Rich's call for a deeper engagement with "the sound of your own voice, naked", and the "form" asserts defiance in continuing to use formal technique "to join and affirm the coexistent tradition of women poets using fixed forms in revisionary, adversarial, or indeed revolutionary stances" (Hacker, *UV* 26). As such, the title connects that which has been disconnected under dominant ideologies of free verse in women's writing to articulate a nomadic consciousness. Hacker invites the reader to 'take notice' that "form – quite often traditional form – is part of what is being expressed and felt, as much a part of the feeling in a poem as the various voices of personal and social reality also present in it" (Lawrence 98). This feminist resisting and rethinking of the literary formal tradition is articulated directly in her use of "vessels" in the poem "Introductory Lines" from the collection *Taking Notice*, as she writes defiantly:

> Women and other radicals who choose
> venerable vessels for subversive use

> affirm what Sophomore Survey often fails
> to note: God and Anonymous are not white males.
> "We always crafted language just as they did.
> We have the use, and we reclaim the credit." (*FC* 243)

Here, Hacker puts a twist on the meaning of "radical" as a woman who engages critically with patriarchy, but also someone who "reclaim[s] the credit". She argues that formalism is not an exclusive male tradition as "God" and "Anonymous" writers are "not white males". The situational irony that connects "venerable" with "subversive" shows her mixing high art with indirect language in an attempt to invigorate fixed traditions. It is ironic that something as emotionally expressive and lofty as poetry can be used for political purposes to rebel against social and literary traditions. Her use of "subversive" is a sanguine articulation of her feminist nomadic consciousness, where "the subversion of set conventions define the nomadic state", as Braidotti observes (*NS* 26). Although the tradition is "problematic and less fully developed", as Finch notes, nevertheless women poets "reclaim, glorify, and build on" the tradition of "Bradstreet, Wheatley, Sigourney, and legions of even less-known poets, lost poets, unpublished poets, oral poets" ("Female Tradition" 91). A female feminist poetics "is not based in the imitation of the fathers but in the reclamation of the unfinished work of silent, or silenced, foremothers" (91). Hacker reclaims her female formal tradition with the rhyming end pattern ("choose-use", "fails-males", and "did-credit"), by this, challenging conventional views of women's formal poetry.

   Taking Notice offers a number of forms, from pantoums to canzones to sestinas. However, the sonnet is the predominate form that offers dialogue as well as structure for troublesome female relationships, as in the poem "July 19, 1979":

> I'll write a sonnet just to get in form,
> . . . .
> I must avoid the self-indulgent stance
> of lovesick troubadours— that isn't wise, (250)

Hacker's choice of the sonnet shows her engagement with the traditional theme of love. In a 1993 anthology of twentieth-century American formalist women's poetry, *A Formal Feeling Comes*, Annie Finch notes that "[Female] poets are reclaiming a formal inheritance more openly than women have done in many decades, and their work

demonstrates that the long tradition of women's formal poetry is evolving once again" (3). According to Craddock, "in an opus that contains fourteen collections and spans over three decades", formalism, and in particular "the sonnet, is not just an occasional presence but often the very essence of Hacker's poetics" (133). Hacker mostly writes using the Petrarchan sonnet.

"Taking Notice", the title piece of the collection, is a significant example of how Hacker's love poems are informed by her dialogues with the tradition of love sonnets. Hacker begins a dialogue with Rich and the tradition of the sonnet by alluding to Rich's "Twenty-One Love Poems" from *The Dream of a Common Language* (1978). "Taking Notice" shows a moving tribute as well as a creative engagement with Rich when Hacker could not reply to Rich's letter directly, preferring instead to begin and maintain a lifelong silent dialogue with Rich through form. In this respect, Hacker shows Rich that though she agrees with her, she can still connect "feeling with form" in an act of Braidottian ''critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour" (*NS* 28). Hacker explains this poetic dialogue: "But I did not have the courage to answer her letter and engage in what might have been another kind of dialogue. I think I have been attempting – by means of poems – to have that dialogue with her since" (*UV* 26). As she continues to write in formal verse, Hacker enters into a literary dialogue in an attempt to prove that a poetics of feminist consciousness can be written in metrical verse.

Hacker looks back at Rich's theme of an intimate relationship and how it progresses. Rich's "Twenty-One" opens with a tone of despair and hopelessness that reflects feminist frustrations of the late 1970s. On the surface, Hacker's poem opens on a not-so-bleak outlook, but similarly through the course of the poem the speaker is anxious and in doubt regarding the success of the relationship. The poem opens to the speaker conceding patriarchy's dominance and strong presence over women's lives in shaping and perpetuating female stereotypical images: "My child wants dolls, a tutu, that girls' world made / pretty and facile" (288). Then, Hacker immediately moves to the challenge of love in line with Rich's earlier articulation: "Sometimes. Sometimes I / want you around uncomplicatedly" (288). Her wish for "uncomplicated[ness]" is a multi-layered word that expresses difficulty on many levels. In the public sphere, it carries the weight of all the complications and obstacles that the 1980s-patriarchal society imposes. Moreover, "uncomplicatedly" expresses the internal conflicts, tensions,

and anxieties of a complicated relationship, which could lead to a form of self-inflicted destruction, as shown later in the poem:

> . . . We, women, patient mockers of our own
> enterprise, are mined with self-destruction.
> We build what we need. We wreck what we build. (291)

The poem, ''Taking Notice'', is not a characteristically feminist work, but it ''establishes a woman-centred world in which the default human perspective is female'' (Myk 89). The strength of these sonnets is in the assertiveness of love and the liberation to choose, as exemplified in the verb "want". In the repetition of the verb (twelve times in the sonnet sequence), the poem communicates the speaker's need articulate an independent representation of feminist subjectivity. In her daughter's articulation, "want" is used for the sake of irony to juxtapose the desire for conformity as opposed to the desire for nonconformity. Clearly, "want" is significant in the rhetoric of this poem as a language of female empowerment and candidness that is a significant departure from "I don't know what it is I want to happen" (81) in "Waiting" from *Presentation Piece*. Here, the third person speaker of her earlier poems becomes "I", asserting her voice and female subjectivity as a mark of her emerging feminism. With this new-found decisiveness, the speaker is resolute on finding stability and fixity in her new relationships but is somewhat doubtful given that all her previous relationships have been unsuccessful. She needs guidance and reassurance to quell her doubts, as she expresses in the second-half of sonnet one:

> . . . You are right: if we
> came to new love and friendship with a sad
> baggage of endings, we would come in bad
> faith, and bring, rooted already, seed
> of a splitting. Serial monogamy
> is cogwheeled hurt . . . (288)

In the lines above, the speaker admits that a "new" relationship is doomed if disappointments are carried from previous experiences. She uses the metaphor of emotional "baggage" to suggest a traveller that journeys to new relationships, carrying along "bad faith" instead of optimistic anticipations. In the metaphor of plant reproduction, "seed" connotes growing of "bad faith" that is "rooted" in a prior

relationship that "splits" the "new love and friendship" before it has a chance to develop. "Serial" and "cogwheeled" create the image of a never-ending cycle of "hurt" in the relationship. These images communicate a fear of failure because of her earlier experiences. The speaker is not only rethinking her feminist subjectivity in this sonnet sequence, but she is also reconsidering her approach to love and friendship.

To narrate an intimate relationship, Hacker uses the different parts of the first sonnet to articulate different views about the relationship by posing a tension in the first part and then resolving it in the second part. The octave expresses the speaker's unrealistic expressions of love, and the sestet expresses the addressee's rational voice. This juxtaposition seems to contrast a young, fastidious character, "I / want you around uncomplicatedly" (288), with a mature and experienced one when the speaker concedes, "You are right" (288). Hacker subverts the traditional themes of love by changing the sonnet division between sestet and octet and adding a couplet at the end. This transformation seeks to subvert and take ownership of the form, while engaging with its amorous tradition. Taking the liberty to move up the volta, or turn, between these parts, suggests a feminist ethics in presenting a balance of viewpoints. To release the tension, the relationship is contrasted with the quotidian in the last two lines: "The neighbour's tireless radio sings lies / through the thin wall behind my desk and bed" (288).

This candidness is also seen in the relationship between Hacker and her mother. In a 1983 letter, Rich commends Hacker on this new theme in her writing, describing Hacker's words as "powerful and heart-breaking, a new kind of voice in your work – brava!"[68] Hacker's candidness responds to Rich's emphasis on truthful expression in women's writing: "I think women poets today . . . have a responsibility to work out of our own truths: a responsibility to poetry and to our own and each other's lives".[69] Hacker addresses the narrow-mindedness and conventionality that made her mother a constant source of fear and dislike as she was growing up:

> She twists scraps of her hair in unshelled snails
> crossed by two hairpins. It takes forty-five
> minutes. I'm twelve. I've come to pee. I've
> left *Amazing Stories* and *Weird Tales*

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[68] Rich, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 15 Mar. 1983. Box 1, Folder 12. MHP.
[69] Rich, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 3 Oct. 1976. Box 1, Folder 4. MHP.

in the hamper. "Don't believe what you read.
. . . .
. . . . Not freed
to tell her what I thought of *More Than Human*,
I wipe between my mottled oversized
girl-haunches. I'll be one of the despised,
I know, as she forbids with her woman's
body, flaccid, gaunt in a greyed nightgown,
something more culpable for us than "men." (289)

Now as an adult woman, Hacker reflects intellectually and emotionally on the pressure that her mother was always under as a housewife, mother, and full-time worker. Hacker contemplates her mother's shabby appearance. She is repelled at how her mother made her appearance deliberately hideous with the "scraps of her hair in unshelled snails" wearing the "greyed nightgown", looking "flaccid" and "gaunt" before going to bed. The main difference between Hacker and her mother is her mother's distrust of language: "Don't believe what you read". In the space of one sonnet, Hacker lists three publications that she was reading at twelve: *Amazing Stories* (1926-1939), *Weird Tales* (1923-1940), and *More than Human* (1953). Reading these early science fiction magazines and books were instrumental in shaping Hacker's artistic imagination. Her engagement with language began at a very early age, as she explains to Annie Finch in an interview:

> The first poem I can remember writing which was a bit more than doggerel was a sonnet, written when I was twelve, about almost "of course," mortality. It seemed, then, very natural to me to try writing a sonnet . . . I had already read and re-read scores of sonnets: by Shakespeare, by Dylan Thomas, by Millay, by e.e. cummings. Cummings was a favorite of many reading addicted teenagers of my generation. ("An Interview")

According to this interview, Hacker was writing sonnets at the time her mother was telling her not to "believe what you read". These contrasts developed Hacker's nomadic consciousness in "not taking any kind of identity as permanent" (*NS* 57), thus understanding and acknowledging generation gaps and the different experiences women go through. Hacker's reflections on her mother have made her consider and fear how her bouts of anger might similarly affect her relationship with her own daughter:

> . . . In

> another room, my daughter, home from school,
> audibly murmurs "spanking, stupid, angry
> voice," —— a closet drama where I am
> played second-hand to unresisting doll
> daughters. Mother and daughter both, I see
> myself, the furious and unforgiven;
> myself, the terrified and terrible;
> the child punished into autonomy;
> the unhealed woman hearing her own voice damn
> her to the nightmares of the brooding girl. (294)

Hacker is intent on candidness in all her female relationships, even with her daughter. The speaker sees herself as both "mother and daughter": she is "furious'' and ''terrified'' towards her mother and ''unforgiven'' and ''terrible'' in her daughter's eyes. This juxtaposition of emotions and alliteration of the sounds ('f' with "furious-unforgiven", and 't' with "terrified-terrible") emphasizes the speaker's identification with the child's emotions and reaction and illustrates the blurring of female roles across different generations. This matrilineal connection becomes more significant in her work as Hacker begins to lead a "woman-identified life"[70] that revolves around her female friends, peers, and family. Her personal life becomes increasingly reflected in her art as these scenes with her mother and daughter create a narrative that is bolder and stronger than before. These raw experiences show a deeper identification with her feelings of anger and deep love that are brought out by these relationships to women. In taking the personal and the private as subject matter for her art, Hacker forms her poetry from her life experiences.

In addition to the complexities of mother-daughter relationships, the poem examines how the body is a complex and nonunitary structure of intense emotion through metaphors of body "choreography" and body "cartography". The first four lines of the third sonnet play out the speaker's earlier fear of separation. Using the oxymoron "jackbooted choreography", the speaker attempts to describe how the relationship is severed when the emotional pain that feels like "hobnailed cabrioles across a brain" pulls "them apart" rather than pulls them together (289). However, underneath this "choreography" of the body, the speaker uses a language of affection in the second part of the sonnet to describe how the female body becomes a "tender cartography" that

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[70] Hacker, letter to Joanna Russ. 12 Oct. 1976. Box 5, Folder 23. JRP.

enacts Elizabeth Grosz's "cartography of the body" (*Volatile Bodies* 56). Grosz explains that "[t]he body is quite literally rewritten, traced over, by desire. Desire is based on a veritable cartography of the body (one's own as well as that of the other)" (56). This embodied geography enacts a "nomadic consciousness" that "aims to rethink the unity of the subject" (*NS* 57) to represent the different experiences women go through. It is this diversity of experiences that connects Braidotti's feminist nomadic subject to Irigaray's notion of gender difference that "combines issues of embodiment with an acute awareness of complexity and multiplicity and [it] defends a nonunitary vision of the subject in general and of the feminine in particular" (78).

Throughout this chapter, I have shown how Hacker's early correspondence with Adrienne Rich was influential in the shift in her early work from dialogues in the male poetic tradition to asserting her engagement with a female formal tradition. This move to a feminist formalist poetics from 1980 shows a shift in the speaking subject's relationship to the body from one that isolates the body from both language and feeling to a feminist poetics that draws on poetic form as a vessel that engages with female experience. Hacker's awareness that female experience is a constant process of learning and change is articulated at the end of "Taking Notice":

> . . . Can I believe
> persistent love demands change, not forgive-
> ness, accept the hard gift of your different sight? (300)

The "different sight" reflects her understanding of the diversity of female experiences and its relation to individual perception. Hacker's resistance to hegemonic, conventional views of art and subjectivity reflects Braidotti's nomadic consciousness and underscores the origins of her nomadic subjectivity in her early poetry. The following chapters address the thematic and formal shifts in her feminist poetics. In the next chapter, I examine the speaking subject's changing relationship to the female body as a result of her breast cancer experience. This trauma of the body allows her to connect to the traumas of other bodies in history when the scar becomes a historical representation of suffering and locates the body in Jewish history and identity.

CHAPTER TWO

Cartographies of the Posthuman Feminist Body in *Winter Numbers*

> . . . They wore the blunt tattoo,
> a scar, if they survived, oceans away.
> Should I tattoo my scar? What would it say?
> ⸻ Marilyn Hacker, "Cancer Winter", 1994

> Upon my body is superimposed
> the map of a Europe I never knew:
> my olive skin, my eyes, my hips, my nose
> all mark me as an Ashkenazi Jew
> if anyone were looking for a mark
> to indicate the designated prey.
> ⸻ Marilyn Hacker, "August Journal", 1994

Introduction

This chapter examines Marilyn Hacker's breast cancer poetry in her seventh collection, *Winter Numbers* (1994). A second shift in Hacker's oeuvre appears when she imagines her "body" as a "map of Europe" that ''superimpose[s]'' upon her the history of her "Ashkenazi Jew[ish]" heritage in ''August Journal''. The metaphor of the map arises out of the postmastectomy "scar" that she uses as a historical sign ("tattoo") of personal and collective suffering. The scarred body is a "revised manuscript/radically rewritten" by the victims of the Holocaust in ''Cancer Winter''. Examining Hacker's metaphorical treatment, I read the body through Braidotti's conceptualization of 'cartography' as a mapping of cultural and historical identity onto the female body. This collection marks Hacker's first use of the metaphor of the 'braid' in ''Year's End'' as a metaphor of female intimacy and interconnectivity, showing Hacker to develop and articulate a female model of nomadism. Braidotti's feminist version of the posthuman is useful to understand how Hacker rethinks the body's ontological status to provide relational foundations beyond the limits and boundaries of the body.

The political and historical image of the body reveals a departure from Hacker's metaphorical mapping of love onto the body, which she illustrates in her earlier poems, namely "Taking Notice". I draw on Stephanie Hartman's reading of the postmastectomy

"body as map" metaphor (Hartman 162) to provide a lens of how the body manifests as a multi-layered and reflective map that links the illnesses and political disasters of her generation to her personal fight with breast cancer. Catherine Cucinella's analysis of the "racial-ethnic body" (114) is also useful in understanding how Hacker maps the ''history of Holocaust victims and survivors onto the scarred body'' (114). The map metaphor connects an embedded historical position of her Jewish roots and an embodied posthuman condition as a result of her mastectomy. Hacker takes up questions of bodily performance and image to highlight the different ways embodiment is experienced that can be understood and examined in light of the posthuman feminist view of the body. She also questions how she, as a cancer patient, can reposition herself "in relation to the altered landscape of'' her ''body, and to the altered landscape of [her] identity'' (Twiddy 80-81).

In ''Against Elegies'', Hacker interrogates the oversimplification of conventional elegies and metaphors of illness to write a new narrative of disease and recovery, which can be understood in light of Melissa Zeiger's examination of the elegy as a chosen form to express the pain and grief of women's experiences with breast cancer. The sense of emotional and physical alienation and isolation in her pre-1980s writings of exile, which she overcame with the support of a women's community, returns in a darker and more sombre tone as the scarred body evokes a partial and incomplete view of the self. Moreover, the speaking subject's view of her body expands from a complex structure of unitary love in her post-1980 poetry to a "nonunitary, multi-layered" (*NS* 11), posthuman vision of the self that connects the post cancerous body to other bodies in crisis. As such, earlier expressions of female interconnectedness that were articulated in *Taking Notice* return in *Winter Numbers* to reflect on the braiding of women's life and death experiences. Her quest for alternative metaphors of experience marks the growth of nomadic thinking as Hacker moves toward a transcultural feminist poetics in her later poetry.

"Against Elegies": AIDS and Cancer Poems

Winter Numbers is the collection that documents the start of Hacker's experience with breast cancer in 1993. It also responds to the illnesses and suffering of others. Death and illness permeate the entire collection as the titles of all three sections

resonate with the reality of mortality: "Against Elegies", "Elysian Fields", and "Cancer Winter". The first and second sections discuss the losses of her generation from cancer, AIDS, and suicide; in addition to these themes, however, the third section examines them from the lens of the personal experience of cancer. In addition to this collection, Hacker published "Journal Entries" (1999), which includes notes from her personal journals after discovering the breast lump and undergoing treatment that covered a three-year period from November 1992 to July 1995. These journals also document the personal and social events surrounding that period that can be read against and with the poems.

Winner of the 1994 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize and the 1994 Lambda Literary Award, *Winter Number*'s importance originates from the way it gives voice to the unacknowledged breast cancer poems published before it. The collection also joins the voices of other women who have experienced and written about this topic; among those women is Audre Lorde, to whom Hacker dedicated "Year's End" from the same collection. Most notably, Audre Lorde's *The Cancer Journals* (1980) was very influential in increasing the awareness of breast cancer experiences as well as in creating the ethical need that writing about breast cancer is an act of politics. Lorde's *Journals* made a significant ''difference not only in the visibility of breast cancer and in the possibilities for writing about it but also in creating an imperative: not only should one write about one's experience of cancer, but doing so is a political act and doing so correctly is an ethical act" (Herndl, "Our Breasts" 221). At the start of her autobiography, Lorde asserts,

> I am a post-mastectomy woman who believes our feelings need voice in order to be recognized, respected, and of use. . . May these words serve as encouragement for other women to speak and to act out of our experiences with cancer and with other threats of death, for silence has never brought us anything of worth. (8-9)

Alicia Ostriker's sequence "The Mastectomy Poems" from *The Crack in Everything* (1996) is also an account of a woman's breast cancer experience. Hacker notes that she was responsible for the publication of these poems in the *Kenyon Review* in 1994 ("Journal Entries" 218). Hacker refers to the poems as she looks for previous poetic accounts of breast cancer. She notes that these poems are "vividly about a woman living through and after breast cancer, and embodies her refusal to be diminished to the

'victim' role, while chronicling her fear and loss" (218). Hacker reflects on Ostriker's work in 1995, after her own breast cancer experience, when contemplating existential questions of life and death.

The publication date of Hacker's collection preceding Ostriker's confirms Melissa Zeiger's observation that "[u]ntil November 1994, when Marilyn Hacker published her *Winter Numbers*, no single author's volume of poetry, as far as I'm aware, has been mostly devoted to poems about breast cancer" (139). In fact, cancer became an important theme in Hacker's later poetry not only because of her personal experience, but also because her father suffered from pancreatic cancer and died at an early age as she writes in "Letter to Julie in a New Decade" from the same collection, "My father was forty-six years old / before he 'settled down' in a career. / Cancer settled in him. They never told / us what it was. It killed him in a year" (48). This grim attention to the emotional and physical effects of the illness shows a darker turn in Hacker's work that stems from a larger examination of illness and mortality. As the body is home to all these ills, it is the embodiment of suffering, as opposed to love, that marks this deeper exploration. The body also becomes the site of political tragedies, as ethnic history is evoked to connect to the suffering of Holocaust victims.

The title of the collection evokes this sombre tone in its double play on "Winter" and "Numbers". The reference to "winter" provides the bleak setting for death, old age, pain, loneliness, and endings as it was the season of Hacker's mastectomy. "Numbers" refers to a person's age as well as the "other numbers": stage of cancer, cancer cell counts, and the numbers of those survived and dead. Bringing these two dark denotations together – "winter" and "numbers" – the poet evokes the trope of mortality to raise awareness of this deadly threat to women. In a feminist narrative of breast cancer, Hacker widens Lorde's treatment of identity, silence, and the body to give voice to both corporeal as well as historical tragedies, which will be discussed later in the chapter. Moreover, the oxymoronic juxtaposition of "winter" with "numbers" shows Hacker evoking seasonal cyclical time against numerical linear time to resist the chronological and coherent model of illness that dictates either the cure or death of the patient. Using "winter", Hacker is writing another depiction of cancer that includes emotional hardship and the threat of remission, which her rhetorical question "I woke up, still alive. Does that mean 'cured'?" evokes (90).

This rhetorical question runs through her post-1994 work where death remains an open question, as she writes in a later poem, "Scars on Paper", from *Squares and Courtyards*:

> The pain and fear some courage extinguished
> at disaster's denouement come back
> daily, banal: is that brownish-black
> mole the next chapter? Was the ache enmeshed
> between my chest and armpit when I washed
> rogue cells' new claw, or just a muscle ache? (16)

Having suffered breast cancer, the speaker's resoluteness is "extinguished" when she finds the slightest "brownish-black / mole" on her body. Living in constant "pain and fear", she is obsessed with whether this mark represents "rogue cells' new claw" and the "next chapter" of her illness, or "just a muscle ache". The oxymoronic pairing of the speaker's feelings reveals the in-between state that cancer patients experience: "fear" and "courage", "extinguished" and "disaster", and "denouement" and "come back". Caught between the shifting boundaries of health and sickness, the speaker is constantly negotiating impulses to notice and examine, or to move on and overlook.

Throughout the course of *Winter Numbers*, the speaker exists in neither position, in an-in-between phase of the narrative moment, or what she calls "the expanding moment, / present, infinitesimal, infinite" (95). At the end of the sonnet sequence she observes, "The late sunlight, the morning rain, will bring / me back to where I started, whole, alone" (90), thus returning to the first sonnet and indicating the passage of time in the "darkening day's / contours" (77). The incoherence that is presented through Hacker's model takes her back and forth between present and past, like the cycle of the seasons, to reflect on her experience of breast cancer and the traumas of others from the past and present.

Winter Numbers is an extended elegy that laments the physical suffering of oneself and others, while trying constantly to find "another metaphor" or a new model to express these novel embodied experiences. By evoking the named and unnamed victims, Hacker as a woman poet reworks the masculinist elegiac model of rendering up the dead into a personal mourning that keeps an affectionate connection with the deceased. However, women poets have not been central figures in the tradition of the elegy because, as Celeste Schenck suggests, "the genre itself excludes the feminine from

its perimeter except as muse principle or attendant nymph" (13). Schenck notes the difference between the male and female elegists is:

> [b]uilt upon a different set of internalized relations with predecessors, the female elegy is a poem of connectedness; women inheritors seem to achieve poetic identity in relation to ancestresses, in connection to the dead, whereas male initiates need to eliminate the competition to come into their own. (15)

This is because engagement, rather than mortality's disconnection, helps evoke a better understanding of oneself and life. Women poets have revised and challenged the predominant elegiac tradition by "reject[ing] the oppressive or sacrificial structures of the traditional elegy" and by being "importantly pioneering for other elegiac genres, notably AIDS and breast cancer elegies" (Zeiger 63).

An early example of a breast-cancer elegy is Adrienne Rich's "A Woman Dead in her Forties" from *A Dream of a Common Language: Poems 1974-1977,* which describes a woman who dies from breast cancer. Hacker refers to this poem in her journal entry dated 14 January 1993, immediately following her operation and while undergoing chemotherapy. She describes it as a "bleak elegy", suggesting her distress because of its depressing and gruesome details. In the first lines, the poem confronts the truth of this illness with a shocking image:

> Your breasts/   sliced-off   The scars
> dimmed   as they would have to be
> years later (53)

The graphic "/" imitates an incision, but it also suggests the separation and disembodiment of this part of the body that is replaced by the "scars" that will be "dimmed" and less distinct than before. The gaps within the lines allude to the silences and reticence associated with these breast-cancer narratives, a "mute loyalty" as she calls it. Reflecting how they "never spoke at [her] deathbed of [her] death", the speaker demands an end to the silence that kept the friends apart in life: "but from here on / I want more crazy mourning, more howl, more keening" (53). The speaker views the friend's regression from the religiously cultured "neo-protestant tribe" to the pagan superstitions of her "amber beads / strung with turquoise from an Egyptian grave". As David Kennedy notes, this reverse movement indicates "a journey back to the culturally

unmediated roots of mourning. Women wailing are more effective than modern women's culturally learned and sanctioned 'mute loyalty'" (75).

In "Against Elegies", Hacker both challenges and complicates the elegy's power of storytelling to fix sorrow: she depicts the vagueness of illness and trauma and the indefinite number of lives they claim. She confronts and examines her own cancer and mortality through the suffering of others as she memorializes them in her lines:

> James has cancer. Catherine has cancer.
> Melvin has AIDS.
> Whom will I call, and get no answer?
> My old friends, my new friends who are old,
> or older, sixty, seventy, take pills
> with meals or after dinner. Arthritis
> scourges them. (11)

In an attempt to resist death by wryly entitling her poem "Against Elegies", Hacker mourns a small group of friends as a declaration against succumbing to despair and hopelessness by memorialising their names ("James", "Catherine", and "Melvin") in poems. Through her antielegiac stance, Hacker is "deconstruct[ing]", as Schenck explains, "the genre's valorization of separation by means of apotheosis" through "refusing resolution and the absolute rupture that is death" (18). As Zeiger argues, Hacker's poems refuse "a self-elegizing impulse and a premature leave-taking" (165). At the same time, the elegiac speaker is aware of the "existential scandal of death" (Hacker "Can Poetry Console") and laments the probable loss of these loved ones. For example, in "Scars on Paper", Hacker remembers a friend: "On paper, someone flowers / and flares alive. I knew her. But she's dead" (15). When the speaker in "Against Elegies" asks "Whom will I call?" instead of the more personal "who will I call?", she is indicating that she is inquiring about someone new for her to offer emotional support, searching for a community to mourn together after her friends have left. The rhetorical question is a call for an answer to this predicament.

The poem works against a linear movement in the "end-rhymes, which are often suppressed"[71] and irregular line lengths in the rest of the stanza, all of which create a tension that cannot contain this direct narrative of disease and grief. Iain Twiddy, commenting on Hacker's elegiac process, explains that "[i]t is not just the large number

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[71] Rich, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 19 July 1991. Box 3, Folder 9. MHP.

of deaths that places elegy under the strain of generating an 'answer', but also what has caused the deaths" (93). The prosody of the poem invites us to make connections with Rich's view that, for Hacker to achieve female expression, the poems must be more irregular so as to suggest illogical connections. Indeed, Hacker, in sensing something new about her own writing, sent "Against Elegies" to Rich for her opinion. Rich, impressed with the long poem, wrote to Hacker of her favourable impression:

> It feels like you're breaking into something new: a rawness, an uneasiness, that has often been held at arm's length by the sheer virtuosity and elegance of your style. It feels to me as if it's on the way somewhere, not there yet. I found myself, nonetheless, responding to it as if I were a Chinese immigrant on Angel Island, reading a poem by an earlier occupant of the same cell, inscribed on the wall, telling of the same loss, fear, sense of betrayal, I was feeling.[72]

The "jaggedness"[73] of the poem reveals that Hacker began to work her feelings into creative subversions of poetic form and strong expression. The irregularity reveals Hacker undoing the model of the traditional elegy from lamenting an older generation dying of old age to "the young-middle-aged / whom something, or another something, kills / before the chapter's finished, the play staged" (11). This unconventional elegy pattern acts to disrupt the closure that comes with dying from old age. This grim self-consciousness of the fate of her particular generation is grasped when Hacker learns of her own breast cancer as she asserts in "August Journal": "It *is* exceptional to die in bed / at ninety-eight" (91). Likewise, when Hacker shows poet Marie Ponsot the manuscript of "Against Elegies", Ponsot thinks "of her five or six Queens College colleagues, closer to [Hacker's] age than hers, who had been killed by cancer," noting "that the prevalence of cancer in [Hacker's] generation – not to mention the scourge of AIDS – was unprecedented" ("Journal Entries" 223). This is the second way, according to Schenck, that female elegists subvert the male elegy, through ''reconstruct[ing]'' the genre by "imagining new or alternative elegiac scenarios that arise from a distinctly feminine psycho-sexual experience" (18). This deviation of elegiac linearity from the old to the young reverts to a desire for coherence and linearity:

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.

> Morose, unanswerable, the list
> of thirty- and forty-year-old suicides
> (friends' lovers, friends' daughters) insists
> in its lengthening: something's wrong.
> The sixty-five-year-olds are splendid, vying
> with each other in work hours and wit.
> . . . .
> But their children are dying. (11)

The gratitude for the health and longevity of an older generation is played out against the devastation by suicide of the "thirty- and forty-year-old['s]". Hacker's confusion ("something's wrong") alludes to a bigger fear she had of getting breast cancer because many of the women around her, especially feminist writers from her generation, had either died from the disease, like Lorde and Sonny Wainwright, or had lived through the experience and survived, like Alicia Ostriker. With that threat surrounding her, Hacker was constantly, "feeling [her] own breasts in tentative and terrified self-examination" ("Journal Entries" 207). Hacker's self-examinations reflected "recent attempts to reposition the female cancer patient as actively engaged in fighting against her breast cancer" (Bahar 1028) as articulated by women's breast cancer autobiographies.

Although the physical and emotional effects of cancer and AIDS have been received and expressed differently by the sciences and arts, Hacker brings them together as there are certain similarities between the politics of AIDS and breast cancer. According to Zeiger,

> the analogies between the discourses of AIDS and breast cancer are important—both are increasingly powerful, effective, and politically sophisticated sources of activism, and both are the necessary response by groups who consider their lives particularly vulnerable to public indifference or hostility. (138)

Differentiating between them, however, Zeiger notes that AIDS elegies "import a communal politics and an overriding sense of *shared* catastrophe into the sphere of poetic production", while breast cancer elegies "negotiate between individual poetic achievement and the interests of women—or women with breast cancer—as a class" (20-12). Although the primary focus of *Winter Numbers* is on cancer, Hacker nevertheless acknowledges the difficulty of aging. Hacker was fifty-two when this collection was published and her realisation of the limitations and indignity of age are

all too vivid in the "pills" that her "sixty" and "seventy" year-old-friends take for "arthritis". Moving from an individual elegy of friends to a closer examination of the effects of cancer, Hacker details her view of her friend's experience:

> Catherine is back in radiotherapy.
> Her schoolboy haircut, prematurely gray,
> now frames a face aging with other numbers:
> "stage two," "stage three" mean more than "fifty-one"
> and mean, precisely nothing, which is why
> she stares at nothing: lawn chair, stone,
> bird, leaf; brusquely turns off the news. (12)

Hacker's elegy for her friend continues her exploration of gender through the female elegy that addresses issues of female bodily experience. Identifying her friend's name and the embodiment of the hair and face is central to the presence and voice of female elegists. As the importance of the body changes in Hacker's later work, she attempts to destabilise the conventions of traditional elegy through the gendered depictions of the body's diverse and shifting experiences. When she returns to treatment, Catherine's age and gender, which are considered intrinsic to a woman's identity and body-image, are changed. Commenting on her friend's "schoolboy haircut", Hacker observes the impact of chemotherapy in creating an androgynous appearance, which she will later explore through the physical and psychological impacts of mastectomy on her own body image. Highlighting the physical changes formed by medical interventions, Hacker sees her friend differently, with the "prematurely gray" hair and "face aging" with numbers other than age revealing that being a middle-aged woman is something that does not last through treatment.

There is a play on the word "numbers" to suggest both the stages of cancer and cell count. Hacker uses the word "mean" as a pun for what these numbers represent as well as for the mathematical average of survival rates among women. She then deconstructs the relevance of these numbers, which in the bigger picture of age and illness "mean, precisely nothing". This inner void turns outward as Catherine "stares" absentmindedly at objects lacking life and soul, just like her. As her despair over her own illness overwhelms her, she cannot handle more unhappiness about others and "brusquely turns off the news". In Hacker's examination of the connection between gender and illness, she gruesomely contrasts the physical and social circumstances of

women's sickness to men. She notes that women all "die faster than men do, in more pain" and "are more likely than men to die alone" (12). Hacker is saying that not only are women disadvantaged by illness, but that it is likely that they will suffer and die alone. Sadly, this knowledge will be no consolation if or when she becomes ill herself. Moving from the "statistics" of the sick and dead, Hacker enquires about herself, and her friend's, "statistics" on the day she finds "a mass in her right breast" ("Journal Entries" 206). It is in this poem that she approaches her own experience of breast cancer poetically and poignantly in the following lines for the first time:

> And our statistics, on the day I meet
> the lump in my breast, you phone
> the doctor to see if your test results came? (12-13)

"The lump" is personified and depicted as an impersonal, separate entity as she "meet[s]" it for the first time, while also suggesting the banality of this encounter in stark contrast to the radical events that would follow. This early alienation from the illness depicts Hacker's feelings as a foreign body enters her own. "This kind of alienation from the self", according to Cathy Altmann, "is exactly what occurs when cancer cells, the Other, take the place of normal cells" (16). At this point, the lump is indistinguishable from Hacker as it is still inside of her, but not part of her. Later, however, in "Cancer Winters", she addresses it as a living, despicable creature and orders it to leave her body: "O blight that ate my breasts like worms in fruit, / be banished by the daily pesticide / that I ingest" (89). It seems that the poem did not originally include the reference to Hacker's lump, as Rich's letter to Hacker quotes the draft: "if/when I meet a lump in my breast".[74] It is plausible that Hacker had not yet published the poem when she discovered her tumor, and as such she may have revised it. Indeed, the structural composition of the collection shifts the speaker's position from witness to patient by the end of the book.

In *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva describes this disgust as "the abject", which refers to the human reaction (horror, vomit) to an unsettling of meaning brought by the inability to distinguish between the subject and object, self and other. Bodily emissions can generate such a reaction as they "remind us of the difficulty of keeping our body

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[74] Rich, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 19 July 1991. Box 1, Folder 12. MHP.

clean, and our vulnerability to defilement and death. When the boundaries of the body are transgressed, there we encounter the abject" (Altmann 12). Elizabeth Grosz explains that the "abject is the impossible object, still part of the subject: an object the subject strives to expel but which is ineliminable" ("Julia Kristeva" 198). "The abject, then", according to Jackie Stacey, "is both separate from, and yet part of, the subject. It is that which we want to exclude, but which threatens to re-enter. As such, it is a constant reminder of the mutability of our borders and the vulnerability of the subject" (76). Thus, we can extend the implication of Kristeva's work on the "abject" to understand how cancerous cells colonise in place of normal, healthy cells. It is this act of taking over the body that creates an alienation from it, as Altmann explains that "[t]he cancer patient can thus experience an alienation from their own body and a state of abjection unlike those with other illnesses" (13).

Although "Against Elegies" addresses the psychic and physical effects of AIDS and breast cancer, it also moves beyond the crises of the body to a spectrum political traumas and sufferings of this century:

> But this was another century
> in which we made death humanly obscene:
> Soweto El Salvador Kurdistan
> Armenia Shatila Baghdad Hanoi
> Auchwitz   Each one, unique as our lives are,
> taints what's left with complicity,
> makes everyone living a survivor
> who will, or won't bear witness for the dead.
>
> I can only bear witness for my own
> dead and dying, whom I've often failed:
> unanswered letters, unattempted phone
> calls, against these fictions. . . (14)

There is a stark realisation of the irony of death in a "century" when genocides have become widespread and numerous. As Saba Bahar notes,

> the litany of place names that memorialize sites of twentieth-century near
> genocides substitutes for the dead themselves, far too numerous to be
> named and honoured. The exponential increase in their numbers renders
> any posthumous recognition impossible. (1040)

There is a grim irony that the efforts of the individual "partisan" are outweighed and overshadowed by the "million gratuitous / Deaths from hunger, all-American / Mass murders, small wars, / The old diseases and the new" (15). As individual action is futile, Hacker seeks connectivity with others who suffer these illnesses and raises it to a global level when she forges a connection via narrative between individual experience and history, particularly from her location in France. In particular, the Holocaust runs through the entire volume as an imperative to document and "bear witness" by descendants of Europeans who experienced, suffered, and died in this tragedy. These massacres make "everyone living a survivor" who is "taint[ed]" "with complicity", and the speaker feels the weight of this responsibility but is incapable and "can only bear witness for [her] own / Dead and dying". She feels she has "often failed" these victims in real life by "unattempted phone calls" and "unanswered letters", even though she writes poems about the dead and dying as "fictions" in her work.

In "Against Elegies", Hacker indicates that a "survivor" has been spared political tragedies and terminal illnesses. Hacker equates the "survivor" with the "witness": both are external observers who have not been straightforwardly touched by life-undermining infections or political conflicts and feel the ethical duty to respond to and recall disasters. According to Ann Shapiro, the works of Jewish women writers are a braided narrative of many strands, one of which is the "imaginative recreation of history. Especially compelling is the Holocaust, which has become a subject both for those who escaped and for those whose response, though historically based, is necessarily imagined" (1-2). Shapiro's use of the braid to describe the diverse yet interconnected experiences of Jewish women writers suggests a heritage that Hacker makes use of in the metaphor of the braid to reconfigure the relationship of identity to Jewish history. Even though time and geography have spared Hacker the atrocities of the event, she makes an ethical commitment to access this heritage by bearing "witness-through-the-imagination" (Kremer 8). It is a historical as well as an ethnic inheritance that is part of most Europeans' consciousness as well as the consciousness of "redispersed Jews seeking roots" ("Street Scenes II" 66). Hacker explains as follows:

> I very much value the idea of the poet as witness, of writing as a dialogue with the past, to an audience at least partly composed of ghosts. In France that sense of history is part of everybody's consciousness . . . It's reconnecting myself, even though it's not an individual history. It's an

> ethnic history – but there's also a sense of continuity that for me goes very much along with what writing is about: a dialogue with the past, as well as with the future. When the life you are living seems more connected with what's happened before, as it often does in France, then in a way that life and that writing seem to be more of a piece. (Gardinier 1)

As such, her identification as a Jewish American living in Paris has created a deep and constant ethnic awareness that provides for her embedded and embodied cartographic reading of her historical situation. Here, Hacker embarks on a new formal dialogue with the past, adding the historical dimension to her earlier attempts at poetic dialogues with traditions and poets. To separate the "witness[es]", or the survivors, from the dead, Hacker views cancer as fatal as death, using it as a metaphor for an "unknown but certain doom" ("Journal Entries" 218). Hacker's treatment of cancer as death originates from a culture that is cancer-phobic, where the common "cultural metaphor is that cancer is war" (Altmann 9) and to lose it results in death, as Barron Lerner's book, *The Breast Cancer Wars* (2001) illustrates. Hilda Raz explains that writers use poetic metaphor to help humans "understand experiences alien and unfamiliar in our lives" and it can also "be used to simplify complex ideas or express and perpetuate common assumptions" (*Living on the Margins* x).

Until recently, the tendency to equate cancer with death has been part of a cultural history of stigmatising cancer when the disease had an overall poor prognosis. However, almost twenty-three years after Hacker wrote these poems, changes in medical practices have helped to revise this understanding through developments in how cancers dealt with. It is possible to cope with cancer through "prevention, surveillance and early detection, treatment of early and advanced disease, and the issues related to long-term survival after the cure" (Burney and Al-Moundhri 137). Regarding breast cancer, the "growing insistence on preventive measures and early detection routines through breast exams and mammographies" have "granted women a more active presence in accounts of the disease" (Bahar 1028).

Almost forty years ago in *Illness as Metaphor*, Susan Sontag argued against thinking metaphorically about cancer:

> My subject is not physical illness itself but the uses of illness as a figure or metaphor. My point is that illness is *not* a metaphor, and that the most truthful way regarding illness – and the healthiest way of being ill – is one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking. Yet it is hardly

> possible to take up one's residence in the kingdom of the ill unprejudiced
> by the lurid metaphors with which it has been landscaped. (3-4)

Sontag's plea comes as a result of the unhealthy effects that metaphors have on cancer patients. For cancer patients, one's attitude and endurance is compared to courage and bravery in military endeavours, like soldiers engaged combat. This trope paradoxically "makes it difficult for patients to admit to feelings such as fear and cowardice, unacceptable qualities in a battle" (Altmann 10); it also makes them responsible for their recovery, as Hacker dreads in "Journal Entries":

> The theory that I can influence the outcome is as terrifying as it is
> reassuring (a metastasis would be "my" fault) . . . That idea of influence —
> as in the Simonton books—is also terrifying because I fall so neatly into
> their category of person-set-up-to-develop-cancer (how I "participated in
> my illness") with stress in the last twelve months. (221)

Raz argues against these prevalent attitudes towards healing: "[c]onventional wisdom says that suffering ennobles . . . Cancer patients aren't by definition strong. Nor are we heroes. Cancer patients aren't responsible for our illness or our recoveries, metastases, remissions, or deaths" (*Living on the Margins* xvii). By designating herself as "survivor", Hacker is invoking the war metaphor that Sontag argues against; however, Hacker positions herself ethically and historically as a Jew who bears witness for her European ancestors as well as others in the way "lives are, / taint[ed]" (14) with the larger geographical and historical ("Shatila Baghdad Hanoi Auschwitz") network of pain of those "dead and dying". Her use of "taint[ed]" suggests lineage, influence and undesirable physical change that comes from one life infecting another in a permanent way "that is written in their chromosomes" (14). Before Hacker's breast cancer experience, as this pre-mastectomy poem shows, she shows accountability towards her ethnic background and the Holocaust. Although Hacker's female revision of the masculinist elegy seeks to establish connections to "her own dead and dying", she acknowledges that the narrative of these deaths ("Catherine", "James", and "Melvin") will disappear from the larger narrative of history:

> For most of us
> no question what our deaths, our lives, mean.
> At the end, Catherine will know what she knew,
> and James will, and Melvin,

and I, in no one's stories, as we are. (15)

Like them, Hacker will also be forgotten by others. Concluding with the present tense "are", Hacker is setting the present narrative moment, or the "expanding moment", in its collective suffering ("we") against the past accounts of "stories" written in other people's "fictions". No stories can contain what these people "know what [they] knew" or even better represent "what [their] deaths, [their] lives, mean" (15). The poem's ending creates an indefinite present moment that rejects the resolution of both traditional elegies and stories of illness.

Hacker's poetic discourse with her community of women friends and family, as discussed in the previous chapter, progressed into a wider and deeper search for connectivity across temporal and geographical spaces that her ethnic project of "writing with the past" suggests. Her post-feminist narrative of illness reconstructs her self-image by joining a community that can hold a place for female as well as male victims and survivors. In the act of "witnessing", as Price Herndl notes, "testimony can rebuild a sense of self but also a sense of community" (''Our Breasts'' 228). Later, Hacker's illness will grant her a more observant vision to incorporate multitudes of sick and dying friends and peers. Finding herself witness within a traumatic moment in history, Hacker composes elegies for an entire generation by evoking them as a memorial wall, as she does with the names of sixteen cancer survivors in "Invocation" from *Squares and Courtyards*:

> This is for Elsa, also known as Liz,
> . . . .
> Tania, Eunice: this is for everyone
> who marks the distance on a calendar
> from what's less likely each year to "recur." (24)

In this ode, the poet reaffirms her existence and the existence of her friends, determinedly, now and later, in that abstract permanence that text gives, as she writes in ''Scars on Paper'': "[p]ersistently, on paper we exist" (15).

"Year's End": Braided Lives and Deaths

In the late 1980s, poet and academic Julia Alvarez sent Hacker a postcard in which she expressed the desire for a closer friendship with her and other women as well: "I wish our lives braided with each other's in a more continuing /close up way".[75] Years later in "Year's End", from the last section of *Winter Numbers*, the verb "braid", for the first time in Hacker's writing, appears as a metaphor of the interconnectivity of women's experiences and relationships: "underneath the numbers, how lives are braided, / how those women's death's and lives, lived and died, were / interleaved also" (75). As these lines reveal, "Year's End" prefaces "Cancer Winter" with the central and unifying theme of breast cancer that runs through the entire section when the speaker in her forties loses two of her friends to cancer.

The poem does not mention Hacker's breast cancer, as this poem was composed before her diagnosis, but by positioning it at the start of the cancer narrative it becomes an omen of Hacker's cancer. The "women" mentioned in the poem are the same two women the poem is dedicated to: Audre Lorde and Sonny Wainwright, both of whom died of breast cancer and knew Hacker very well.[76] The speaker reflects how, in general, women's lives are connected or "braided", but in particular "those women's death's and lives", how they "lived and died were interleaved also".[77] Hacker finds 'braid' a useful metaphor for collective experience as the verb 'braid' suggests a gendered agency in finding connections between many people from diverse backgrounds in complex ways, while maintaining their distinct subjectivities and avoiding the simplification of their lives. It also suggests a sense of fate, as these women's lives and deaths were not coincidental but rather destined to intertwine. The connection between destiny and the braid presents the female body as an embodiment of both suffering and history.

The braid is an embodied metaphor for Hacker's agency. The metaphor of the interleaf suggests a layering or inserting of paper to create a cohesive structure, which if compared to the parallel structure of the lines of the poems signifies that these women's names are interleaved in the verse lines to honour their legacies. In this image, Hacker

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[75] Alvarez, Julia. Letter to Marilyn Hacker. 1980. Box 1, folder 10. MHP.
[76] Similar to Lorde, Sonny Wainwright published a breast cancer book: *Stage V: A Journal Through Illness* (1984). She died in 1985.

aims to draw attention to the connection between Lorde's and Wainwright's lives as women, writers, and cancer sufferers. While the interleaf indicates an overlapping, the braid offers a way to interweave these voices into a corporeal structure. As Hacker controls how the braid is seen by others, it becomes a metaphor for her poetry writing. Shapiro argues that Jewish American women writers "must invent new paradigms and myths to describe [their] writing" (7). Within the theme of Hacker's friendship with Lorde and Wainwright, the braid signifies intimacy, but in the context of "deaths and lives" it suggests a sense of binding by destiny.

The verb 'braided' is best understood within the social and political context depicted in "Journal Entries", where Hacker voices gendered notions of suffering by interweaving her breast cancer narrative with stories of other women, some of whom are cancer patients, writers, doctors, friends, and family. Though their experiences vary, they nonetheless find common areas to resist and rewrite cultural expectations by moving the experience from the individual to the group in a gendered account that, as Hacker says, is "not inclined to the machoism of keeping it to my/ourselves" ("Journal Entries" 207). This poem foreshadows Hacker's later use of the braid to evoke an organic conception of embodied subjectivity that she will employ when searching for new metaphors to connect her experience to others.

In paying tribute to Lorde, Hacker returns to the metaphor of warfare when referring to Lorde's struggle as "war" fought by "warrior women" engaged in battle against cancer. By evoking this image in connection with Lorde, Hacker is engaging in Lorde's use of this metaphor in her own writing:

> Each day's obits read as if there's a war on.
> Fifty-eight-year-old poet dead of cancer:
> warrior woman
>
> laid down with the other warrior women. (76)

Hacker presents Lorde, the most powerful predecessor of breast cancer narratives, as heroic, a "warrior woman", alluding to the female warrior recurring in Lorde's poems who acts as muse, inspiring her to challenge her cancer with ferocity. This legendary character is evoked in Lorde's elegy, "The Night-blooming Jasmine" in *The Marvelous Arithmetics of Distance: Poems 1987-1992* (1994):

> Through the core of me
> a fine rigged wire
> upon which pain will not falter
> nor predict
> I was no stranger to this arena
> at high noon
> beyond was not an enemy
> to be avoided
>
> but a challenge
> against which my neck grew strong
> against which my metal struck
> and I rang like fire in the sun.
>
> I still patrol that line
> sword drawn
> lighting red-glazed candles of petition
> along the scar
> the surest way of knowing
> death is a fractured border
> through the center of my days. (52)

In the above lines, Lorde portrays the surgical scar that crosses her chest as a militarised zone in the same manner of military metaphors of aggressive warfare that Sontag refers to, articulating traditional dialogues about cancer. "[A] fine rigged wire" that is unpredictable as to when "pain" will recur or death befall, both of which are not seen as inimical to the poet but rather as a "challenge" that transforms her into a stronger being that "rang like fire in the sun". Lorde accepts the risk cancer brings and uses it in her work. Although Sontag argues against these metaphors, Lorde seems to be energised by them. It helps her reject what Talcott Pearson calls the "sick role" (Altmann 10) and the position of victim that comes with not being in control of your body, even if she dies in the struggle. Reiterating her embodiment of this legendary figure, Adrienne Rich writes of Lorde on the back cover of *The Cancer Journals*: "Lorde is the Amazon warrior who knows how to tell the tale of battle: what happened, and why, what are the weapons, and who are the comrades she found" (1980).

"Cancer Winter": Breast Cancer Autobiographical Narratives

Moving from elegies to friends and victims of illnesses and history, Hacker reflects self-consciously on her own breast cancer experience. She rethinks her

comparison of death with cancer as she tells Hayden Carruth in a letter dated 13 January 1993, fourteen days after her mastectomy, "I've written too many poems in which cancer was the metaphor for certain death. Now it's in my own life, neither a narrative nor a metaphor, and I intend to survive, so I'll have to think about it another way".[78] Written in fourteen Petrarchan sonnets, Hacker's breast cancer autobiography, "Cancer Winters", examines the process of regaining subjectivity and agency after the wholeness of the self has been unsettled; it is a poetic examination of the physical and emotional transformative power of cancer. She takes up questions of bodily performance and image, attempting to make sense of and find closure, all narrated by Hacker as a breast cancer patient.

Cancer is the central topic of this poem as Hacker recounts her struggle with breast cancer as she takes us through the physical and psychological experience of the disease, starting with mastectomy and then chemotherapy. She addresses shifts in her gender and maternal identity, and self that are important to revising the meaning of her postcancer body. The poem begins with Hacker the patient taking in the images and sounds surrounding her in the hospital room:

> Syllables shaped around the darkening day's
> contours. Next to armchairs, on desks, lamps
> were switched on. Tires hissed softly on the damp
> tar. In my room, a flute concerto played.
> Slate roofs glistened in the rain's thin glaze.
> I peered out from a cave like a warm bear. (77)

The aesthetics and ambiance of the room downplay the tragedy of the situation as the world carries on with a semblance of normality. There is an element of numbness, as if the speaker were detached from the scene acting as a spectator or a narrator, describing the image from a distance. Hacker uses language to create different interpretations of the word "bear" that depict different aspects of the breast cancer experience. There is an interesting connection between the word "bear" and its homophone "bare" to suggest a vulnerability and sense of exposure for her body being violated, and a part of

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[78] Hacker, letter to Hayden Carruth. 13 Jan. 1992. Box 10, Folder 2. HCP.

her removed. It resonates with her earlier use of "bear" to become witness, yet here she has become the victim, the burden, the thing that is borne, as positions are swapped.

Using "warm bear" as a simile to compare to the speaker's dormancy, points to the unusualness of the scene. For a bear to hibernate during the winter, it must be sleeping. Since the speaker wakes up, it indicates something unnatural, as waking up during the winter goes against nature, similar to the cancer and the mastectomy that go against the body's nature. After awakening from its hibernation, the bear is afraid and vulnerable and finds protection in the enclosed safety of the "cave"; as the speaker wakes up, she "peer[s] out from a cave". Weak and frightened after the surgery, she examines her surroundings as she gradually regains consciousness and comes out of the comfort of the anaesthesia.

Associating herself with a bear, the speaker takes on the post-anthropocentric strand of posthumanism. "Post-anthropocentrism", according to Braidotti, "displaces the notion of species hierarchy and of a single, common standard for 'Man' as the measure of all things" (*PH* 67). The comparison to a bear opens the body's ontology to "other species" in a process of "becoming-animal" (66). In "becoming-animal", the lines between the categories "human/animal" are blurred in a process "of trans species solidarity on the basis of our being environmentally based, that is to say embodied, embedded and in symbiosis with other species" (67). The speaker embeds herself in a "cave" to embody animals that hibernate and begins to sense the meaning of being a different human, or a posthuman.

Because the speaker is immobile, she communicates her desire for documenting this experience and creating a poetic and ethical account through imagining a fictional male writer: "I watched a young man at his window write / at a plank table, one pooled halogen / light on his book, dim shelves behind him" (77). The speaker contrasts the primitiveness of the cave to the civilised bedroom to move from an exploration of the ill body toward an exploration of writing. Moving from a bear to a "young man", the speaker seeks to blur the lines between both species and gender categories to position herself as other, and from the hospital room in Ohio to her current flat in Paris.[79] From this external viewpoint, she is able create a nonlinear past narrative that employs the

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[79] In a letter dated 13 Aug. 1993 (HCP), Hacker explains to Hayden Carruth that the image of the writing-table is set in Paris, "Yes, we have halogen lamps in Paris, as well as slate roofs".

past tense ("peered", "watched", etc.) to make sense of her breast cancer experience. In her "Journal Entries", Hacker speaks of a wish to leave the hospital and a longing to "be the person writing at the table facing the window in the rue de Turenne at dusk" (222).

Here in "Cancer Winter", as well as in "The Boy" and "Squares and Courtyards", Hacker adapts Robyn Selman's application of "gender behaviour" to poetry. In "Other Voices, Other Rooms", Selman reviews and compares Rafael Campo's *The Other Man was Me: A Voyage to the New World* (1994) and Rachel Wetzsteon's *The Other Stars* (1994), observing that the "interiority/exteriority theme" (27) was clearly illustrated in the poets' treatments of their worlds. Using Wetzsteon as an example, the woman artist "looks inward" to examine "a room of [her] own", while the male poet "faced the window", looking "far outside" as Campo exemplifies in his "contract with the exterior" (27). In depicting a male writer over a female writer, Hacker invokes Selman's gender analysis to examine how a boy's self-consciousness influences the way he sees the world.

In this image of writing, both figuratively and literally, the female speaker is, as Bahar notes, "discuss[ing] the anxieties and sufferings related to illness and break[s] the silence that surrounds it" (1028). The speaker returns to the enumeration presented in "Against Elegies" during the "night / falling fraternal on the flux between / the odd and even numbers of the street" (77) that depict the view she has of Ohio from her hospital room. The "odd and even numbers" suggest that two selves are writing as they are "fraternal", separated by time and geography: the past self that is experiencing the treatment in the hospital in Ohio and the current self in her flat in Paris reflecting on her experience. Moving between past and present, the poem echoes the title of the collection in that "Winter" corresponds to the nonlinear account of her cancer experience and "Numbers" to the present, "expanding" narrative moment.

As the past is interwoven with the present, "the odd and even sonnets . . . alternate between . . . the first group [that] tells the 'too-familiar story of breast lump discovery and its attendant events', the second one charts how she comes to terms with her terror" (Bahar 1035). This alternation in the crown of sonnets reveals the poem "resisting the linear model of illness" (Bahar 1050) and recovery, reflecting the recurrent nature of recovery and illness as Hacker puts it "up and down days" ("Journal Entries" 215). With the braid of sonnets, Hacker creates a poetic and interwoven

account of past and present. This process opens up spaces for meditations on history that she would employ from this point onwards in her poetic oeuvre.

The two selves – the male and female – meet in her transformed postmastectomy chest that is "round side and flat, gynandre/androgyne" (87). Using the visual "/", the speaker attempts to blur the line between male and female as a woman with the half-chest of a male. Hacker's postmastectomy body pushes her to examine the physical aspects of gender through the notion of androgyny. Placing her androgynous speaker within the external realm of a festival, "I'll bake my chest again at Juan-les-Pins, / round side and flat, gynandre/androgyne" (87), Hacker explores the external forms that the post-cancerous gendered body takes and how it appears to others, as she asserts in "Journal Entries" when she refuses to wear a mastectomy bra as a feminist and moral act: "I want my half-flat-chested survivor status to be visible" (212).

The concept of androgyny emerged during second wave feminism when feminists "emphasized the potential or real sameness of men and women, the capacity of each to fuse or combine elements of the masculine and feminine into a wholeness lacking in the purely masculine or purely feminine" (Friedman, *Mappings* 70). For example, in Adrienne Rich's poem "Diving into the Wreck" (1973), the speaker embodies both male and female sea creatures: "And I am here, the mermaid whose dark hair / streams black, the merman in his armored body . . . I am she: I am he" (24). Rich's image of androgyny seeks to remove the patriarchal boundaries set between the genders and move beyond gender. However, four years later, because of the growing gender difference discourse, Rich would renounce these words with, "These are the words I cannot choose again: / *humanism androgyny*", as she writes in "Natural Resources" from *The Dream of a Common Language* (1978). However, the suppressed concept of androgyny returns with an "antihumanist, poststructural twist" in altered forms of gender representation, such as "drag, transvestism, and camp" (77). Although Braidotti distances her feminist nomadic subject from the notion of androgyny, as I will explain in detail in Chapter Three, androgyny considered as a form of transgression against "humanism" provides a basis for a posthumanist view of the androgynous subject.

The trajectory of the poem refuses to locate the self and the body in a fixed position, as the uncertainty of cancer rejects traditional autobiographical narratives. Combining personal and cancer narratives, "numbers", as Zeiger notes, is a recurrent

reminder of "medically referential numbers (stages of treatment, statistics about the dead)" (164) and living:

> I woke up, and the surgeon said, "You're cured."
> Strapped to the gurney, in the cotton gown
> and pants I was wearing when they slid me down
> onto the table, made new straps secure
> while I stared at the hydra-headed O.R.
> lamp, I took in the tall, confident, brown-
> skinned man, and the ache I couldn't quite call pain
> from where my right breast wasn't anymore
> to my armpit. (78)

Hacker appropriates the surgeon's emphatic word "cured" to show her scepticism of the traditional narrative of illness. In his choice of "cured" as opposed to "healed", the surgeon triumphantly dictates the finality of the disease, in line with conventional medical rhetoric. Hacker's repetition of the term seeks to interrogate its meaning to a body and patient that are healed but cannot return to their original state; they have been changed forever. In its "epistemological and ontological meanings" (Cucinella 113), "cured" serves to address how body, gender, and language must be revised within breast cancer narratives.

In the first half of the second sonnet, Hacker evokes images from the surgery room – "surgeon", "strapped", "gurney", "cotton gown", "table", and "hydra-headed O.R. lamp" – to recreate the circumstances of the surgery, and with it how she felt. The poem's strict rhyme scheme ("cured-secure" and "gown-down") compliments the constraint that the speaker describes in being "Strapped to the gurney" while she "stared at the hydra-headed O.R. / lamp". The speaker approaches her experience of cancer and mastectomy as a form of grief for losing the unity of her body and her sense of self and motherhood (Hartman 155). This major change in her body marks a radical transformation in both her self-identity and her relationship to her body that begins when she chooses "ache" as opposed to "pain" to suggest that the emotional and psychological hurt exceeds the physical one. Highlighting the nonlinear narrative of the disease, from this moment in the past, Hacker shifts to the present tense meditation in the third sonnet:

> . . . I'm incomplete
> as my abbreviated chest. I weigh

> less⸺one breast less⸺since the Paris-gray
> December evening, (79)

A fissure takes place between the body and the speaking subject ''I'' as the missing breast signifies a body that is marked by its incompleteness. Reflecting on what this change means to her relationship to her body, she uses the words "incomplete", "abbreviated", and "less", all of which depict a partial view of an embodied existence, and the incoherence of the illness account. In the emphatic separation of "breast" from the rest of the line, Hacker points to the source of her inferiority that she expresses with the word "less" as an indicator of both psychological and social perception. As such, the speaker takes on multiple locations – narrator, victim, survivor – which fracture her as a subject. ''The split and contradictory self'', as Donna Haraway argues, "is the one who can interrogate positionings and be accountable [. . .] Splitting, not being, is the privileged image for feminist epistemologies of scientific knowledge'' (''The Persistence of Vision'' 288). Elizabeth Grosz similarly conceptualizes this situation of multiplicity as bodies being ontologically ''incomplete'' (*Volatile Bodies* xt).

Hacker returns to this image of incompleteness in a later poem, "Scars on Paper" from *Squares and Courtyards*, to describe how "[n]ow one of them's the shadow of a breast / with a lost object's half-life, with as much / life as an anecdotal photograph" (15). The image creates a shadow-like presence of an absence, suggested by the breast's reduction to an object that is "lost" with a "half-life" like the memory in an "anecdotal photograph". Her use of "lost" as opposed to "gone", seven years after her mastectomy, articulates an ambivalence and fear of cancer's return, as she writes in "Invocation": "Our saved-for-now lives are life sentences / —which we prefer to the alternative" (24).

This unstable sense of self is in line with the poststructural theory that postmodern feminists espouse, that "posits subjects who are always already alien to themselves, partial, and contradictory" (Warhol-Down and Herndl 414). Diane Herndl explains that this "alienation is a condition of postmodernity, a condition of the subjectivity that is always different from itself" (''Reconstructuring'' 479). She continues that "postmodern art and theory during the 1980s and 1990s have challenged the idea that any of us are ever anything but alien to ourselves; in fact, they celebrate the alien within us" (482).

Herndl goes on to explain that Donna Haraway in "Cyborg Manifesto" uses the metaphor of a cyborg "not to return to the pre-technological body" but rather to adopt

the "simulacrum" body: "a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (qtd. in Herndl 482). Although Braidotti finds the cyborg a useful figuration of interconnectivity, she is critical of it for the same reason she is critical of the androgynous subject: the blurring of gender difference. As she sees it, Braidotti finds "that the cyborg also announces a world 'beyond gender,' stating that sexed identity is obsolete without showing the steps and the points of exit from the old, gender-polarized system" (*NS* 133).

Although medical rhetoric is dry and scientific, the metaphors it employs can compound to the patient's sense of fragmentation. When Hacker's disease is described as "an infiltrative ductal carcinoma, one cm in size, with a microscopic secondary tumor, but no lymph node involvement detected" ("Journal Entries" 216), the military metaphor is evoked that challenges the wholeness of self and body. This alienation is a departure from Lorde's articulation of an idea of wholeness that pervaded the 1960s and 1970s and that was expressed in books like the 1971 Boston Women's Health Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, as the preface shows: "Our bodies are the physical bases from which we move out into the world; ignorance, uncertainty – even, at worst shame – about our physical selves create in us an alienation from ourselves that keeps us from being the whole people that we could be" (3).

Thus, while Lorde "began to feel that in the process of losing a breast [she] had become a more whole person" (91), Hacker alternatively laments how her "self-betraying body needs to grieve / at how hatreds metastasize" (85). This personification of the body's disloyalty to its owner stems from, as Hacker illustrates, the breasts' deceitful schemes that will turn on them: "breasts have and hold / their dirty secrets till their secrets damn them" (84). For Lorde, however, to see and speak the truth about female experience, her body-image, body-feeling, and consciousness must be undivided, otherwise there is the risk of "remaining forever alien to" herself (44). "When coming to terms with the personal experience of cancer", as Iain Twiddy notes,

> poetry may employ tropes of distancing and stasis rather than internalization, given that recovery consists in the absence of the cancerous from the body. Although internal, and made of bodily material, cancer is often perceived as alien to the body, as something external that has somehow got in. (12)

Like Hacker, other feminists have come to view their bodies differently, with imperfection and less certainty. Embracing fragmentation and contradiction, Diane Herndl's words echo Hacker's feelings of incompleteness. As a breast cancer survivor and postmodern feminist, Herndl examines her relationship to her body after a mastectomy, "I am now partial, because a part of me is missing" (''Reconstructing'' 482). Unlike those with other illnesses, the sense of otherness from one's own body comes as a result of foreign bodies, or "the Other" as Kristeva calls it, taking the place of normal cells, as Hacker writes in the third stanza:

> My calm right breast seethed with a grasping tumor.
> The certainty of my returns amounted
> to nothing. After terror, being brave
> became another form of gallows humor. (79)

The speaker reflects on her body before the mastectomy: the breast that was still hers and the tissue invaded by the "diabolical enemy" (qtd. in Altmann 9), the tumour. The speaker is gradually disassociating from a part of the body, but the impossibility of disassociation from the breast that is still hers ("My") creates an uncertainty and split that transforms how the speaker is to regard her cancerous and post-cancerous body. She uses binary descriptions to divide the different entities between benevolent and malevolent: "calm/seethed", "breast/tumor", and "My/grasping". As the speaker experiences "terror", she realises that the "brave[ry]" that she showed in "Against Elegies" as "witness" for the dead and dying is ironic ("gallows humor") after she herself becomes a cancer patient. The proximity of "certainty" to "nothing", one typed above the other in subsequent lines, creates parallel layers that suggest there is a fine line between the act of knowing and uncertainty. Here, the speaker revises her earlier comparison of cancer to war as she realises that cancer cannot be assimilated with war, as the uncertainty of cancer does not offer clear cut outcomes as war does:

> It's become a form of gallows humor
> to reread the elegies I wrote
> at that pine table, with their undernote
> of cancer as death's leitmotiv, enumer-
> ating my dead, the unknown dead, the rumor
> of random and pandemic deaths. I thought
> I was a witness, a survivor, caught
> in a maelstrom and brought forth, who knew more

> of pain than some, but learned it loving others. (81)

The irony, or "gallows humor", of Hacker's diagnosis is that it teaches her otherwise: cancer is not a metaphor for death, although it might lead to death; its course is arbitrary and uncertain. In her journals, she attests to this realisation four days after her mastectomy: "I have lost a breast and a metaphor, a breast with cancer in it and a defective metaphor. I can no longer write poems in which the word 'cancer' coldly and simply (and simple mindedly) presages/stands for 'death'" ("Journal Entries" 206). In the lines above, Hacker continues to discuss her disillusionment with the illness and her simplistic conception of "witness" as she realises her hubris in writing as a "survivor" after her own experience with breast cancer. The rhyme in "humor" and "rumor" creates another level of irony as her narratives relied on second-hand sources of "random and pandemic deaths". Ending the second line with "wrote" poses the question of the writer's place in responding to others' crises. She self-consciously breaks the fourth line at the word "enumer-" forcing herself to break the cycle of counting her "dead, the unknown dead" as she has become one of them; the numbers must stop.

        In this moment of realisation, she connects to other women writers who have written "on the speciousness of a division between 'victims' and 'survivors' since [they] are both at once" ("Journal Entries" 218). "Through Corralitos Under Rolls of Cloud" from *An Atlas of the Difficult World* (1991) is not mainly about cancer, but in it Adrienne Rich criticises the survivors as realising themselves only "in opposition to the lost":

> . . . what do you know
> of the survivor when you know her
> only in opposition to the lost?
> What does it mean to say *I have survived*
> until you take the mirrors and turn them outward
> and read your own face in their outraged light? (47)

Rich's critical examination of the "opposition" between "the lost" and the "survivor", as perceived by the self-proclaimed survivor is analogous to the irony Hacker's earlier belief that she would survive her friends, as she writes in "Against Elegies", "When I die, the death I face / will be more than likely be illogical: / Alzheimer's or a milk truck: the absurd" (14). This realisation is accompanied by her understanding of the body's frailty and, as Saba Bahar notes, "by an account of the trials she undergoes as she enters the

socially liminal area occupied by the ill. Dwelling on these trials, her work plots her increasing enlightenment about the precariousness of life" (1034). Hacker expresses this same awareness in "Journal Entries", regarding writing those "terrible lines" that "now . . . seem like an affront to women and men who *have* had cancer, who are alive with their scars, with their nightmares, with their courage, with whatever else I don't know, or don't know yet" (210). In the recurrence of past tense verbs "wrote", "thought", "was" "caught", "brought", and "knew", Hacker is indirectly questioning her espousal of the figure of the 'witness' and 'survivor'.

In *Winter Numbers*, she compares these two figures as someone who has been spared the horrible suffering of deadly diseases and wars; someone who stands on the sidelines; and someone who carries the moral and ethical responsibility of reporting and documenting what has been observed. This was the definition that Hacker put forth in "Against Elegies" when she divided people into those that are witnessing the effect of tragedies and those who are affected with cancer and AIDS themselves and are equated with death: "makes everyone living a survivor / who will, or won't bear witness for the dead" (14). She learns from her diagnosis, however, that these divisions are not clear-cut and that the illness account, like the movement of the sonnets between past and present, is not linear, in the sense that the patient either dies or is cured. Hacker also self-consciously notes how she "simple-mindedly" believed that the pain she has "learned" from "loving others" can connect her to the suffering of others, but again she realises that this is unsatisfactory.

This nonlinear and disruptive depiction of cancer resonates with Arthur Frank's description of Holocaust narratives as "chaos narratives", which he describes as "an anti-narrative of time without sequence, telling without mediation, and speaking about oneself without being fully able to reflect on oneself" (98). For Frank, "these stories cannot literally be told" but "can only be lived" by those who are affected (98). The awareness of Hacker's "affront to women and men who *have* had cancer" ("Journal Entries" 210), thus leads her to "find another metaphor":

> I need to find another metaphor
> while I eat up stories of people's mothers
> who had mastectomies. "She's eighty-four
> this year, and *fine*!" (81)

Finding that the military metaphor and metaphors of biomedicine that alienate the self from the body are insufficient to express the complexities of the bodily experience of cancer, Hacker rethinks the breast cancer experience by setting out to "find another metaphor" that translates the physical experience into a political one in a way that "establishes continuity between victimhood and survival" (Bahar 1042). Acknowledging that traditional stories of illness and death are unsatisfactory, Hacker echoes this exploration for a more truthful and less grim articulation of her experience when making a plea and demanding herself to write differently:

> And those new words, new metaphors? The terrible lines I wake up with in the middle of the night are ones I've written myself: the lethal transformations of the breast, the deaths, and then again the deaths, of cancer. Let me write another book, let me face down the elegies a different way. ("Journal Entries" 210)

Having battled with breast cancer herself, writer Hilda Raz similarly articulates the need to find new narrative representations: "We needed new models of experience. We needed new metaphors. No sinking ships. No heroic victims" (*Living on the Margins* xvii).

Hacker's exploration for an alternative metaphor leads her to rethink the body's functions and its relationship to the self. Cancer, as Hacker begins to discover, modifies the "body's epistemological and ontological status" (Cucinella 113); changing it from a source of love, as discussed in Chapter One, to a source of knowledge: the history of the self. As the surgeon removes the staples from her scar, Hacker compares herself to "a revised manuscript / radically rewritten" by the illness and biomedicine. Here, Hacker uses the ailing body, as other feminists have done, to become part of a "new narrative identity" (Herndl, "Our Breasts" 222). Speaking of her postsurgical body, Jackie Stacey, like Hacker, articulates a narrative of her body: "The narrative of my body continued to be rewritten at each stage. As I lay recovering from surgery, I tried to find out what had been removed apart from the tumor. . . Overnight my identity was reinvented. I was now a cancer patient" (4). Susanna Egan argues that autobiographical narratives are characterised by their "emphatic presence of the body", suggesting a "cultural paradigm shift that revalorizes the body as a significant component of identity" (qtd. in Herndl, "Our Breasts" 225). Hacker's use of "manuscript" and "rewritten" reveals that she is rethinking the breast's primary role of breastfeeding:

> A dozen times, she looked at the long scar
> studded with staples, where I'd suckled her,
> and didn't turn.
> . . . .
> . . . nursing her without a "nursing bra"
> from small, firm breasts, a twenty-five-year-old's. (82)

Hacker focuses on the embodied image of the breast, as it is the place where the mother provides her infant with nourishment as she writes in ''Year's End'' (75). The alteration of the breast's maternal function leads Hacker to alter her relationship with her daughter as Iva matures from dependent child to independent teenager, taking over from the partner in caring for Hacker after her mastectomy in the hospital. Mother and daughter swap roles as the invalid becomes the child and the child becomes the healthcare assistant: Iva holds her cup for her to drink and "shirts for [her] to wear", helping to "wash [her] hair", and "help [her] out of the bathwater" (82). The consonance in the repetition of the "h" sound ("hand", "held", "holding", "hair", "help", and "hold") suggests this transformation in their relationship.

Hacker's feminist and moral act of speaking and writing about her experience of cancer begins with her daughter as she insists on Iva seeing the postmastectomy scar: "I was glad Iva watched: she wouldn't have to wonder what it looked like, fear some unknown horror: it looks as extreme now as it ever will" ("Journal Entries" 214). In the lines conflating their roles during this visit, "She took me / I brought her / to the surgeon's office, where she'd hold / my hand", the ambiguity of the parent-patient role is suggested as the speaker needs emotional and physical support. Although the place where Iva "suckled" has been impaired, the physical intimacy between Hacker and Iva deepens as the scar is demystified and Iva sees the transformation of her mother's "small, firm breasts" into "a long scar studded with staples". Hacker compares the mastectomy hospital experience with Iva's birth: "out of the operating room / the tumor was delivered, sectioned, cold- / packed, pickled" (84). With wry humour, Hacker likens the tumour to a baby but the lifeless meat ("cold", "packed", and ''pickled'') evokes the posthuman perception of the body as the tumour becomes a baby for science "to demonstrate to residents / an infiltrative ductal carcinoma" (84).

In the seventh, and repeated in the ninth, sonnet of the sequence, Hacker rethinks and explores her earlier claims of the relevance of cancer and AIDS to political

traumas. Hacker looks to compare cancer to the pain of other victims of history and politics after she no longer views death as a likely consequence of cancer:

> . . . Insomniac with terror,
> I tell myself, it isn't the worst horror.
> It's not Auschwitz. It's not the Vel d'Hiv.
>
> . . . .
>
> It's not Auschwitz. It's not the Vel d'Hiv.
> It's not gang rape in Bosnia or
> gang rape and gutting in El Salvador. (83, 85)

Although the "terror" of cancer is constantly looming, Hacker's experience with cancer teaches her not to equate her disease with political oppression, confessing that cancer cannot be assimilated with "Auschwitz", "Vel d'Hiv", and "gang rape in Bosnia" or "El Salvador". Recognising that the crisis of the body cannot be equated with the crises of history, Hacker nevertheless attempts to find an external mark that can be interpreted as a sign of both personal and collective suffering. Here, Hacker evokes the mastectomy scar as a historical wound that links to the Auschwitz camp prisoners' identification numbers tattooed on their arms: "They wore the blunt tattoo, / a scar, if they survived, oceans away" (85). Analogous to cancer survivors' scars, this political tattoo becomes a "scar" if these prisoners live to survive the ordeal, showing that by likening "her mastectomy scar with the tattoo of camp survivors", both become "indelible marks of traumatic, life-threatening experience" (Hartman 165). The analogy between tattoo and scar has her speculate on the "numbered, shaved, emaciated Jew / [she] might have been" (85), connecting her body's oppression under the attack of cancer to the Jewish body's disfigurement under Nazi debasement. The body's ontological status is revised as Hacker uses her experience of pain to understand, acknowledge, and connect to the suffering of Holocaust victims. In other words, Hacker keeps her pain alive, or scar open, to allow her to form connections of trauma that create deeper and more meaningful ethnic links. Here, the body becomes an embodiment of suffering in order for it to become an embodiment of ethnic history.

She reverses the political wound in describing their "blunt tattoo" as a scar, while she considers "tattoo[ing] [her] scar". She imbues their external mark with a deeper pain, and her physical experience with a creative design. As such, Hacker extends the

metaphor of the scar beyond the limits of her body to incorporate both personal and collective pain. Herndl explains that many women use the experience of cancer to explore ethnic identity. "These women experience the body's betrayal", according to Herndl:

> as a chance to go beyond identities conscribed by that body, even as they are realizing that it is the bodily experience of change that is allowing—or perhaps forcing—this exploration. At its best, this new relation to one's own identity as fluid can open up channels for connection to people who are different from oneself.
> ("Our Breasts" 227)

In this respect, Hacker's scar evokes the posthuman condition in its relational foundations. In her posthuman postmastectomy body, Hacker finds a new means of expressing her politics of breast cancer in relation to other sufferers, as Braidotti reminds us that "[t]he posthuman is not postpolitical. The posthuman condition does not mark the end of political agency, but a recasting of it in the direction of relational ontology" (690). Therefore, thinking through this posthuman model "entails a rethinking of the subject both in its embodied singularity and embedded location, and in its interconnected, collective, and relational dimensions" (Blaagaard and van der Tuin 48).

"August Journal": A Cartography of Jewish History and Identity

Hacker's exploration of her breast cancer experience has her developing the scar into a cartography of her embodied experience and embedded location in ethnic history. Hacker reflects on the physical and historical presences of this age that characterise contemporary literature, as she writes when reviewing poetry for the 1996 Spring issue of Ploughshares:

> Prose and poetry share some of the same obsessions: we are at once corporeal and historical beings, existing in our physicality and our narratives, with the two often at odds . . . Here at the end of the century there is AIDS, hunger, cancer, the shadows of Auschwitz and Hiroshima behind the vivid presence of those easiest to dismiss or dispossess: young black men, women with HIV, Spanish- or Arabic-speaking immigrants, people of ambiguous race or gender. ("Introduction")

Hacker's description of writers being simultaneously "corporeal and historical beings" shows her embodied engagement with history to "explor[e] the multiple and relational nature of her own identity, and how it implicates her in history and in the suffering of others" (Hartman 165). Integrating her posthuman body into the world, Hacker incorporates the scar into a historical and political map of Europe, as she writes in "August Journal":

> Upon my body is superimposed
> the map of a Europe I never knew:
> my olive skin, my eyes, my hips, my nose
> all mark me as an Ashkenazi Jew
> if anyone were looking for a mark
> to indicate the designated prey. (94)

In this metaphorical mapping of the body, the "cartography of the body" acts as a genealogical map of Hacker's Ashkenazi heritage and the tragedy of her Jewish people. The scarred body of Hacker the victim-survivor becomes a location for both a personal bodily experience of cancer and a collective history of victims and survivors. It is not an individual history; rather, it is a "map of Europe [she] never knew", a "Europe of old stairways and dead Jews" (95). This indirect time frame is useful, as Braidotti explains, in that it allows "us to look into the details, do more detailed cartographies, respect the complexities of our embodied embedded relational effective posthuman subjectivity" ("Posthuman, all too human"). Thus, in light of this Braidottian cartographic metaphor, Hacker seeks to produce a meaningful representation of her posthuman body and its place in history.

The use of "superimposed" creates different levels of influence. It is an imposed ethnic history and, therefore, is not fully integrated into the body, creating a kind palimpsestic mapping on the surface. The equation of "superimposed" with "I never knew" through the parallel lineation emphasises this meaning. Hacker's exploration of the meaning of this heritage echoes Rich's examination of location starting with the body: "I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history" which she is "created and trying to create" ("PL" 212). Rich identifies the exact place to start from: "Begin though, not with a continent or a country or a house, but with the geography closest in-the body" (212). In Hacker's cartographic metaphor, she follows Rich by beginning her exploration with the body. Hacker's image of history "superimposed" on

the self-echoes Rich's phrase "I am created" as a predestined origin. However, "trying to create" shows Rich falling short of integrating this history into the body, while Hacker manages to transform the mastectomy scar into a historical wound.

Hacker's ability to make this connection in comparison to Rich has two main sources. The first is the body's position in relation to identity and the second is historical specificity. In reference to the former, "Split at the Root: An Essay on Jewish Identity" (1982) is Rich's first articulation of her Jewish inheritance.[80] She begins her essay by asserting, "I have to claim my father, for I have my Jewishness from him and not from my gentile mother" (*Blood, Bread, and Poetry* 100). Rich provides two main obstacles for claiming this identity: the first is her father's "silence, his taboos", and the second is her mother's "gentile" background – because of which, according to "Jewish law", Rich "cannot count [herself] as a Jew" (102). As such, she locates her identity as a "white southern woman", a "social Christian" (103). Two years later, in "Notes toward a Politics of Location" (1984), Rich realises that her privilege is determined by "[t]his body. White, female; or female, white" ("PL" 215). Therefore, the body that is presented in Rich's work is a white one. She attempts to examine the location of her Jewish body from the position of her white one.

Unlike Rich, both Hacker's father and mother were first-generation Jewish immigrants and although they were not practicing Jews, there was a presence of her heritage through her Jewish grandmother Gísela. According to Cucinella, ''the racial-ethnic body that emerges most visibly throughout Hacker's work is the Jewish one'' (114). In her entire oeuvre, to the best of my knowledge, Hacker never describes herself as a white woman. As discussed in Chapter One, in "1973" Hacker denies her daughter's identity as "white" and instead insists that "She's Black. She is a Jew" (19). In "August Journal", she highlights distinctive features of her body – "olive skin", "eyes", "hips", and "nose" – not only as external "mark[s]" of her ethnicity that connect to her body. This gendered metaphor of the scarred body leads to a posthuman cartography that connects personal and collective pain as well as ethnic identity.

In this posthuman cartography Hacker's feminist anti-humanism challenges the white body as a hegemonic civilisation model. "Whiteness cannot be separated from

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[80] Rich makes an early reference to race in ''When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision'' (1972) when she writes, ''My own luck was being born white and middle-class into a house full of books'' (21).

hegemony", as Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg note, but as it is "situationally specific, it is always shifting, always reinscribing itself around changing meanings of race in the larger society" (qtd. in Cucinella 114). The ethnic roots of Hacker's body are illustrated in the "taint[ings]" (14) and "mark[ings]" (94) that are "superimposed" on her body. Through these inscriptions, she renders her body as, different, or a racialized other. Hacker's specific cartography, however, in line with Braidotti's cartographic analysis of contemporary events, is not really an autobiographical text; it is rather an account of a situated subjectivity in identification with a historical and ethnic position. "Hacker evokes the politics of positionality", as Catherine Cucinella quotes Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg, "which involves 'devot[ing] special attention to the differing ways individuals from diverse social backgrounds construct knowledge and make meaning'" (114). As such, Hacker's "body is both itself a map and placed geographically within a map, and she treats the map image with acute historical specificity" (Hartman 162).

The map Hacker imagines both originates from and is analogous to the postmastectomy scar. Using the scar to conceive the map, Hacker draws on her own experience of breast cancer as it is imprinted on her body in the same way that the ethnic features of her body draw a map, both testifying to a visual and physical experience. Like a scar, the map is a visible representation of an absent entity that makes both history and ethnicity readable to others. As the scar extends from "ribs to pit" (89), the lines of the map extend to form connections and boundaries between history and geographical locations. In the same way that the map represents a levelled surface, Hacker uses the word "flat" to describe the chest that "greets strangers" (89). Because "cartographies are politically informed maps of the present, they are not one-dimensional, but rather give rise to all sorts of contestations and dissonant readings" (Braidotti, *MB* 185); similarly, the mastectomy scar is mulitlayered and represents different experiences of living with and through the illness, as no scar in general is the same as another. Finally, the map along with the scar creates a visual representation to the illness as the "map image makes it more possible to comprehend the scar as a sign of presence rather than absence" (Hartman 162).

In this metaphor of the map, to draw lines is to produce spaces that enable Hacker to interrogate her relationship to space and the place she inhabits. As Hacker lives between languages, cultures, and countries as well as historical moments in the metaphor of the map, movement in space is fundamental. Braidotti describes this space

using Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualisation of 'sedentary' and 'nomadic', as "open nomadic space" that is "without enclosures or borders" as opposed to "[m]etropolitan space" in which "the sedentary powers of the city were erected" (62). In particular, in affiliating herself with ancient Jews – and likewise with the implicit sense of their nomadic way of life – Hacker is setting herself up for a nomadic mode of relating to space. Although she lives in Paris permanently, her relationship to the city is secondary to her imagined sense of motion.

As this movement characterises the posthuman subject, Hacker's nomadism is realised through "making imaginary roots for [herself] in Europe, where [her] people came from" (Gardinier 1). Hacker writes to Hayden Carruth about her wish to fix roots in Paris, "Eight months in France may help me decide what I want to do with the rest, or the next bit of my life – whether I want to emulate Iva and simply pull up roots and put them down for good where I feel I want to be – right here".[81] Hacker's affiliation with the "people of the book" (95) enacts a form of transposition, which in Braidotti's conceptualisation means "to change positions, to move on, to displace, and to produce or describe new mappings" (Setti 132). Her nomadic transposition enables her to reclaim the suffering of her Jewish people without a sense of heroic entitlement: "I'm more the Jew pursued into the dark / than the scrubbed Yank marching through Normandy" (94). Crossing time boundaries, Hacker's nomadic subjectivity repositions her with a generation and ethnicity that she was distant from. Hacker's cartography is about inscribing this history onto her body and mapping this new position.

In addition to the white body's complex relationship to Jewish identity, the second reason Rich struggles to locate herself in history is the lack of historical specificity. In "Notes toward a Politics of Location", she contemplates different places – "Prague or Lodz or Amsterdam" – and different times – "when the Third Reich began" – and then confronts the possibility of "no address" and "no body at all" (216). With no specific connection to this heritage, Rich can only speculate. Hacker's cartography, however, takes her deeper into the annals of history, to a date that is relevant to her on a personal level. She contemplates her fate if she had been a child in Paris during WWII, as she writes towards the end of ''August Journal'':

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[81] Hacker, letter to Hayden Carruth. 8 Feb. 2001. Box 73, Folder 32. HCP.

> I could have been one of the children seized
> that day at 22, rue des Ecouffes.
> I could have been one of the two-year-olds
> not knowing quite how to pronounce my name
> penned in a littered courtyard, blotched with cold
> behind barbed wire, until the transports came
> . . . .
> Some other names: Touvier, Bousquet, Laval.
> I know those names, but not the children's names
> "deported to the East" in cattle cars. (94)

The significance of the 1942 Vel' d'Hiv roundup is that it coincides with Hacker's birth in the same year but on the other side of the ocean. This tragedy haunts Hacker like a spectre of what could have been her childhood if she had "been [among] one of the children seized / that day". Unlike Rich, Hacker's cartography of history on the female body locates her at a specific time (1942) and at a specific place (Vel' d'Hiv, Paris); this map for Hacker aligns with how Braidotti describes "a figuration" as a "living map, a transformative account of the self; it's no metaphor" (10). In Braidottian terms, Hacker evokes these "highly specific geopolitical and historical locations" to reify the connection between the body and identity and between individual and collective identities; as Braidotti puts it, "it's history and belonging tattooed on your body" (11). Therefore, without a specific historical moment, Rich is unable to represent this 'history' on a 'map', as Caren Kaplan argues that "any exclusive recourse to space, place, or position becomes utterly abstract and universalizing without historical specificity" ("The Politics of Location" 138).

Hacker journeys back into history, to the Jewish communal past, to articulate her ethical commitment to "bear witness for the dead" (14) by writing about the wars' most vulnerable victims: the children, who being too young to "pronounce" their names, Hacker can only tell their stories. However, she does "not know the children's names", unlike the AIDS and cancer patients she writes about in "Against Elegies". For this reason, her greatest elegy to them is through imagining herself as a member of the group of children who lived through the experience and repositioning herself through membership in that group. The description of these children being herded like livestock into "cattle cars" and "deported to the East" adds to their anonymity and the inhumane treatment of these child prisoners. Fifty years later, Hacker thinks about those children and reiterates her earlier question on the simplistic division between 'victims' and

'survivors': "If I'm one of the victims, who survives? / If I'm – reach for it – a survivor, who / are the victims?" (91). Moreover, the meaning of those events is magnified by the proximity of where Hacker currently lives in Paris to the site of the raid, as she notes in "A Few Cranky Paragraphs on Form and Content": "the twenty-seven children, my contemporaries, older sisters and brothers, who were arrested that day with their parents in just one antique tenement, 22 rue des Ecouffes—still standing, five minutes' leisurely walk from where I live" (124).

As Hacker tries to take on the experiences of these children and the Vel' d'Hiv, she relates it to her identity:

> can any Jew stay indoors with a book
> and ruminate upon her own disease,
> present or past, absorbed, alone, aloof?
> . . . .
> Can any Jew praise life and fail to claim
> a share for them of bread, of books, of stars? (94)

In the nomadic cartography of Hacker's mapping of Jewish traumatic history onto her body, she is connected to the pain and suffering of the Jewish people. In this collection, her identity as a Jew is foregrounded to her identity as a woman and feminist. As *Winter Numbers* makes clear, this identity becomes a point of connection to other Jews as she finds there is no isolation and loneliness in pain if one is a Jew. In the above lines, she questions her ethnicity and asks, what does Judaism mean to being a writer? How does a Jew deal with his or her illness? Can a Jew both "praise" and "claim a share" of life at once? The shift from the individual reference to the plural locates the body in a collective framework as "she continually charts and reformulates connections between her experience and other experiences she seeks to witness" (Hartman 163).

The cartographic metaphor of the map reveals a move from the body as an agent of love towards a nomadic engagement with time, space, place, and ethnicity; however, like the scar, the map and the heritage it connects to are pre-destined as she contemplates in "August Journal": "though you are not my past, you are my past" (95). Yet Hacker wants to construct her own metaphor that connects her not only to the suffering of those in her past and present but also those in her future:

> My future, though, is coming toward me fast
> From elsewhere, and I cannot know where from (95)

As the lines above reveal, "August Journal" ends on an ambiguous note about the future of her posthuman condition. Hacker's exploration for an alternative metaphor that embodies her agency leads her to the metaphor of the braid in *Squares and Courtyards* that is conducive to her move towards a transcultural feminist poetics, which she then employs in her forthcoming collections. The braid offers a way to reconfigure the posthuman feminist body into a self-composed image that expresses how she wants to relate to others and to be perceived. As a metaphor for poetic, personal, and historical interconnectivity, the braid embodies a multiple, shifting, and overlapping nomadic subjectivity.

CHAPTER THREE

Braiding Memory with History: Nomadic Subjectivity in *Squares and Courtyards*

> . . . Speech and touch invoked
> my grandmother, the bookkeeper from Prague,
> who died as I emerged out of the fog
> of infancy, while lives dispersed in smoke
> above the camps (and Dresden, and Japan)
> and with them, someone else I might have been
> if memory braided with history.
> ——Marilyn Hacker, ''Squares and Courtyards'', 2000

Introduction

This chapter examines Marilyn Hacker's poetic exploration of the personal and historical dimensions of her Jewish identity. In her eighth collection, *Squares and Courtyards* (2000), Hacker's search for a metaphor to connect personal "memory" with collective "history" leads her to the metaphor of the braid. In light of Braidotti's figuration of nomadic subjectivity, I read the braid as an embodiment of Hacker's nomadic subjectivity and her embedded ethnic and historical location as an expatriate American Jew in Paris. She attempts to move beyond the postmastectomy body and configure a multifaceted and embodied model of female "subjectivity in a nomadic mode" (*NS* 22) by augmenting and transforming the scar, which begins as a metaphor for marking boundaries and becomes a metaphor for crossing boundaries in the metaphor of the braid. The braid offers a useful and fitting model of female agency for rethinking subjectivity in a Braidottian way, particularly in the way the braid moves across different temporal, geographical, cultural, and political spaces. Hacker attempts to break down barriers between these different realms by imaginatively, yet incompletely, entering the consciousness of children who attempt to write their personal stories by accessing collective Jewish history as depicted in the poem ''The Boy''. She manages to capture her shifting female imagination by tracing a female genealogy to her Jewish grandmother in a manner that enacts Braidotti's 'countermemory'. This memory is interwoven with history when Hacker imagines the

"memory" of a child in Europe that is "braided" with the "history" of the Holocaust in the poem ''Squares and Courtyards''.

In this personal and historical exploration, the braid emerges as an articulation of "an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes without an essential unity", and yet, at the same time, follows "fixed routes" that move in "repetitious, cyclical moves, [and] rhythmic displacements" (Braidotti, *NS* 52). This sense of paradoxical movement is achieved in the metaphorical process of opening up spaces through text and poetic form to journey inward, "back ward into her childhood and the communal Jewish past" (Biggs 14), and outward to contemporary illnesses, political tragedies, and European urban landscapes, with the braid acting as a metaphor for building bridges between the past and the present. Equally paradoxical is Hacker's use of fixed poetic form that offers possibilities for internal and external explorations of the self in the way it works with and against the fixity of form as Hacker both fights and celebrates the shifting boundaries of gender, health and sickness, and life and death.

Simultaneous with the publication of her second translation, Claire Malroux's *Soleil de Jadis* (A Long-Gone Sun) (2000), *Squares and Courtyards* demonstrates the movement of culture through translation, the influence of translation on the poet's creative practice, and the poetic conversations between the original and translated texts. I read translation as both a medium for "conceptual nomadism" (Braidotti, *NS* 52) and a type of intertextuality (Miola 16) in the way it carries themes and images from one language to another, from one culture to another, and from one memory to another. There is a conceptual shift and a deeper engagement with the past when Hacker finds a connection between Malroux's account of the Nazi occupation of France and her personal affiliation with the Vel' d'Hiv, as both events made up the historical narrative of World War II. This influence is an intertextual relationship between the two books as seen in Hacker's use of spatial metaphors like 'square' and 'courtyard' to locate the self in cityscape and use of the braid to understand the past by interweaving it with the historical conflicts of the early twentieth century.

Hacker's translation of *Soleil de Jadis* deeply informed her own writing, as Malroux's interweaving of autobiography and history influenced how Hacker plays with the conventional boundaries between the writing genres of personal history and imagination. She sometimes mixes private memory with collective history, while at other times she "fictionalis[es] the auto/biographical past and present" (Stanley 62).

The act of connecting to victims of the Holocaust, immigrant generations, French victims of the German occupation, and victims of war camps and "Dresden, and Japan" (14) presents Hacker's writing as "a large braid with many intersecting strands", a metaphor that characterises the "tradition of Jewish American women's writing" (Shapiro et al. 1). The spaces that are opened by the "cartography of the body" in *Winter Numbers* become places where she locates memory to draw on a silence, an unspoken past heritage that she is disconnected from in *Squares and Courtyards*.

Hacker's Translations of Claire Malroux's Poetry

Hacker's post-1996 writing is informed by her translations, which are key to the development of her creative practice. Translation, as a creative literary practice, generates increased creativity as the poet-translator comes in touch with more themes and more cultures. In other words, just as the translated text is a product of and a braiding of voices with the original text, a writer's own work can develop from the creativity garnered from another's work. According to Susan Bassnett, "[t]ranslation, like imitation, can be a means of learning the craft of writing, for if writers can recognise and learn to speak in different voices it becomes more probable that they will identify a distinctive voice of their own" (174). Bassnett's words on the influence of translation upon creative practice are echoed by Braidotti's questions on the development of new figurations of thought and her argument for a "new conceptual creativity": "how does one invent new structures of thought? Where does conceptual change start from? What are the conditions that can bring it about?" (*MB* 173). Both notions of influence and creativity underscore the importance of translation as a creative literary activity that acts as a vehicle for the communication of another culture and poetic conversation.

For Hacker, engaging through text with other writers is a form of intertextual dialogue that links the poetry of other writers to her current poetic engagements at a given time. Without specifying how these links are formed, or even using the term 'intertextuality', Hacker confirms this relationship between her texts and the texts she translates, as well as the influence on her own work, when she explains that translation is "something I find really useful in my own work. I think the two feed each other" (Dick). Her use of the verb 'feed' creates a feminine image of nourishment and dependency, as if she as poet-translator initially involved in the process of translation

with the plan to boost her own writing. An added connection between her and the work she translates is that, like her, the translated writers are bilingual or multilingual. Thus, just as her work echoes the languages of other writers, so does theirs, creating a larger dialogue that spans across languages and cultures.

As in the case of Hacker's own writing, she largely chooses to translate poetry with political themes. This feminist ideology is evident when she starts translating French women's poetry as part of her political vision to help move marginalised female voices from the periphery to the foreground of literary discourse. Hacker helps to convey these writers' work to a new audience; as Nicholas de Lange puts it, "[t]ranslation is a process of negotiation with an author, which I find very helpful, because the translator is in some ways an intermediary between the original author and the new public" (qtd. in Bassnett 15). Hacker approaches translation in the manner translation theorist Lawrence Venuti suggests with a "politically engaged ethics that strives to preserve cultural difference against the pressures of hegemony" (Benmessaoud 186). Her ideology is to suppress her personality as a translator in the attempt to project the author's, described in her own words in an early interview as "putting your hands in the clay of language, but leaving your ego someplace else" (2005). However, in a more recent interview, she revises this view of translation to an embodied process of "inhabiting another person" (2014) that reveals her understanding of the intertwining of the original text and translation to produce a version that is an organic projection of both, or as Octavio Paz explains:

> The poet, immersed in the movement of language . . . chooses a
> few words . . . he constructs his poem: a verbal object made of
> irreplaceable characters. The translator's starting point is not the
> language in movement that provides the poet's raw material but
> the fixed language of the poem . . . His procedure is the inverse of
> the poet's: he is not constructing an unalterable text from mobile
> characters; instead, he is dismantling the elements of the text,
> freeing the signs into circulation, then returning them to language . . . The
> result is a reproduction of the original poem in another poem that is . . .
> less a copy than a transmutation.
> ("Translation" 159-160)

Translating Malroux's poetry after publishing eight poetry books at the fairly advanced age of fifty-four reiterates Hacker's feminist poetics of "reclaim[ing] the tradition" that she sees can be transferred to other male-dominated literary traditions, or to call back

her 2010 interview: ''I now feel free to hesitate at positing a separate 'female' line from which I might descend as a poet" (O'Callaghan 76). Gender and political ideology govern Hacker's selection of texts for translation. Levine asserts that translation becomes a political act when it "aims to (re)produce an effect" and "to persuade the reader" (Basil Hatim and Jeremy Munday 104). In this spirit, Hacker sets out to subvert the dominant male discourse in French literature by advocating French women's writing through translation, which acts as a medium of dialogue that bridges a history of Western feminism to non-Western feminism. Hacker's ideology stems from a background of Western liberal feminism that has achieved better representation for women in the public arena. The discrimination and underrepresentation that French women poets have experienced prompted Hacker to translate their poetry.

It appears that Hacker's translations helped in drawing more critical attention to Malroux's poetry: Hacker's second book of translations received double the number of reviews that her first book did (*Edge* received two book reviews, while *A Long-Gone Sun* received four – two of which are book reviews and two are full-length articles). Having already introduced Malroux's literary contributions and her poetics in the preface to *Edge*, Hacker's English-speaking readers are then taken on the historical journey of *A Long-Gone Sun* through a woman's memory of a childhood that was intruded upon by "History / brutally carrying out / Time's orders" (177). The book is written in dedication to her father, Augustin Malroux, who was involved in the French resistance, eventually dying in a concentration camp. She recounts this autobiographical narrative as "le passé pourtant ne reviendra jamais au même [the past that will never return the same]" (qtd. in *A Long-Gone Sun*).

As opposed to *Edge*, which was originally published as separate poems in magazines and journals, *A Long-Gone Sun* is the translation of the original novel-length French version, *Soleil de Jadis*. Its composition in this format helps to relate the events in a sequential chronological order, connecting all four sections of the book into a coherent whole. Starting with a vivid and detailed description of her house and the French village of Albi, Malroux introduces her readers to all the characters that take part in this drama – her parents, her sister, her grandparents from both sides – leading to the pivotal incident in the fourth and last section of the book – "Sugar Loaves" – that forces her to gain consciousness of politics: the arrest, deportation, and death of the poet's father, a sacrifice which the poet believes "gives his daughters' life a second time" (175). This

book of memories will forever commemorate his bravery, as does the bust erected for him at "the town square" with the dedication "*Fighter for freedom / Explorer of the planet*" (183).

Shirley Ann Jordan notes that the "identity quest" (18) that is explored through the weaving of "personal histories" (44) into historical events is a common theme in contemporary French women's writing. She explains that these women writers focus on "individual trauma, on concentrated periods of personal crisis, on devastating pasts which haunt the present, and on doubts and uncertainties related specifically to gender identity" (18). Recounting "France's Vichy past" is at the heart of finding a sense of personal identity within a communal one (44). Malroux develops this sense of selfhood as "the child" at the start of the narrative "metamorphoses into an 'I' as the book progresses," with her consciousness at the end becoming a collective "we" who proceed toward the same destiny, as Hacker explains in the preface (xviii). This identity quest becomes increasingly critical in Hacker's more recent work, and is represented in a number of distinctive ways via questions of race, Jewish history, forgotten childhood memories, and trauma connected to personal and collective crisis. As such, the identity Hacker works out is both individual and collective, and grows around her questions "what can I learn?", "what am I living for?", and most importantly "*Is there a yellow star sewed to her dress / . . . / she'll have reflective decades to write down*?" The "I" and "she" refer to an individual self within a historical one that the poet needs to access to understand and link personal with collective history.

Composed immediately after *A Long-Gone Sun* was translated, *Squares and Courtyards* develops *Winter Numbers'* act of bearing witness to historical events and illnesses, such as the Holocaust, cancer, AIDS, political oppression, and aging, with a realism that balances dailiness with death. It also continues to narrate complex and nonlinear spatial, temporal, and geographical shifts. However, new to this collection is the emergence of memory as an alternative pattern of identification. "[The collection] brings a new level of personal commitment into the alchemy of form and message", as Annie Finch notes, "[i]t evidences a dramatic shift in Hacker's poetic career . . . [it] ventures farther than ever before into the details of memory" ("Forms of Memory" 168). This new collection originated from Hacker's anxiety and wish to write ''a mature, more complex, newly evolving mode of work'', as she writes in a 1995 letter to Hayden Carruth:

> I've been depressed, some days really heavily, others more of a general malaise. I was entirely convinced that event that award was a farce, that the book to which it was given is entirely mediocre, that whatever talent I ever had has been dissipated, that, while other writers of my generation are developing, moving into a mature, more complex, newly evolving mode of work, my own has remained static, only <u>losing</u> in depth and intelligence from year to year.[82] (underline in original)

Winner of the first Audre Lorde Award in 2001, *Squares and Courtyards* is made up of ''Scars on Paper'' and ''Paragraphs from a Daybook''. The material of the first section examines her past and present personal experiences in the form of quatrains and sonnets, while the second section is a sequence of sonnets that explores the poet's family relations and feminism. This categorisation reveals that Hacker employs her formalist tendencies to achieve a structured means of expression that allows for rumination on questions of subjectivity and relationships.

Hacker's search for a metaphor, which she began in *Winter Numbers,* continues as she opens up spaces for the exploration of the self; *Squares and Courtyards*, with its reference to urban space, is a conspicuous articulation of how the self is made through public and private spaces of experience. It highlights the relationship between the body to space in its interiority and exteriority. In its invocations of grim experiences and street scenes, it complicates a fixed viewpoint from which to view the self. As a feminist writer, she refigures conventional geographic and architectural spatial arrangements in order to access cultural and historical knowledge. As a Jewish woman, she imagines a nomadic use of space in a shifting, nonlinear, and overlapping movement of internal and external scape. She enacts what Braidotti describes as "nomadic trajectories" within "metropolitan space" (*NS* 55). Braidotti notes that the purpose of a nomadic mode of relating to space "is to identify lines of flight, that is to say, a creative alternative space of becoming that would fall not between the mobile/immobile, the resident/the foreigner distinction, but within all these categories" (*NS* 13).

Based on this approach to space, Hacker understandably locates herself metaphorically in both the public space of the "Square" and the private space of the "Courtyard" at the same time without being limited by either, in a flowing movement as is suggested by the conjunction "and" in the title. The title's spatial significance also

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[82] Hacker, letter to Hayden Carruth. 8 Dec. 1995. Box 73, Folder 32. HCP.

attempts to reflect different forms of human relationships. First, the title's reference to public and communal spaces of the "square" connotes connection, congregation, communication, recollection, and support for others, first and foremost. Second, its reference to more private spaces of the "courtyard" allows reflection within oneself through internal explorations that venture farther than before into the annals of her memory of family, friends, and childhood home and toys.

More likely a direct influence, rather than a coincidence of themes and images, the "recurring attention to memory, its reveries of detail, its histories and intimacies" uncovers links between Malroux's work and Hacker's (Finch, "Forms of Memory" 176-177). Hacker recognises the same "à un parcours" (journey) in Malroux's poetry when she describes *A Long-Gone Sun* as "a book about memory […] of a child's plunge, half-willing and half-resisting, into the abyss of history" (Malroux xviii). These intertextual relationships function in a reader-writer system: Hacker's translation of Malroux's poetry and her later use of history, memory, and self-reflection in her own work – and, in turn, Malroux's translation of Hacker's poetry – illustrate an enigmatic or implicit dialogue of themes and contexts that draws the reader in to notice and interpret the significance of this intersection. For example, in her crown of sonnets "Paragraphs from a Daybook," Hacker writes about an anonymous "friend" she meets in a "café", alluding to her collaboration with Malroux:

> I almost gushed to my friend about a movie
> I'd just seen: the son of a concentration-
> camp survivor's homage. Mother tells son
> the volumes she remembers. Now she's seventy-
> something, tangos in high-heeled elegance
> over the abyss of memory.
> But we were balancing fine points of translation
> with forkfuls of ratatouille in a café
> the freezing afternoon of New Year's Eve,
> and both of us had other things to say.
> Our plates were cleared. With habitual diffidence,
> she handed a new manuscript to me
> and took (to the Ladies') momentary leave.
> I turned a page and read the dedication
> to her father, who died at Bergen-Belsen. (72)

Though Hacker does not refer to Malroux by name, she hints that her friend is a writer that gave her a "new manuscript" and together they "were balancing fine points of

translation". The speaker, passionate ("gushed") about the historical plight of the Jews, saw a film about a son paying "homage" to his "concentration camp survivor" father. Ironically, the reader learns in the second part of the sonnet that her friend's book is also a "dedication / to her father, who died at Bergen-Belsen". The relevance of this anecdote is how it sits in a collection that engages primarily with "the abyss of memory", a phrase that is emphatically end-stopped and sits on its own in line six. The speaker uses "volumes" to modify this memory, as in both volumes of history books and as in masses of victims. Ending the sonnet with Bergen-Belsen, which has become a symbol of the Holocaust, creates a deadening silence that encourages the reader to contemplate the severity of the disaster, and with it the memory.

Hacker's translation story properly begins with the publication of *Edge*, when she was still an editor of *Ploughshares* and a faculty member at Brandeis University. The title of Malroux's work reflects her position in between languages and poetic traditions as a translator of Emily Dickinson's poems to French. Other women translators echo this sense of liminality, such as Susan Bassnett, who writes, "an insider yet an outsider simultaneously, standing on the threshold between cultures: the ideal place for a translator, who occupies the liminal space that others step over without a passing thought" (179). The position of the translator, as Nicole Jouve notes, is in the "in-between. Like words in translation s/he endlessly drifts between meanings. S/he tries to be the go-between" (Kumar Das 132).[83]

This metaphor of the feminist translator takes its currency from French feminist thought, particularly Hélèn Cixous' notion of the 'in-betweenness' of *feminine* writing that involves some place "in between two poles of male and female" (Kumar Das 132). Drawing on Cixous' concept of *feminine* writing, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood proposes that the feminist translator rewrites her "body bilingual" as she moves "between the source text, the target language text-in-progress and the readers she is 'entertaining' with her work" (Bassnett 222). Although *Edge* is not particularly a

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[83] In *Le Rire de la Meduse* (1975) ("The Laugh of the Medusa"), Helene Cixous rejects the binary opposition between male and female writing and proposes instead a view of *feminine* writing that "work[s] (in) the in-between", going beyond biological distinctions. Susan Bassnett notes that translation studies developed through the 1970s in parallel to the development of feminist theory during which Cixous was developing her concept of the in-between. However, they only recently came into contact to develop feminist translation studies which aims to, according to Sherry Simon, "identify and critique the tangle of concepts which relegates both women and translation to the bottom of the social and literary ladder… it must investigate the processes through which translation has come to be "feminized," and attempt to trouble the structures of authority which have maintained this association (1996).

feminist work, it nevertheless draws on French feminist thought as the collection communicates a dreamlike place "between seasons, between land and sea, day and night, ripeness and decay, life and death," (*Edge* ix) and between the two languages they are constructed in, as Hacker states in her preface to the collection.

As such, Malroux foregrounds the notion of in-betweenness, which not only underscores *Edge* but also the texts she translates and translations of her own work. Malroux's poetry shows signs of being shaped by Dickinson's work in her meditations on death and mortality: "the antiseptic other side of death" (3), and in her brief and elliptic style "A single / Boat / Heads out to sea" (5). In fact, Hacker might have come to know Malroux through her English to French translations of Dickinson's poems. Yet especially Dickinsonian is her "Time has doors has windows", which is reminiscent of Dickinson's poems on time, aging, and death. Like Dickinson's "we turn not older with years, but newer everyday," Malroux's poem has a tone of matter-of-fact acceptance toward growing older, tempered by an emphatic reminder that this process is not a "corridor of anguish" (35). However, Malroux does this in her own contemporary, French way, as she writes: "Moving sidewalk in the subway belly where the fetus / conveyed past brilliant billboards / Loses teeth hair strength hope / It is not this corridor of anguish" (35). Malroux depicts the progression of life, from "fetus" to "los[ing] teeth hair strength [and] hope" as a speeding subway passing by colourful memories on billboards. Hacker clearly dismisses Malroux's poetic convictions as having "no political agenda" (ix) but is quick to note that Malroux surprises her readers by describing "stagnation" through a woman's "lipstick poised in the air" (79) and her daily activities as part of a wider world seen through a woman's eyes in "Octet Before Winter".

Such poems on the "edge" are reflected in Hacker's translations, which also oscillate between translations that "privilege sense over music" ("A Long-Gone Sun" 321) – as the lines above show – and translations that show a "careful and creative choice of equivalent words and allusions" (King, *A Long-Gone* 359). Hacker explains in the preface that she "worked closely with the author to bring into English the rhymes and other patterns of sound that make these poems impressively musical" (King, *Edge* 114). Take, for example, how Hacker maintains the rhyme in "Basic Truths" when translating "N'importe quoi / Le met en joie" to "Its random choice / Makes it rejoice" (p. 13). The "hermetic, enclosed, private female world of *Edge"* (King, *A Long-Gone* 359)

alludes to a private inner world that develops into an autobiographical narrative of World War II and France's occupation by Germany, seen through the eyes of a female child in Malroux's next poetry collection, *A Long-Gone Sun*. From its title, Malroux's book draws on memory and how it is linked to history in a "Proustian" account of the past (Gilbert), as Hacker explains in the preface to her introduction:

> how a child gains consciousness at the cost of 'innocence' when she realizes in precise detail that harm *is* done, that the seemingly eternal moment of childhood is part of the irrevocable passage of history: not history in the abstract, but that of the specific time and place in which/of which she becomes aware.
> (*A Long-Gone Sun* xv)

The specific historical moment is that of the Nazi occupation of France during World War II at the time of the Vichy French government, from about 1940-1944, in the French village of Tarn. The intersection of Malroux's time frame with the plight of Jews in Europe in the 1942 Vel' d'Hiv roundup is the origin of influence of Malroux's book on Hacker's. Similar to how Malroux writes out of her childhood, Hacker also uses childhood as a starting point for her internal exploration of gender, race, and writing, and how these components shape her identity as a Jew. As such, both of these poems are inspired and motivated with pictures of children that have "become generally pervasive in contemporary memory and discussion of the Holocaust", such as the photo of the boy from Warsaw and *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank (Hirsch, "Projected Memory" 4, 11). Documenting and memorialising the images of Jewish children during the war reveals that child characters are central to Hacker's racial and historical identification. "Images of children", according to Lucy Dawidowicz,

> bring home the utter senselessness of Holocaust destruction . . . Children, moreover, were particularly vulnerable in Hitler's Europe: in the entire Nazi-occupied territory of Europe only 11 percent of Jewish children survived and thus the faces of children signal the unforgiving ferocity of the Nazi death machine.
> (Hirsch, "Projected Memory" 12)

Women poets relate to childhood, according to Marsha Bryant, because their feelings of otherness within a patriarchal society are similar to a child's marginalisation and helplessness. Children are also somewhat more indeterminate in all ways. The woman

poet "speak[s] more often through the voice of the child than through the personas of mother or lover, perhaps because society enforces a childlike passivity and dependence on women" (qtd. in Bryant 80). Similar to "children, they are uncertain of the future and want to know not only Who am I? but more important, Who am I to become?" (80). It is this marginalisation that provides Malroux and Hacker the space to take on the figures of children to access the intersecting dimensions of memory and history.

"The Boy": Childhood and Ethnic History

Throughout *Squares and Courtyards*, Hacker extends her examination of her connection to the Vel' d'Hiv through the image of the child in her writing. In a manner similar to that seen in Malroux's writing, Hacker attempts to recover the past, but as she is disconnected from it she employs characters who allow her to access different narratives, engaging in a nonlinear flow of temporality in nomadic mode to open up alternative spaces to access different dimensions of herself. As the word "Squares" in the title of the collection suggests, the first poem of the collection, "The Boy", ventures into the world of collective existence an external exploration of her Jewish identity:

> ### Marilyn
>
> Is it the boy in me who's looking out
> the window, while someone across the street
> mends a pillowcase, clouds shift, the gutter spout
> pours rain, someone else lights a cigarette?
> . . . .
> I'll never be a man, but there's a boy
> Crossing out words: the rain, the linen-mender,
> are all the homework he will do today.
> The absence and the privilege of gender (13)

> ### Claire
>
> *I began to tell this story even before*
> *the end of what it's trying to recapture*
> *the pupa in its chrysalis*
> *. . . . .*
> *Yet history*
> *is there and despite the absence*
> *of visible landmarks*

> *it gives depth and highlights*
> *I began to tell this story*
> *a long time ago*
> *and yet only today*
> *when nothing is left of the past but doors*
> *which swing open and shut on emptiness*
> *. . . . .* (3)

"The Boy" opens the self to questions of otherness as a boy struggles to write something as he takes in his surroundings. The boy writing next to a window shows Hacker employing childhood to understand her Jewish heritage. Using the window as the medium for "looking out", Hacker creates a visual photograph similar to the ones used in Holocaust memory. From the start, then, Hacker creates a paradox between her present self that is reflecting on her childhood and the character of the child that she is not and can never be. Hacker uses the image of the writer sitting at the window during the rain many times in her poetry, as "Cancer Winter", "The Boy", and "Squares and Courtyards" reveal. She tells Hayden Carruth in a 2001 letter, "I am a habitual looker out of windows, perhaps especially in Paris (as the poems in *Squares and Courtyards* testify) that's about all one CAN do in this downpour".[84] Although the poet uses the rain as a plot setting to locate her characters inside, she uses the distance provided by the view from the window to examine the public aspects of the self as well its private dimension by looking from inside.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Hacker wrote "The Boy" and "Squares and Courtyards" in response to Robyn Selman's analysis of gender stereotypes – boys tend toward exteriority and girls toward interiority – in a literary review of Rafael Campo's and Rachel Weztsteon's poetry. In an email to Robyn Selman, Hacker explains the imagery that inspired this poem:

> "The Boy" was written in my flat in . . . Paris, where my worktable faces a window with a vis à vis, beyond which the lives of the people living opposite, framed by door-sized windows, go on more or less before my eyes, as mine does before theirs. A schoolchild doing homework in one of those flats would face me as I'd face him or her. But there is no such child; it was I who watched the elderly widow (I think she's a widow) with the enormous rubber plant in her front room sitting at the window hemming a pillowcase that day, while her young neighbor-on-the-landing leaned out the window with a lit cigarette, watching the street.

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[84] Hacker, letter to Hayden Carruth. 8 Feb. 2001. Box 73, Folder 32. HCP.

(qtd. in Semansky 20)

Using childhood as a starting point of the poem, Hacker offers a shift towards Malroux's theme of history in the manner of Isabelle Stengers' "conceptual nomadism" (Braidotti, *NS* 52). Stengers argues that concepts are "nomadic because they have acquired the capacity to transfer from one scientific discourse to another" (52). Braidotti explains that this concept is useful because it "allows for multiple interconnections and transmigrations of notions" (52). There are echoes of Malroux's exploration of childhood and language in Hacker's poem. Hacker's narration is also similar to Malroux's in that she narrates an adult's perspective from the viewpoint of a child's.

Hacker departs, however, from Malroux's themes by examining the relationship between gender and ethnic identity. The reader learns what Malroux's narrator remembers through a child's perception of her surroundings, as presented in the preface of the poem, "I began to tell this story / a long time ago" (3); however, in Hacker's poem, the boy is inside the narrator, when she questions, "Is it the boy in me who's looking out / the window . . .?" (13). Hacker achieves a sense of uncertainty and exploration that characterises both the female speaker and the boy by structuring the first stanza in the form of a question. Hacker conflates gender in this depiction; however, she separates these identities in the third stanza by articulating the female narrative "I" – "I'll never be a man" – but is quick to clarify that "there's a boy" presence within herself.

In this shifting of personas, Hacker aims to create a space to explore gender's influence on the way one engages with his or her surroundings. Her usage of first person pronouns "me" and "I" in the first and third stanzas proposes a model of the female identity as the basis of subjectivity, which also rejects the notion of fixed identity foundations and locations; it is a female subjectivity that must be specified as embedded in the Jewish European landscape through which Hacker locates herself. Hacker's model, therefore, exemplifies the flexibility of Braidotti's nomadism which is "not fluidity without borders, but rather an acute awareness of the nonfixity of boundaries" (*NS* 66). There is a symbiotic merger between speaker, boy and girl: the female speaker explores how the boy feels and the boy explores how a girl feels, which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. However, at other times, Hacker leaves space for the

interposition of gender difference. She seeks to emphasise the continuities and discontinuities of one's experience of gender.

In depicting a boy over a female protagonist, the poem blurs the boundaries of gender, allowing the speaker to move in and out of different characters. The male character allows her to be herself as a writer and a Jew, both at the same time. The symmetry intrinsic to the quatrains works against Hacker's depiction of the perplexities of gender in childhood in the way she oscillates between characters. This movement allows her to create a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty in the poem that characterises female speaker and boy. Hacker explained the connections between these different identities in "The Boy" during the Poetry and Politics conference:

> "The Boy" began as a mental conversation with a poet-critic friend, who, in an essay, posited the stance of the young woman poet as 'examining the room she's sitting in' where the young male poet is looking out the window... The 'boy in me' who was indeed looking out the window as he /I wrote ... But, although the questions of Jewish identity as inflecting masculinity become central to the poem, as the old saw goes, 'I didn't know he was Jewish.'—at least, not until I was well into writing it. (2009)

The coexistence of both personas in the female body – the speaker's and the boy's – reveals the notion of androgyny resurfacing in Hacker's poems. As discussed in Chapter Two, Hacker first uses the androgynous metaphor in "Cancer Winter" to create a corporeal space that joins both male and female chests in the postmastectomy body ("I'll bake my chest again at Juan-les-Pins, / round side and flat, gynandre/androgyne") (87). However, there is a difference in Hacker's treatment of androgyny in the female body between both poems. In the postmastectomy body, there is no gender ambiguity; the influence of illness on the body is visible on the outside in both the "schoolboy haircut" and the "flat" chest, as both hair and breast are inherent to a woman's identity and are representative of cultural images of femininity. In this sense, the androgyny is fixed (although hair grows) and static as the body's changes are unchosen. The cancer stigma also influences attitudes toward this kind of androgyny. With the speaker in "The Boy", the body is "un-marked", which suggests that the male character is unsure of his gender and how it connects him to his ethnicity. The body's "neutral" identity can create conflicting feelings about one's gender identity, similar to the boy's perplexity towards

his gender. Therefore, the former is more of a physical androgyny and the latter a psychological androgyny.

Moving from the binary of presence/absence suggested by the image of the postmastectomy "chest", androgyny opens up spaces for the body to "choose from a number of different roles, free to move back and forth between roles traditionally segregated into masculine and feminine" (Farwell 442). According to Devender Kumar, androgyny is "juxtaposed" between the "masculine and feminine" when they both "stand equally valid against each other and contribute significantly to the individual's enterprise towards an ideal whole" (124). As such, the relationship between the two entities "remains not that of antagonism, but of interdependence for each transforms itself into the other willingly. In their relationship, a kind of dialectic is set up. Neither side is reduced to the other in subservience or defeat" (124).

The psychic context in which androgyny is introduced in "The Boy" engages in contemporary feminist debates, specifically Braidotti's attention to the gender difference of the nomadic subject, which she distances from the notion of androgyny. Braidotti warns against the "blurring of the boundaries of sexual difference, in the sense of a generalized androgynous drive", which she notes is characteristic of a post-gender system of modern capitalism (*NE* 49; *PH* 98). Although Braidotti is critical of androgyny, her affirmation of "sexual difference as providing shifting locations for multiple female feminist embodied voices" (*NS* 165) in the manner that Hacker embodies different characters to articulate different female identities. In fact, androgyny can be linked to Braidotti's "diagram" or "methodological map" of mulitlayered gender difference: "differences between men and women", "differences among women", and "differences within each woman" (*NS* 151). In particular, Hacker's androgyny is related to level three, which "highlights the complexity of the embodied structure of the [female] subject" who is a "multiplicity in herself: split, fractured"; it is a self that is:

> relational, in that it requires a bond to the "other"; it is retrospective, in that it is fixed through memories and recollections in a genealogical process [which entails an] identity [that] is made of successive identifications, that is to say, unconscious internalized images that escape rational control [that] also implies that one entertains an imaginary relationship to one's history, genealogy, and material conditions. (158)

As in Braidotti's third level, Hacker attempts to articulate her Jewish identity by establishing "a bond" or "an imaginary relationship" to her Jewish heritage through the child in "The Boy". Therefore, Hacker's use of androgyny does not indicate an in-between-stage that is opposed to masculine and feminine positions in the manner that Braidotti is critical of; rather, it is a subversive practice for the creation of "alternative figurations or schemes of representation" (Braidotti, *NS* 4) of her location. The poem further explores the connection between gender and ethnicity when the boy tries to take on a girl's reaction to this mocking:

> (Because he flinched, because he didn't whirl
> around, face them, because he didn't hurl
> the challenge back—"*Fascists?*"—not "*Faggots*"—"*Swine!*"
> he briefly wonders—if he were a girl . . .)
> He writes a line. He crosses out a line.
> …………………………………………
> The absence and the privilege of gender
>
> confound in him, soprano, clumsy, frail.
> Not neuter—neutral human, and unmarked,
> the younger brother in the fairy tale
> except, boys shouted "Jew!" across the park (13)

In a shift from contemplation to an examination of the speaker's relationship to her heritage, the second stanza brings the historical discrimination against Jews under scrutiny as the speaker embodies the male character. Hacker opens up discourses of gender difference in the way the boy questions his tormentors' reactions "if he were a girl" and not forced to endure the homophobic insults ("Faggots") of the "Fascists". In these curses against the boy, Hacker hears a history of antisemitism. Raising questions of connotations of external marks of identity, later in the poem the speaker wonders how the tormentors identified the boy if he looks no different from other boys ("He has short hair, a red sweatshirt"), but nevertheless these tormentors "know / something about him" that makes him a target for attack ("that's shameful if it shows") (14). Hacker attempts to imagine the feelings of a Jew in the war, as "he should be proud of" his identity but must hide who he is or he will be killed.

Gender boundaries are even further blurred as the boy is not yet aware of his gender ("the absence . . . of gender / . . . soprano, clumsy, frail"), illustrating his androgyny, yet he is forced to recognize his Jewishness when the racist boys call him a

"Jew". Like the boy, the female speaker is trying to understand her ethnicity as she hesitantly "writes a line", and then "crosses out a line". The verb "writes" shows Hacker attempting to write her Jewish identity through accessing the history of the boy's people in "the war" and "the partisans" that resisted the Nazi occupation (Biggs 9). The poem's challenge of boundaries, however, climaxes in the play on the word "crosses" as it not only signifies her failure to access this history, and with it, write her own story, but also a "cross[ing]" of boundaries that echoes Braidotti's nomadism in Hacker's aspiration to articulate a shift in her subjectivity that reflects a transcendence of her geo-political and cultural location. The sense of movement in the poem is further achieved by use of the word "shift" to suggest moving scenes ("mends a pillowcase, clouds shift, the gutter spout / pours rain, someone else lights a cigarette?") that create an alternative imaginary to linear narratives.

After the bullies in the park harass the timid schoolboy, Hacker subtly refers to World War II by contrasting the boy's confrontation to "The book that he just read, about the war, / the partisans" (13). This ironic comparison leads the reader to consider: how could a boy's oppression be worse than a whole people's? Then the reader is asked to join the boy in decoding why this war story "is less a terrible / and thrilling story, more a warning, more / a code, and he must puzzle out the code" (13). It becomes apparent that the boy's heritage holds more importance to the formation of his identity than to its historical significance and is likewise a "code" that Hacker must "puzzle out" as she begins to understand her Jewish identity. This ambiguity shows Hacker drawing on her past to negotiate the many dimensions of her identity, but like the boy who tries to write, the poet also experiences a writing crisis and is unable to write ''[her]/his story" (14). Throughout the poem, the fluidity of gender, ethnicity and identity are examined as Hacker moves seamlessly between boy and female speaker, only to settle on a juxtaposition of the masculine and feminine at the end:

> . . . Someone who'll never be a man
> looks out the window at the rain he thought
> might stop. He reads the sentence he began.
> He writes down something that he crosses out. (14)

Reiterating the ambiguity of the poem, the male character reappears at the end of the poem; however, the vagueness of the reference to "someone who'll never be a man"

suggests both female narrator and the male protagonist, as Hacker cannot be a man, and the war "got [the boy] killed in 1942" (14). The space between the past and the present, the descendant and the ancestors who experienced the war, the boy and his ethnic history all must be bridged, or connected, if he is to understand his identity. However, without an "intergenerational" (Hirsch, "Projected Memory" xii) connection – through familial or personal relation - this feat is impossible, even if different selves are imagined. Using the word "thought", the speaker reveals that the window that allowed the boy introspection at the beginning of the poem is now a barrier separating him from the external world of experience and with it, the history of his heritage. The poem ends on a sombre note with the poet failing to understand what it means to be Jewish and to form a relationship with her ancestry by writing her story: "[she]/he writes down something that [she]/[he] crosses out".

''Squares and Courtyards'': Braiding Autobiography and History

Hacker moves from a male character in "The Boy" to a female character in the title poem, "Squares and Courtyards": both poems emphasise the importance of the child character in Hacker's exploration of ethnicity and gender. As we have seen, "Squares and Courtyards" shows Hacker exploring Selman's notion of the woman poet looking inward to examine the room she is sitting in so as to imagine an image of herself in touch with her childhood memories. The relevance of this image suggests, according to Chris Semansky, "not only that women's attention is drawn to their immediate vicinity but also that they are more inner directed, more apt to use their bodies and emotions, their images of themselves as subjects for their poems" (19). The "room" that Selman speaks of is the internal space to explore one's emotions, past, and memory. As such, Hacker employs stereotypical gender behaviour to explore the connections between gender and a writer's engagement with the world through language. As in "The Boy", she finds inspiration for her character studies by watching people from across the street or from her window. In "Squares and Courtyards", the time and narrative movement of the schoolgirl returning home at the end of the poem ("*while I imagine her across the street / as late light shifts, sunlit, dusk-lit, lamplit*") was taken from Hacker's contemplation of a scene she remembers after returning to France following her cancer treatment in the U.S., as she explains in "Journal Entries":

> The sun's going down: I got lost in the memory of the young woman
> across the street at 26, rue de Turenne, pregnant in November, pensive at
> her kitchen table in an oversized white T-shirt while the rotund, elderly
> mom-and-pop upstairs were having a raucous extended family dinner, all
> their windows across the street opening those lives into mine. (241)

In the same way that the windows of her Paris apartment open the lives of others onto hers, Hacker finds Paris a gateway to other geographical and cultural centres, both historical and modern. In a palimpsestic narrative of past and present, she takes the streets of her neighbourhood, rue de Turenne in the third arrondissement, as a passage to her own Jewish family history and the historical background of the Marais, which is near to where she lives. These locations allow her to write the contemporary world of the city and to metaphorically situate herself historically and geographically in an "embedded . . . social position" (Braidotti, *NS* 4) as a descendent and privileged survivor of historical tragedies.

Hacker's interest in the city dates back to the 60s and 70s when with her then-husband, Samuel Delany, lived in New York's East Village, where the diverse characters of the urban scene were to be important subjects in her poetry. Indeed, the title of an early collection in 1974, *First Cities*, reflects this delight. Because the city has long had a masculine character, it has marginalized women. As such women writers have taken it up as a metaphor because "in writing about the city, women reveal their response to culture itself", as Susan Squier notes (5). She adds that the city "can provide [them] with space [real or imagined] and cultural tools with which to transcend enforced domestic servitude" (5).

The title of the poem "Squares and Courtyards"[85] is influenced by European cityscape, and Hacker's chosen form – a corona of sonnets – resonates with the same metaphorics of space that she employs earlier in "The Boy". However, "Squares and Courtyards" communicates the imperative for an expansive form that can accommodate her imaginative, political, and cultural endeavour for change. In an interior monologue of a woman comfortable in city space, Hacker gives a view of urban life with its beauties

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[85] The title of Hacker's poem, "Squares and Courtyards", in its engagement with spatial metaphors of European landscape and history, echoes Elizabeth Bishop's "Paris, 7 A.M." from her collection *North and South* (1946). In Bishop's poem, the speaker imagines a cartography of Paris that consists of "circles", "squares", and "courtyards". These urban spaces allow for both "introspection" into the self and "retrospection" into the tragedies of history.

of architecture, food, friendship, and family:

> Across the Place du Marché Ste-Catherine
> the light which frames a building that I see
> daily, walking home from the bakery,
> white voile in open windows, sudden green
> and scarlet window-box geraniums
> backlit in cloud-encouraged clarity
> against the century-patinaed gray (41)

In a second attempt to capture the female imagination, Hacker opens the poem in the same manner that the "The Boy" begins by observing the world of human interaction; however, by foregrounding the word "across" in the lines above, Hacker suggests that the speaker has moved beyond the barriers of conventional thinking and has positioned herself in an external realm of experience that resolves the crisis of observation from behind a window in a flowing semi-synthesis with the public space around her, signalling a nomadic engagement with urban space. Moreover, "across" separates the narrator from urban space and at the same time engages her with it as she "walk[s] home from the bakery". The poem shows that everyday events take place in what she calls "semi-public spaces", such as squares, "cafés, restaurants, and parks", and Hacker finds that the "combination of being 'in public' yet alone, . . . is as conductive to words on paper as is actual solitude" (*UV* 2).

The square she names in the first sonnet, the 'Place du Marché Ste-Catherine', is in fact a real-life square, which she describes as having "vegetation so lush it could be qualified as 'wooded'", across from a café she frequently visits. The image of the square originated from a nostalgic daydream of Paris while she was in New York as she writes to Hayden Carruth:

> For two or three days, every time I closed my eyes, I'd be mentally walking around the corner onto the shopping street, the rue St. Antoine, or turning into the little cobblestoned Place du Marché Ste-Catherine — on the way to the metro from my front door — and become unspeakably homesick and nostalgic.[86]

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[86] Hacker, letter to Hayden Carruth. 27 Jan. 1997. Box 73, Folder 31. HCP.

'Place du Marché Ste-Catherine', as a point of access to the poem (which later proves to be a central concern), propels the speaker into a public square full of vivid sensation and recalls the 4th century virgin Saint Catherine of Alexandria, both of which foreground the experience of the city as an embodied, social and gendered space.

The central town square has been a distinguishing characteristic of urban space in European cities, which Hacker presents not only as the setting of the poem but also in the geometrical square shape of sonnet-spaces with their four sides repeated throughout the poem. The foregrounding of this square is pivotal to the temporal formation of the poem: in a crown of sonnets, 'Place du Marché Ste-Catherine' is repeated three times in sonnets one, four, and seven, thereby establishing the square as an empirical space of the everyday interwoven with childhood memories and history in stanzas two, three, five, and six. "In narrative sonnet sequences", as Hacker explains:

> the individual sonnet often functions like a cinematic 'take,' zooming in at
> the necessary moment, then, blackout, new scene on the screen:
> establishing settings, ideas, and, even or especially, characters and their
> relationships, by the accumulation of disparate incidents and details.
> (*UV* 133)

Hacker's depiction of the square shows her looking back to Malroux's description of her childhood village at the beginning of *A Long-Gone Sun*:

> Studded with plane-trees
> my south-western village
> looks like a tree itself, from roots to crown
> tapping the springs of the stream and the main road
> where the two largest shops face each other:
> the café-tobacconist-post-office and the bakery-grocery,
> to bloom on the crest of the rising street, in leaves
> school-gray and church-blue, village square-green and cemetery- white
> its feet rooted in real life,
> its head abandoned to the winds of imagination
> and solitude (7)

Malroux's "village square-green", like Place du Marché Ste-Catherine, is a real-life place that is the hub of activity in her "south-western village", – which the daily life of the villagers is projected upon – against the larger historical and cultural circumstances of France during the 1930s. This village was not a fiction, as the speaker imbues it with

"real life" by personifying it with "feet" and a "head" that allow for the "winds of imagination" to recreate the tangible memories of her childhood. Malroux ends the stanza on the word "solitude" to contrast the earlier memories of a busy village with her last memories of loneliness after her father is arrested.

Malroux's linear narrative serves to compare the sociopolitical space of France before and after 1939, marking the start of World War II. France's sovereign position before the war is depicted early in the book as Malroux remembers the square as a "gathering place" for children whose joyful voices "come from the square on summer evenings". She also remembers this square as a place of peace and spirituality that comes alive with the celebration of the Christian feast "Corpus Christi". Hacker's square is intertextually related to Malroux's in that both open onto experiences of collective experience. However, the different narrative movements through time - Hacker's square connoting the public, present space of the self, while Malroux's square symbolises a past, private space – is key to how Hacker seeks to represent the city as an embodied space, which for Braidotti stems from "the politics of everyday life and in renewed interest in the present" (*NS* 65).

As a modern urban woman, Hacker draws upon a long tradition of women's poetic engagements with urban space and place when she writes with delight of the pleasures of New York, Paris, and London. The act of walking and observing the sights of the city from a female perspective captures the embodied experience of city space in everyday life. Her delight in the city shows in the exact images of the shapes that delineate the city and the aesthetics of the vivid colours. These images of the city ("frames", "a building", and "windows") suggest a public space that has boundaries, with the foregrounding of the Parisian square, but which also "open[s]" up more multi-coloured spaces that teem with endless beauty and potential: the "white voile", the "green and scarlet window-box geraniums", and the "century-patinaed gray".

These lines recall Hacker looking back to twentieth-century women's responses to urban life, such as Adrienne Rich's "Twenty-One Love Poems", as we have seen in Chapter One. "Twenty-One" provides a fitting example to contrast Hacker's positive depiction of the city to Rich's hostile one, where the speaker "struggle[s] to locate a woman poet's position in the city" (Ortega 327) when she engages in a love relationship. In "Poem IV" the speaker is walking through the city enjoying the different scenes and the weather: "I come home from you through the early light of spring / flashing off

ordinary walls, the Pez Dorado / the Discount Wares, the shoe-store" (27). The poem starts off light-hearted with a sense of love and hope, however, the speaker becomes conscious "of the patriarchal city space" (Ortega 331) when she is called "*Hysterical*" by a "man, taut, elderly, carefully composed / [who] lets the door almost close on" her (26). Here, the speaker is alienated in the city space and emphasises its hostility to women and women's concerns.

Urban life is particularly problematic for Rich because the city's monumental structure suggests limitations and boundaries of patriarchal culture that trap and exclude women. "The city exemplifies civilization", according to Lucy Collins, "growing from man's achievements in industry and commerce, it is a dynamic space within which relations of power and identity are contested. Urban space is marked, even defined, by the masculine" (146). Rich is unable to "write a map of the city that makes women's perspectives a priority" in the 1970s (Ortega 333), while thirty years later Hacker finds the urban space nurturing to her senses, as the rest of the first sonnet shows: "[it] is such a gift of the quotidian / a benefice of sight and consciousness" (41). The speaker is at ease in her environment and the poem combines the speaker's love of the city with her love of life and appreciation for having the health to enjoy it. She compares the feelings of gratitude one experiences as a cancer survivor to her feelings for the city:[87]

> I sometimes stop, confused with gratitude,
> not knowing what to think or whom to bless,
> break off an end of seven-grain baguette
> as if my orchestrated senses could
> confirm the day. It's fragrant. I eat it.
>
> Confirm the day's fragrance. I eat, bit
> by bit, the buttery *pain aux raisins*
> shell-coiled beside my steaming afternoon
> tea. (41)

As opposed to Rich's bleak vision of the city ("we walk / through the rainsoaked garbage, the tabloid cruelties / of our own neighborhoods") (25), the "light" that surrounds the architecture of the square suggests a utopian cityscape that immerses the

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[87] This sense of gratitude is better understood when reading her poem on surviving breast cancer in this collection, "Scars on Paper". Surviving breast cancer has allowed her to develop a deeper appreciation for life as she writes, "Each day I enact / survivor's rituals, blessing the crust / I tear from the warm loaf, blessing the hours / in which I didn't or in which I did / consider my own death" (15).

speaker in bliss. Through the incorporation of European architecture, food ("seven-grain baguette" and "buttery *pain aux raisins*"), and drink ("tea"), Hacker foregrounds the experience of the city as an embodied space resulting from the physical closeness created by the sensory imagery; this immersion of the senses suggests the urban environment as organic and nurturing, showing her celebrating the pleasures of urban life. In doing so, she is "confirm[ing]" and representing the "lived experience" of the everyday physical environment as "an embodied and embedded" feminist nomadic subject (*NS* 65). The boundary between the female body and the city becomes blurred, as pleasure is both the speaker's representation and experience of the city.

Hacker's affirmative engagement with city space resonates with Elizabeth Grosz's conceptualisation of the "relationship between the body and city as 'interface'", where the "boundaries between them crossed" (qtd. in Skoulding 61), allowing for a "cobuilding"; an interactive relation between "bodies and cities" to determine each other (Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion* 301). As opposed to the excluded speaker in Rich's "Twenty-One", the speaker in "Squares and Courtyards" is engaged with urban space; they are independent, yet complement each other, as Grosz's theorisation illustrates. This relationship between self and city is pivotal to Hacker's poetry, as she explains:

> It interests me that distance — in particular the distance and tension between the two cities, New York and Paris, in which I live, between my two languages/cultures, between a heritage of exile from a Europe which cast out its Jews . . . is thematically important in just about all the poems in . . . which I've written. ("A Few Cranky" 122)

The connection Hacker maintains between her native and adopted cities – New York and Paris – enacts Grosz's interrelated, dynamic view of space, which emphasises social practice and is echoed in Doreen Massey's argument for a more interactive understanding of space that is a "product of interrelations", allows for "plurality" and the coexistence of "distinct trajectories", and is "always under construction" or "always in the process of being made"; "we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far" (9). The body is situated in the "street" as the hub of activity in urban space and the witness of both time and the city's inhabitants:

> . . . It's the hour for a schoolchild's treat,

> munched down, warm in waxed paper, on the street,
> . . . .
> while the street's sunlit, dusk-lit, lamplit. (41)

The city spaces are delineated with "the street" that builds momentum and depth in the poem. Hacker substitutes its static geological connotation with its temporal sense to keep the layers of urban form alive. The passage of time in the last line of the octave ("sunlit, dusk-lit, lamplit") marks a shift in the sonnet in the direction of multiplicity, turning the sestet into layers of history and meaning – and with them, layers of memory. Hacker seeks to create a temporal paradox with a return to her childhood through a paradoxical image that carries her back to the alleys of New York. This nonlinear narrative is achieved by the "paradox in the sonnet sequence" that "permits cinematic shifts in time, place, and point of view" (Finch and Varnes 302): from the present to the past and from Paris to New York. It is also realised in the necessary act of starting a new sonnet by ending the first sonnet using the last line of the previous sonnet to become the first line of the next, with the general implication of a shift from exteriority to interiority. This paradox is proof of the sonnet's adaptability to subject matter, as Hacker explains regarding the contemporary uses of the form: "[it] constitutes an eloquent proof of its malleability, its diversity: not that the sonnet as a form in itself is 'pertinent', but that it lends itself to pertinent topics, to which, by the weight and richness of its history, it adds a counterpoint of what has gone before" (144).

In her writings, Hacker often employs the image of the street as a palimpsestic metaphor for the layering of experience in time. For example, in "Letter to Alfred Corn" from *Names*, the street is inscribed with layers of experiences of the different lives that pass through it to create a narrative of human history: "Every / street I walk down with one friend, then alone, then with somebody / else is three streets; is a new glyph incised on a palimpsest" (261). Malroux points to Hacker's use of the metaphor in Malroux's English to French translations of four of Hacker's collections – *Selected Poems: 1965-1990* (1994), *Winter Numbers* (1994), *Squares and Courtyards* (2000), and *Desesperanto* (2005) – in the title *La Rue Palimpsest* (2004), which is taken from the poem "Canzone" in *Desesperanto*:

> Now and from memory's clerestory,
> my vision of that palimpsest, a street,
> (as fading daylight, gold on velvet, adds

textured layer) turns outward as streetlights turn
on, lights cut out lives, limits: What can I learn? (116)

In the lines above, past and present meet in the image of the street that is likened to a palimpsest as a surface for the writing of experience that leaves legible traces for the writer to learn from when she asks, "what can I learn?" Malroux notes that the significance of the palimpsest is that, through these avenues of experience, Hacker is rewriting the self in the same manner as the street, which has "textured layer[s]" of images - the streetlights, the lives, and the limits. Malroux comments on this reworking of identity through a back and forth flowing movement between temporal and spatial settings in her preface to the translated collection:

> Such events have prompted Marilyn Hacker to make a painful reflection on the past and on herself. This is a journey that has a double meaning, a two-way path that we are invited to, through incessant movements back and forth, each of them bringing its share of discoveries, of surprises or of sadnesses, between two continents, America and Europe, two moments of time, the present and past. (10)

Steven Rydman shares Malroux's view of the movement in Hacker's work between past and present. However, he views this reflection as more of an accumulation of words and voices: "Palimpsest . . . stands as a unifying concept [. . .] for the words and spirits of many other poets and poems [that] float on the surface and underneath each of these pieces" ("Names"). He also looks at the palimpsest as a "synonym for form" due to the abundance of poetic forms Hacker uses in her poems. Though these two examinations – Malroux's and Rydman's – address important temporal and structural formations suggested by the image of the palimpsest, they overlook the fact that Hacker also employs this metaphor as a nomadic device to create textual spaces that break out of the confines of architecture to cross boundaries into public, urban spaces, such as the street and the square. This conceptualisation of city space is useful to imagine feminist conceptualizations of space alternative to masculine discourses of identity in the city, where Hacker is able to write her own female imaginary of urban experience. From the embodied experience of being and moving in the "material space" of the city, Hacker imagines the street as an "associative space" to a childhood place (Hebbert 581), and in a continuous flow of consciousness the reader is transported to the alley of her childhood New York home. As the "process of remembering grows out of spatial

metaphors of connection and topography" (581), the speaker travels from the outer public space of the square to the inner private world of the memory:

> She sucks her pencil, window-framed. I sip
> nostalgia for a childhood not my own
> Bronx kitchen table, with a fire escape
> in the alley shaded by sumac trees
> which filtered out the other languages
> I heard the airshaft's crosscurrents intone (41)

In this gendered space of the cityscape, Hacker evokes Braidotti's affirmation of gender difference as the speaker takes on the experiences of a schoolgirl who is deep in contemplation, gazing out the window and thinking what to write ("sucks her pencil"). Depicting a young female poet after having already examined a male one illustrates that Hacker's focus on gender difference in feminine writing is necessary if she is to construct an "intergenerational" (Hirsch, "Projected Memory" xii) connection that draws on her memory. As Braidotti explains, materially embodied social difference is a starting point for women's genealogies:

> In my view, the enfleshed nature of the self has a lot to do with time and memory. It is the capacity to recollect that provides the subject with the imaginary unity and the sense of continuity necessary to function both internally and socially. Whereas the phallogocentric masculine system colonizes women's imaginary, the project of feminism is both to resist and open up alternative spaces for women to collectively redefine their singular experiences as "the others of the Other!" Consequently, sexual difference is not to be understood as an unproblematic category, nor is it to be radically separated from the workings of categories such as class, race, ethnicity, and other coded social differences. It does continue to privilege, however, sexed identity— the fact of being embodied female— as the primary site of resistance. (*NS* 89)

Examining the intersections of identity, the speaker identifies with the Jewish schoolgirl with the "yellow star sewn on her dress" (45) and at the same time differentiates between the character "she" and the narrative "I" ("not my own"). Juxtaposing "me" with "not me", Hacker practices the kind of "ethical connectedness" ("Projected Memory" xii) that Marianne Hirsch proposes in being critical of using the experiences of the oppressed and vulnerable Other. Kaja Silverman terms this as "heteropathic memory", wherein "discursively 'implanted' memories can participate in the desires,

struggles, and sufferings of the other", and as "identification-at-a-distance" that "does not interiorize the other within the self but that goes out of one's self and out of one's cultural norms in order to align oneself, through displacement with another" (qtd. in Hirsch 9).

These contradictory identity constructions depict a nonunitary subject connecting to a self that is not hers. Here, Hacker is examining the multiplication of her possible locations: she is a privileged, Western subject engaged in elite literary discourse. Drawing on Irigaray, Braidotti calls this multiplicity "the principle of not-one", which views the feminine as "a complex and multilayered location and not an immutable and given essence" (78). In an Irigarayian sense, she is not one because, as a woman, she is a minority; she also claims her otherness as a feminist and Jewish descendant. Hacker engages with the various conflicts and relationships among these identities in an imagined textual space that Gillian Rose describes as 'Paradoxical Space' that is "multidimensional, shifting, and contingent" (239). 'Paradoxical Space' rests on the notion of 'plurilocality', which foresees women engaging with "several social spaces simultaneously": "centre and margin", "insider/outsider positionings" (299). "Both within and without", according to Minelle Mahtani, "Paradoxical space, then, is a space imagined in order to articulate a troubled relationship to the hegemonic discourses of masculinism" (271-272). Mahtani echoes Rose's 'Paradoxical Space' by observing that "we have witnessed an explosion in the use of spatial metaphors to describe the varied experiences of multiple, fluid, contradictory and flexible identities" (300). There is a recognition in Jewish American writing that an individual can articulate/embody more than one identity, as the "tremendous diversity of Jewish American women's poetry" can be attributed "to the three-part-identity (Jew, Woman, American) of the poets and the various conflicts and relationships among these identities" (Rubin 18).

Hacker's memories reflect this fragmentation of the self in the way memory has boundaries and discontinuities, which she uses to construct an incomplete self from unconscious images that may or may not relate to her lived experience but that are significant to her consciousness. As she "fictionalis[es] her auto/biographical past" (Stanley 62), openly playing with conventional boundaries between genres, Hacker invokes what Paul Hetherington calls the "fictions of memory" that "derive their authenticity from their fidelity" (115) to "configur[e] present understandings rather than simply detailing past events", in an act of "us[ing] material from the past to

construct new narratives of the self" (102). Using the present tense "sucks" and "sip", Hacker foregrounds the past or, as Braidotti says of memory, in an "ongoing and forward-looking mode" (*NT* 235) as a new interpretation and understanding of the past. When it comes to racial and historical imagination, memory is pivotal as Hacker creates a narrative of images from her fragmented recollection ("Bronx kitchen table", "fire escape", "sumac trees", and "airshaft's crosscurrents intone") (41) and imagines them in her poetry to connect her childhood to her ethnicity. These images are "not so much the stuff of memory", even though they were shaped by memory, "but the stuff of poetry's resonant dreaming" (Hetherington 113), which to Braidotti is a form of "remembering in the nomadic mode" (*NT* 235). "Memories need the imagination", as Braidotti notes, "to empower the actualization of virtual possibilities in the subject. They allow the subject to differ from oneself as much as possible while remaining faithful to oneself or, in other words, enduring" (*NT* 236). As such, images from Hacker's childhood prove crucial because they allow her to visualise a particular poetic location – her childhood Bronx apartment – and imagine herself there. This narrative movement to the past follows *A Long-Gone Sun*, as public and private mingle in the world of the poem:

> My childhood's house is
> school and home at once.
> At night it rises from a corridor of light
> cleared by the headlights' beams (9)

Both speakers perceive first their public surroundings – Hacker's square and Malroux's village – and then their childhood homes. The metaphorics of inner and outer space coexist in the same textual temporal space in Malroux's narrative; however, Hacker constructs a nonlinear narrative in the form of a "zigzagging line" (Braidotti, *NT* 31) that makes continuous shifts in temporal and geographical settings. Although Braidotti uses the figure of the "zigzag" as a form of Deleuze's "rhizome", the zigzag's left and right turns are less random than the rhizome and more structured, proving useful to describe Hacker's fluctuating combination of present and past, external and internal in the poem. In this textual and metaphorical juxtaposition of these separate but interconnected positionings, Hacker's text offers a multi-dimensional metaphorical topography that imagines a feminist nomadic subject progressing seamlessly through different spaces in order to take up a 'politics of location' that locates herself in history as a Jewish woman

writer in Paris. This exercise begins with connecting to her Jewish roots as the child's exploration moves beyond her Bronx apartment to explore her identity, which emerges as the main theme of the poem:

> I heard the airshaft's crosscurrents intone
> below the minyan davening morning offices.
> A childish rasp that slurred and sputtered was
> the Polish janitor's red-knuckled son
> . . . .
> Other syllables connected news
> from gutted Europe to the dusty motes
> of Sabbath morning. (42)

Hacker constructs an ethnic imaginary of a New York Jewish community of the 1940s as she hears Jewish prayers and rituals in the "minyan davening morning offices", ethnicity in the "childish rasp" of the immigrant "Polish janitor's red-knuckled son", and history in the garrulous "voices of old Jews", all of which locate the poem in a Jewish context. These ethnic recollections lead Hacker to the roots of her Jewish identity, her Jewish grandmother:

> As long as someone listened when I spoke
> especially someone walking a dog—
> I'd launch into juvenile monologue:
> Greek myths, canine behaviour— and could I stroke
> the Lab or spaniel? Speech and touch invoked
> my grandmother, the bookkeeper from Prague,
> who died as I emerged out of the fog
> of infancy, while lives dispersed in smoke
> above the camps (and Dresden, and Japan)
> and with them, someone else I might have been
> if memory braided with history. (43)

The "we" in the last line of the fourth sonnet, "as long as someone listened when we spoke", becomes an "I" in the fifth sonnet, changing the scene from the external and collective – café dialogues, weather, politics – to the private space of the speaker's childhood. The sense of touch implicates the female body in the act of remembering. In a continuous flow of consciousness, the speaker remembers her memory as a child "stroking" the "Lab or Spaniel". The sensory imagery "speech" and "touch" brings back Hacker's grandmother and her native Prague. Hacker's "fog[gy]" memory of the grandmother is suggested by the "fog / of infancy". There is a play on the word "fog" as

it is also alluding to the "smoke above the camps", as well as the bombing of "Dresden" and "Japan". Though she was not aware of them, there is a knowledge of these tragedies by the meaning given to those events by her personal ties to this history. The verb "dispersed" creates levels of disconnection: there are the "lives" that died and disappeared; the Jews' "lives" that were scattered and displaced; and those "camps" that "dispersed" or severed potential ties to this heritage.

The possibility of this history is articulated when the speaker contemplates, "someone else I might have been"'. These words echo Adrienne Rich's contemplations: "Had I survived Prague, Amsterdam, or Lódz and the railway stations for which they were deportation points, I would be somebody else" ("PL" 216). As we have seen in Chapter Two, when Rich wrote these words in 1984, she was attempting to examine her Jewish identity through possibilities of other times and places, but without a fixed time and place, this history has no fixed personal or historical meaning. However, Hacker's translation of Malroux's *A Long Gone-Sun* has provided her with a model of linking personal histories with collective history, not as history in the abstract sense – as Hacker writes about Malroux's historical narrative – but the past in a specific time and place: Tarn, France in 1930 up until 1940. Therefore, to access her own history, Hacker locates herself ethnically and historically in 1942, a year that marks both her birth and the Vel' d'Hiv in Paris, France. This date and event is embedded in her consciousness as she writes about it in detail in "A Few Cranky Paragraphs on Form and Content":

> On July 16, 1942, almost thirteen thousand Jews, over four thousand of them children under sixteen, were summarily arrested by the French police. Single adults and childless couples were taken to a concentration camp at Drancy—before, and since, a banal suburb. The children and their parents, more than seven thousand people, were penned up for seven days without sanitation or first aid, starvation rations given them more brutally than they'd have been given to penned animals, in the Velodrome d'Hiver, a sports stadium—from where they, too were sent to Drancy, and thence, with the others, to Auschwitz. Except for those who escaped, or were rescued before deportation—a minimal number—not one of those 4,051 children returned. (123)

Rich's use of the modal "could" offers an interesting comparison to Hacker's use of "might". Rich uses the more certain "could" although she is unable to connect to history, while Hacker uses the less certain "might" though she finds a specific time in history to locate her ethnic identity. Though she locates herself in history, she is not certain as she

"might have been" someone else. The key is the sense of contingency that "might" creates in the poem, suggesting a possibility that drives the poet to achieve certainty. This contingency opens spaces for deeper explorations of history through familial connections to her Jewish European grandmother, who allows the speaker to imagine herself as "someone else I might have been".

Gísela represents Hacker's filial connection with Jewish culture. Through recollections of her, Hacker seeks to trace a genealogy of Jewish women that creates a women's tradition although it is discontinued, fragmented, and contradictory, as images from different events from the past usually are. This practice reflects Braidotti's embodied materialism that connects a "living memory and embodied genealogy" (*NS* 129) as "[g]enealogies constitute a cumulative scale of female embodied and embedded experience that, for [her], are a symbolic legacy" (89). The grandmother stands as both a figure of loss and life in the way she died "while" she enabled Hacker's existence by her distance from wars and the Shoah. Rethinking her position in history, Hacker engages in the act of witnessing "them" (the survivors, and victims of history) whose "lives dispersed in smoke", reiterating her earlier assertion of "bearing witness" and social consciousness in *Winter Numbers*. In Braidotti's particular notion of the 'politics of location', she "adds to the spatial element a time factor", as "the present is not a static block but a flow, pointing in multiple directions" ("Posthuman, all too human"). This temporal dimension opens up spaces for historical memories and genealogical forms of belonging.

In this multi-layered ethnic and historical exploration, Hacker illustrates Braidotti's nomadic subjectivity using the metaphor of the braid. The braid establishes a strong link between the body, as the first strand of the metaphor, and the capacity to imaginatively synthesise the strands of personal "memory" to collective "history" in order to produce new narrative structures of the self. This triangulation of interconnectedness is formally achieved in the way she uses repeated lines to plait the crown, leading up to the final sonnet. The braid places Hacker's writing at the centre of her configuration of a poetics in nomadic form that has to be simultaneously fixed and flowing for the possibility of change within the medium of form. It is a nomadism that is dedicated to a culturally and historically based location, while flowing and interconnecting.

Although the braid is not necessarily rooted in Jewish tradition, it represents a female heritage that is shared between women of all cultures. In braiding, there is an embodied interconnectedness as women's hands are interlaced with each other's hair. The proximity of the bodies creates an intimacy that is private between the two bodies but becomes public when the braid is seen by others. Adrienne Rich uses female braiding as a metaphor for poet and poem in "North American Time" (1983):

> Suppose you want to write
> of a woman braiding
> another woman's hair —
> straight down, or with beads and shells
> in three-strand plaits or corn-rows —
> you had better know the thickness
> the length the pattern
> why she decides to braid her hair
> how it is done to her
> what country it happens in
> what else happens in that country
>
> You have to know these things (*Later Poems* 132)

In the fifth stanza of the poem, the speaker is not involved in the action but speaks to an addressee, who is perhaps a poet, and gives an example ("suppose") of a "woman braiding / another woman's hair" to highlight the ethical responsibility of accuracy in "writ[ing]". The concept of accuracy is depicted in the different forms of braids: "straight down", "with beads and shells", "in three-strand plaits", or "corn-rows". Though these different patterns could be reflective of different forms of cultural identification, the focus is on "know[ing]" and "decid[ing]" the reason, process, and information about the braid. In other words, if a woman wants to braid, she has "to know these things"; accuracy with private, intimate details is a political act; as such, the braid is a political act. In this respect, Rich uses this metaphor as a political form of interconnectivity between the personal and collective. Rich's braid links to Hacker's in that it connects the private world of the poet to the public world of culture and politics. Hacker mentioned this poem by Rich when I asked Hacker about her use of the braid in "Squares and Courtyards".[88] This poem is similar to "Notes toward a Politics of

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[88] Hacker, Marilyn. Personal Interview. 8 May 2017.

Location", which Rich wrote one year later, in that it also examines the position of the poet in a North American geopolitical location.

However, there is a stronger connection between Rich's use of the braid and Hacker's to be found in Rich's blurb on the back cover of *A Long-Gone Sun*. Rich writes, "In this braiding of autobiography and history, the distinguished French poet Claire Malroux depicts in marvellous and terrible concreteness the era of Nazism in France" (2000). Since translation of Malroux's book was completed before Hacker published *Squares and Courtyards*, Malroux's connection of memory with history not only influenced Hacker's historical examinations but also Rich's metaphorical description of this connection provided an image of interconnectivity. Throughout this thesis, Rich's influence on Hacker's poetics has been examined alongside the development of her poetics. Rich being aware of this influence could have conceptualised this connection between "autobiography and history" on the cover of one of Hacker's publications to indirectly indicate to Hacker the usefulness of this metaphor to create such a connection.

Hacker's search for a metaphor that embodies her nomadic subjectivity moves her from the metaphor of the map to the braid. Although the braid develops from this cartographic metaphor, the braid is not "superimposed" like the map on the surface of the female body. The braid is an embodied experience as it arises from the body; the map is not. While the map is useful for Hacker to identify her body's ethnicity, it does not depict a deliberate engagement with memory as a form of personal history that links with the history of victims and survivors. Connecting the braid with memory, Hacker echoes a nostalgic childhood story that resonates with many women as she illustrates in the image of the girl "chewing her braid" (44). The interconnectivity that the braid signifies also creates a sense of tension when Hacker uses it to suggest a restraint or requirement that she responds to when she writes of the Jewish schoolgirl in the poem, "*her century requires a lexicon / of memory braided with history*" (45). For Hacker, Jewish history is an aspiration and an obligation, both of which the braid allows her to articulate at the same time.

The whole poem builds up to the contingency that is suggested by the conditional "if". Hacker could have started the line with "memory" and broke the previous line at "if", but by placing the conditional before the braiding of history and memory, she creates a tension in the poem between the act of locating and the

contingent "if". There is the implication that this connection between memory and history cannot be made. The speaker is critical of the enormous (and possibly impossible) distance that must be crossed to braid these divergent spaces, which she tries to access as a history that "might have been". The speaker returns to her childhood via the memory of a dog:

> I pressed my face into the dog's warm fur
> whose heat and smell I learned by heart, while she
> receded into words I found for her. (43)

The sensory imagery – "warm", "fur", "heat", and "smell" – is imprinted in her memory as sensations "learned by heart". She recalls these memories as she uses "words" to bring Gísela into language. Braidotti's notion of "countermemories" is a useful lens to understand how Hacker attempts to create a genealogy through her grandmother, who is representative of female legacy. Specifically related to Holocaust memory of the survivor's descendants, Marianne Hirsch's "postmemory" is additionally useful to Hacker's exploration of memory because it is an "intergenerational act of adoption and identification" ("Projected Memory" xii) that is closely connected through "familial or group relation" (9).

Thus – neither a survivor, nor a child of a Holocaust survivor – Hacker speaks from a position of postmemory in "trac[ing] the trajectory of memory from the first-generation" (Hirsch 6) grandmother to herself as a third-generation American Jew seeks to reconfigure Holocaust narratives. Linda Anderson proposes that women autobiographers can discover a dimension within memory to recreate one's identity (*Women and Autobiography* 12). It seems appropriate that the intimacy needed for this connection comes through the sonnet as Hacker views it as "a form which invites close engagement" (*UV* 129). Hacker frames this connection in the sonnet's square shape to resemble a Holocaust photograph, as well as the shape of the Jewish concentration camps, as Hirsch notes, "photographs, are precisely the medium connecting first- and second-generation remembrance, memory and postmemory" ("Projected Memory" 10).

In the sixth sonnet, through "receding into words I found for her", Hacker traces a female heritage passed on from grandmother to grandchild, and from mother to child. The maternal roots of genealogies are important to the location of the enfleshed body in

feminist political practice as Braidotti notes Irigaray stating (*NS* 89). Hacker, a Jewish woman, passes this lineage on to her own daughter:

> I wrote a girl on paper when I bore
> a child, whose photocopied life became
> letters tattooed across a watermark,
> a woman's in the world, who shares her name. (40)

These words on paper bring life to a new body, a "child" that is imagined through metaphors of textual replication: "photocopied" and "watermark". A watermark is "a distinguishing mark or design impressed into a sheet of paper during manufacture, typically visible only when the sheet is held up to the light" ("watermark"). This metaphorics of body writing recalls the image of the "superimposed" genes of Hacker's Jewish heritage on her "olive skin", "eyes", "hips", and "nose" in "August Journal". Here, however, the "photocop[y]" is lighter, as the very nature of "water" means that the mark is transitory, leaving almost no trace at all. Unlike Hacker's visible features, the subtle impression of her biracial daughter's Jewish roots are barely visible. Yet this mark is made permanent, like a tattoo, when she "wrote" it with words – "letters" and "name" – to create an embodied textual genealogy that is embedded in an earlier historical and racial location. Elizabeth Grosz compares this textual body to "a palimpsest, a historical chronicle of prior and later traces, some of which have been effaced, others of which have been emphasized, producing the body as a text which is as complicated and indeterminate as any literary manuscript" (*Volatile Bodies* 117).

Thus, Hacker evokes her grandmother again in the sixth and seventh stanzas, where she explores language as a strong and very particular form of heritage. While the immediate message is the loss of the grandmother, Hacker's larger canvas depicts how the loss of language represents a loss of history and connection:

> And Gísela, who took me to the park,
> for whom I pieced together sentences
> —it's all the words she said to me I miss.
>
> It's all the words she said to me I miss,
> down to unechoed accents. Did she speak
> Yiddish to me? With whom did she speak Czech?
> German was what my father spoke till his
> Sixth year, first grade (when did he tell me this?)
> -his parents' common tongue. (44)

Hilda Raz notes that Jewish American writers evoke ethnic ancestors in their writing to signify Yiddish as a language of "heritage" and "Hebrew as a language of learning" (*Prairie Schooner* 3-4). Hacker's yearning for her grandmother parallels her yearning for this language which, according to Hayden Carruth in a personal letter, comes out faintly in the "unechoed accents" of the poem: "what I hear in your poems is faintly Yiddish—a surprising amalgam and perfectly appropriate".[89] Like the Vel d'Hiv, Hacker's grandmother appears often as she is evoked again in the collection's closing sequence, "Paragraphs from a Daybook". Here, Hacker remembers the car accident that led to Gísela's death, when the speaker as a child was too young to have a sense of what happened:

> The toddler and the stout
> gray-haired woman walk out
> of the park oval toward the shopping streets
> into a present tense
> where what's ineffaceable repeats
> itself. Accidents.
> I dash ahead, new whistle in my hand.
> She runs behind. The car. The almost-silent
> thud. Gísela, prone, also silent, on the ground.
>
> Death is the scandal that was always hidden.
> I never saw my grandmother again. (103-104)

In this painful exploration of memory, Hacker revisits a specific location in time to understand the circumstances of her grandmother's death, but even more so to account for it. As Carruth notes in a later letter, this image is not depicted as a *momento mori*, but rather keeps with her constant exploration of memory:

> I find the parts of your poems about your grandmother which are devoted
> to your childhood altogether non-death-like, full of lovely sentiment and
> joyful memory. The transition to her death and disappearance – 'to
> Florida' – is by no means unsmooth or too abrupt or anything else
> untoward; it's just right.[90]

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[89] Carruth, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 22 Jan. 1996. Box 2, Folder 3. MHP.
[90] Carruth, letter to Marilyn Hacker. 8 July. 1998. Box 2, Folder 3. MHP.

The intensity of this image was perhaps provoked through Hacker's own reading and translation of a similar scene in Malroux's *A Long-Gone Sun* of her father's "arrest, deportation, and death" (Malroux xv):

> *When the doorbell rings long and loud one morning*
> *my father goes to open the door himself*
> *Two men are framed in the doorway*
> *their well-groomed looks entirely neutral*
> *Order to pack his things*
> *……………………………*
> *My last image of him is of a head*
> *turned toward the car's rear window*
> *Good-bye to everything did he know it*
> *As for me, I'll never know*
> *what that last look meant*
> *Presentiment of certain death?* (175)

Squares and Courtyards provides ample instances of the intersection of Hacker's and Malroux's personal histories. Annie Finch notes that "the malleability of memory itself" and "how closely separate people's memories can intertwine and affect each other" are the themes connecting these two collections (''Forms of Memory'' 177). In "Paragraphs from a Daybook", a memory from another person's memory is evoked when Hacker sees "a boxlike, carved wood, a square / tile" on a stall at a second-hand market:

> On a beechwood sideboard, there sat in state
> an object [...]
> A recollection that I can't translate:
> carved wood, a blue ceramic square,
> chimes which a child with short brown hair
> released into the air, turning a key,
> . . . .
> the tune she'd conjured out of the hot plate—
>
> . . . .
> I hold what's entered my own history:
> music; carved wood, a blue ceramic tile. (105)

The description she gives of this box resonates with Malroux's description of the same box her grandmother had when Malroux was a child:

> A hot-plate sits in state on the oak sideboard
> in a kind of gallery against the wall

………………………………………
Carved wood, with squat feet, set with a blue faïence tile
which shows a landscape
it plays a tune (159)

Replication and influence, similar to the "girl on paper" with the "photocopied life", are evoked here with the memorialisation of objects and shared memories. This reproduction of memory occurs when Malroux's memory becomes part of Hacker's memory repertoire. Just as a random object evokes a long-forgotten memory, the music box at the flea market evoked a memory of an object that Hacker had not seen, but knew very well from Malroux's description of it in *A Long-Gone Sun*, which Hacker realises has "entered my own history". The self-conscious embedding of Malroux's memory within Hacker's illustrates how this and other texts in Hacker's oeuvre are in dialogue with previous ideas, experiences, and historical moments and which suggest an intertextual method of writing. At the end of the collection, Hacker writes:

Nothing will restore these young women.
. . . .
. . . She will forget
sometimes, when the phone rings, who it might
be, and who it is not.
She will remember how it rang that night. (107)

There is an awareness that these exercises in memory will not bring back loved ones, and there will be times when she "will forget", but at the same time she is consoled that "she will remember" those lives through an ethnic memory necessary to bear witness to the chaos and suffering. The act of remembrance becomes a reality when the memory of the speaker and the schoolgirl intersect, as the last sonnet of "Squares and Courtyards" reveals:

. . . The air's thick
with cognates, questions and parentheses
she'll scribble down once she's back in her room,
chewing her braid, tracing our labyrinthine
fragments. (44)

The imaginary girl manages to "scribble down", or write, her identity through this internal exploration of the "room" of her personal memory. The "possibilities opened in

the fourteen-line labyrinth" (Finch and Varnes 297) that parallel memory's "narrow, twisting, and discontinuous route back through the broad plains of the past" (Stanley 62) are opened to Hacker's creative practice as she is able to construct a narrative of interconnectivity in the image of the schoolgirl "chewing her braid". For a moment, the two females – the speaker and the girl – become "our", and the speaker is able to overcome her crisis of writing and finally confront her cultural history with her private memory. The seventh sonnet ends in the first line of the first sonnet, with the Parisian square – the Place du Marché Ste-Catherine – not as a walk through urban space, but as a walk to "home". Hacker concludes the poem with an air of success and certainty:

> *Not thinking, she'll get old (or not) and die;*
> *thinking: she can, if anybody could.* (44)

These two lines act as a counterpoint to the rest of the crown in the way that they pit grim examinations of the tragedies of history against an optimism for survival and capability: "can" and "could" express the shift from "not thinking" to "thinking". The speaker interjects "or not" before "die" to subvert linear narratives of age that proclaim that death necessarily accompanies old age. In an unambiguous and clear note, the speaker asserts that the girl will not dwell on aging and death, but will think of the ability to get things done. In other words, her ability to conceive of a metaphor of nomadic interconnection is both imagined in the space of poetic text and in her present and future poetic dialogues. Hacker imbues this metaphor with an embodied form when she writes a poetics of cross-cultural affiliation using the renga form. The braid will also be depicted by the "braid of garlic" that creates an appropriate mode of address to the food and people of the Mediterranean as she pays tribute to the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. Just as new bulbs can be added to the braid, Hacker ends her oeuvre on a metaphor that creates potential for the braiding of future voices.

CHAPTER FOUR

Transcultural Poetic Dialogues of the Posthuman Nomadic Subject in *A Stranger's Mirror*

> There used to be a face that looked like home,
> my interlocutor or my mate, my country.
>
> Plan your resistance, friends, I'll join you in the street,
> but watch your backs: don't underestimate my country.
>
> Where will justice and peace get the forged passports
> it seems they'll need to infiltrate my country?
>
> Eggplant and peppers, shallots, garlic and cumin:
> let them be, married on my plate, my country.
> —— Marilyn Hacker, "Ghazal: *dar al-harb*", 2015

Introduction

This chapter examines Marilyn Hacker's private reflections on aging, her political interrogations of American citizenship, and her transcultural poetic dialogues in her latest collection, *A Stranger's Mirror* (2015). In "Ghazal: *dar al-harb*", Marilyn Hacker articulates the cultural and political shifts that define her nomadic subjectivity. In the repetition of the refrain "my country", Hacker accounts for and resolves the multiple positions of power that structure her present political location as a North American citizen through a 'politics of location'. The different resonances of the refrain show the speaker's alliance shifting from her country to the food of another culture in what Adrianna Dagnino describes as ''creative transpatriation'' (''Contemporary Transcultural'' 129): "Eggplant and peppers, shallots, garlic and cumin: / let them be, married on my plate, my country". In her multiple and disparate locations, Hacker challenges the restrictions of her citizenship while engaging with the productive aspects of difference that show her working towards a Braidottian model of posthuman nomadic thought.

"Ghazal: *dar al-harb*" was originally published in *Names* (2010) and was later republished as part of a larger collection of Hacker's work from 1994 to 2015. Including earlier poems with newer work suggests that the poet's examination of her location continues to be relevant as her writing engages in new cultural and political dialogues. *A Stranger's Mirror* selects poems from her last four collections over the past twenty years alongside new translations of French and Francophone poetry, all of which are introduced by twenty-five new poems. The collection shows the development of a characteristic poetic commitment to historical and political engagement. Her nomadic thinking across boundaries becomes conducive in light of Dagnino's conceptualization of 'Transculturalism' to the development of the transcultural dimension of this later work.

Hacker's poetic engagement with what Braidotti describes as the 'posthuman predicament' of our times – characterised by wars, globalisation and the displaced masses that are products of both – moves her toward a posthuman "relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity . . . a subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated, but still grounded and accountable" (*PH* 49). This movement towards a posthuman nomadic subjectivity leads her to write a poetics that opposes Western insularity on the one hand and communicates the imperative to move beyond binary oppositions of west and east by cutting across different poles of the cultural, political, and geographical spectrum on the other. This posthuman subjectivity also articulates a 'politics of location' that accounts for and critiques different positions of power. For Braidotti, exploring a politics of difference lies at the core of a "posthuman subjectivity [that] expresses an embodied and embedded and hence partial form of accountability, based on a strong sense of collectivity, relationality and hence community building" (*PH* 49).

A Stranger's Mirror draws a cartography of Hacker's nomadic thought as contextualised in her real-life experiences. Braidotti describes these cartographies as "bibliographies, genealogies of ideas and also readings of real life events" ("Posthumanism"). I read this collection not only as a reimagination of traditional forms but also as a relocation of the self in the Deleuzian manner of "deterritorialization" that distances a person from the familiar, allowing for a new perspective on it. The collection celebrates difference, as it provides space for diverse voices, cultures, languages, and poetic forms in what Braidotti calls "the affirmation of the positivity of difference" (*PH*

11). Drawing on the traditions of the Arabian ghazal and the Japanese renga, among other non-Western forms like the sonnet and Sapphic, Hacker makes use classical eastern forms to cross physical and literary borders to bridge cultures. Her involvement with these eastern forms shows her interest in middle eastern wars, expressed with her return to the braid as a metaphor of interconnectedness in her elegy to Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish in ''A Braid of Garlic''.

The many voices she weaves in her work help to complement her indirect reports with first-hand accounts of suffering and survival, acting as witnesses for her poetic narratives. She joins in mourning the dead, celebrating protest and bravery, and writing about the advantages of technology to connect family and friends who have been separated by immigration and wars. The metaphor of the mirror in ''A Stranger's Mirror'' signifies Hacker's intimate examination of age, illness, and intense emotion. However, the glass is also focused outward as the self is constantly connected to friends old and new, strangers near and far, cities native and adopted, and histories old and new in *Diaspo/Renga*. As her most recent collection, A *Stranger's Mirror* stands as a coherent, yet multidimensional testament to her critical nomadic thinking over the past two decades.

"A Stranger's Mirror": A Struggle with Age

A Stranger's Mirror is Hacker's fifteenth poetry collection, consisting of selections from four previous books – *Winter Numbers* (1994), *Squares and Courtyards* (2000), *Desesperanto* (2005), and *Names* (2010). Along with the new poems and translations, this collection creates a cartography, to borrow Braidotti's notion, of pivotal shifts in the poet's later work. Reviews have applauded the wide range of poetic forms in the collection from an Arabic monorhyme to the Persian rubaïyat. The book's structural division between new and old – new poems, translations, and forms, as well as old collections – shows a space that bears past experiences and familiar feelings but recasts them in a new context in which these feelings and memories exist. The book is a retrospective through the reflection of a mirror.

Nominated for the 2015 National Book Award for Poetry, *A Stranger's Mirror*'s importance originates from its response to the "absence of any sustained discourse of aging" in women's writing (Henneberg 106). Hacker joins other women writers in her

articulations of female perceptions of aging as she makes readers aware to the importance of age to women's identity. As early as 1970, in *The Coming of Age*, Simone de Beauvoir embarked to "break the conspiracy of silence" (2) of old age being considered by people as "a kind of shameful secret" (1). Critics like Silvia Stoller have argued that feminist philosophy neglected to emphasize the importance of the study of aging (1). Margaret Gullette echoes this opinion with the views that "feminism, which was explaining male bias in so many realms of gendered difference, was rendered helpless whenever age overrode gender" (*Aged by Culture* 25). Sylvia Henneberg argues that "any serious study of personal or political experience . . . stands to benefit from the inclusion of a critique of aging, and, conversely, to suffer from its exclusion" (122). However, Hacker's treatment of aging was not entirely absent from the work of other women writers, such as Adrienne Rich, to whom Hacker dedicated "Pantoum in Wartime", one of the new poems in *A Stranger's Mirror*. As Rich herself grows older, her later work "explore[s] such topics as physical pain, self-renewal, memory, and life review, all of which are significant aspects of age studies" (Henneberg 116).

The title poem, "A Stranger's Mirror", frames the entire collection in the way the poet sees her own life and others' with clarity. On the surface, the poem struggles with questions of longings and temptations that are left open-ended. On a deeper level, however, the poem illustrates a heightened awareness of time: not just time in the physical aging sense, but also time in the sense of memories of youth, feelings, and experiences. Contesting conventional narratives of decline, the speaker tries to break free from the stagnancy of old age, even as the poem evokes it through images of the aging body. Reflecting on the past through a "mirror", the speaker reassesses the meanings of her aged female body and longing in light of her older and estranged reflection.

The title of the poem is oxymoronic in that a mirror is a reflection of one's true self, one's recognisable image of themselves. Yet, what the speaker views is a woman "exiled from her own desire, / reflected strangely, in a stranger's mirror" (38). Here "exiled" connotes separation and estrangement, yet "strangely" from its "own desire". As desire is located in the body, it is self-exiled from its own drives, from its own body; it is a nonunitary, split self, in Braidottian terms. Whether the speaker is looking through another person's mirror or her own, she is not herself: unrecognisable, a "stranger". This strangeness comes from her being different from the younger self that

she is accustomed to seeing in the mirror, the self of her memories. This disruption of the unitary self is also a disruption of one's emotional stability, as Linda Fisher explains that "every metamorphosis has something frightening about it, referring to the disruptive effect of change vis-à-vis the illusion I have of myself as stable, coherent, and continuous" (Stoller 117).

Because the crown of sonnets is both consecutive and nonlinear, it allows for a narrative that produces the temporality of aging and retrospection into youth simultaneously. The poem examines "[t]he inadmissible elucidation(s)" that are "not pronounced" (43) of the speaker's longings:

> Beside her bookshelves, in his winter coat,
> a denim jacket lined with cotton fleece,
> and who might not have said to him, "Then stay . . ."
> as there was, all at once, a lot to say,
> except that was another century's
> invitation. Her questions, bilingual jests
> came from the creased lips and crepey throat
> of a woman in her sixties.
> Alone, and with a choice of alphabet
> she did not reconstruct the repartee,
> at once anodyne and intimate,
> nor pause at her stacked desk to contemplate
> disaster she might well precipitate
> if her neck were smooth. If she had breasts. (37)

Characteristic of Hacker's writing, the poem opens with a spatial preposition ("beside") to signal that the speaker is external to the narration, yet in close proximity to it as these female characters represent different aspects of herself. It is also used to indicate the emotional distance between the couple. Writing from a third person point of view referring to a "her", the speaker acts as an external narrator to open a space between her younger self and her current aging self. In order to analyse the poem, and Hacker's vague use of pronouns, some biographical knowledge is necessary. In a past "century's invitation", the memory of "his" and 'him" alludes to a man, and in the context of Hacker's biography suggests her ex-husband, Samuel Delany. Although the speaker was a young female writer, she was unable to express her wish by asking him to "stay", while there was "a lot to say". This image recalls Hacker's words from an early poem discussed in Chapter One, "Villanelle", from her first collection: "we grope through

languages and hesitate" (89), where the speaker seeks to articulate feelings of fear and uncertainty in a relationship.

This memory in the first six lines of the poem evokes a longing not for love itself, but rather for conversation and engagement of emotions, emphasised by the full end rhyme: "stay" and "say". She then juxtaposes this image with a more recent and pressing need to express "questions" and "bilingual jests" of an older woman with "creased lips and crepey throat" (37). The visual images of aging are also achieved by the dense alliteration of the 'k' sound – "question", "came", "creased", and "crepey" – that seeks to emulate the wrinkled texture of crepe paper. These images of aging depict the body as an embodiment of temporality in the way time leaves indelible "crease[s]" and wrinkles on our bodies. According to Fisher, "aging is an embodied temporality, in the dual senses of time embodied — time 'captured' or (re)presented, given a form and face, as it were, in our body, by our body" (Stoller 117). As such, it is not a static embodiment; rather, it is a mutating embodiment that advances through time and echoes Braidotti's nomadic image of the body to be both "grounded" and "to flow" (*NS* 27).

Occurring in the middle of the sonnet, the terse statement "woman in her sixties" moves age and aging from an undertone to an integral part of her identity; its omnipresence in the sonnets that follow parallels that of the omnipresent narrator. The speaker sets her life in plain view when she gives her chronological age ("sixties"), which is seen by many women as a private aspect of their identity. In keeping both selves, the younger and the older, in one sonnet, Hacker is enacting what Gullette calls a "midlife progress narrative" (qtd. in ''Age'' 10), which Barbara Waxman defines in feminist writing as "turning a bipolar concept of youth and age into that of an age continuum" (qtd. in ''Age'' 10). The speaker's contemplation on the physical aspects of her aging contributes to a sense of stagnation that threads through the entire crown.

The speaker begins by describing that she is "alone", an image she makes visual by separating it from the rest of the line with a comma. Then she finds herself unable to "reconstruct the repartee", which is not due to a lack of skill as she has a "choice of alphabet", but because her feelings are both "anodyne and intimate" at the same time. This paradoxical combination, "anodyne" in its tediousness and "intimate" in its longing, is pivotal to the temporal struggle the poem is communicating and that is reiterated throughout the sonnets. Almost every sonnet contains a word that connotes stagnation: ''anodyne'', ''ruin'', ''mythology'', ''torpor'', ''dull'', ''slack'', ''slothful'', ''entropy'', and

''stagnant''. This theme is formally realised through the repeated lines of the crown that create different resonances of the initial word "anodyne", suggesting the poet is "saying the same old dull thing endlessly" (39). The opposing movement to break free from what Gullette calls a "master narrative of decline" ("Age" 10) is achieved with the absence of these words from the last two sonnets and serves to show hope that the "distancing [of] the old narrative seems plausible" (Hacker, "A Stranger's Mirror" 39).

Moving to a reflection on her youth, the octave of the second sonnet narrates the disruption of the image of the self when the body that was taken for granted changes:

> When her neck was smooth, when she had breasts,
> she thought the body was the least of it,
> the site of some desires and appetites
> and certain others' ardent interests.
> Not beautiful, not scandalous. Requests
> like touch and hold, like any intimate
> avowal, shocked no one, under any light; (38)

In a self-critical tone, the speaker explains that she never "thought" about the body, as it was the "least of" her concerns. She identified her body as a "site" of "desires" and "food", and for others a place for their "ardent interests". It was an ordinary body: "not beautiful" and "not scandalous". Yet, more importantly, there was nothing "shock[ing]" about "touch[ing]" and "hold[ing]" in the public "light". Hacker's treatment of social perceptions of aging can be seen in Adrienne Rich's "Memorize This," from her collection *The School Among the Ruins* (2004), which contests the stigma of love in old age: "Love for twenty-six years, you can't stop / A withered petunia's crisp the bud sticky both are dark / . . . / what delicate amaze" (75). The speaker uses "Twenty-six years" and "withered" to indicate old age. The petunia's stem and the bud are both "dark", suggesting that new growth will not appear. This image is contrasted with the "amaze" of intimacy that is "delicate" like the flower at the start of the poem. While Rich writes a love poem challenging these restrictions, Hacker shows that she herself is "shock[ed]" by society's extreme reaction. Fisher confirms that perceptions "regarding the aged involve any number of insensitive and demeaning prejudices and stereotypes" (Stoller 110). From the point of her embodied temporality, the speaker's old "thought[s]" are seen from a new "light" that has revised her earlier simplistic view of the body's longings.

The second-half of the second sonnet develops the mapping of ethnicity on to the body, first articulated in *Winter Numbers,* to a mapping of age as the body becomes an archaeological site of past experiences and waning youth:

> Now, inadvertent archaeologist
> she contemplates the ruin of a face
> (the downside is quotidian dis-grace,
> the upside is invisibility)
> and the ravenous mythology
> in which she's exiled from her own desire,
> reflected strangely, in a stranger's mirror. (38)

With the same courage garnered from Audre Lorde to write about the effects of cancer, Hacker's exploration of aging invites readers to reflect on how the experience of old age moulds one's narratives, as well as how language represents this experience. The end rhymes are mostly consistent and the rhythms easier; her irony is toned down, and there are more pauses to contemplate by the many end-stopped lines. The streets and squares of Paris, meetings in cafés, and witty replies are replaced with poetic examinations of medical accounts. The emphatic "Now" is a temporal marker of this shift in the perception of the body. Looking at herself in the mirror, the speaker tells us that she has become an "inadvertent archaeologist", two words nearly oxymorons of one another; in other words, an archaeologist's work is not unintentional. She conjoins these words to make the reader ponder on how one becomes unconsciously conscious of aging as one ages.

This excavation unearths the "ruin[s]" that signify the destruction of her skin and, consequently, the remains of what her face used to be. Comparing her aging face to "ruin[s]", the speaker evokes a sense of stagnation located in the irreversibility of history. Similar to the postmastectomy scar, these lines are "inadvertent", leaving a permanent trace on people's bodies, as well as reflecting a lack of agency and a lack of control over how this aging face is read by others. The speaker looks at aging from both sides of the mirror, reading the personal experience as "quotidian dis-grace", while to the public she becomes "invisible", which to her is a paradoxical advantage of aging. The hyphen between "dis" and "grace" alchemises the meaning in a play on the prefix to mean "not", emphasising that aging is not shameful but grotesque. "Mythology" here serves to address the "ravenous" taboos imposed on intimacy in old age that "exiled" the

speaker "from her own desire". Coupled with ruins, mythologies are located in the context of a history but retain a presence by telling stories of a remote past, which traps the speaker in the past of her youth.

As Braidotti includes the aging body along with other posthuman bodies, the body must move from "reactive melancholia" (*NT* 21) to produce a posthuman ethics of affirmation. In other words, the speaker must move out and away from this sense of stagnation and engage with her temporal embodiment in order to think through her predicament. Cast out of normality, Hacker needs to find a way to age that is different from that of previous generations of women by not succumbing to this melancholia, or stagnation, that Braidotti criticises, and paradoxically not giving in to the fantasy to remain young forever. Considering for a moment the possibility of transcending the "torpor", the poet writes, "At dusk in the street warren near the port / with a witty quadrilingual friend, / distancing the old narrative seems plausible" (39). The "plausibil[ity]" of moving away from the "old narrative" arises as the speaker finds a commitment that extends beyond self: the commitment of friendship and human engagement. However, with time acting against the speaker, "weeks" pass and she finds herself reverting to thinking about her longings:

> The graying woman yawns, sits at her table,
> insomniac after the equinox.
> The words she wants are in some padlocked box
> whose combination she's incapable
> of calling from the incoherent babble
> of panic and despair, of dream that shocks
> her out of brief and febrile sleep. The lacks,
> the slack, the slide, the sunrise above the rubble—
> is that all, all want, that heat, all need,
> that model of unspeakable obsession,
> senile in promise, infantile in greed,
> horseblindered to the world beyond its skin? (40)

The "graying" female speaker loses sleep and despairs as she lacks the "words" to express her feelings. These words are figuratively brought into the body, so that they are not visible to her or anybody else. Locking them away from her immediate thoughts in "some padlocked box" reflects both the valuable and "unspeakable" nature of her emotions; they are not forgotten but rather saved. Her choice of "incapable" as opposed to "unable" suggests a general and complete lack of competency on the part of the

speaker that shows a stagnancy of willpower and determination. There is an incapability to express, or even understand, these feelings, as even the speaker cannot "call" the "combination" from the voices in her head ("incoherent babble") of "panic and despair". Throughout the poem, this new passion is challenged by images of aging, as when the hot flashes of menopause ("febrile") of the speaker's "brief" sleep are disrupted by unintelligible dreams.

Initially denying her emotions, the speaker then decides to explore them in the sestet of the sonnet. The alliteration ("slack-slide-sunrise"), written in a sequence and separated only by commas, articulates the breathless quality of her strong emotions, which has a compulsive quality to it as suggested by the parallel lineation of "need"', "obsession", and "greed". More of an obsession than love, these emotions become all-consuming and irrational when the speaker describes it as both "senile" and "infantile", polar opposites on the human spectrum, yet both mentally unstable. The female body is also the site of death and illness, as the speaker contemplates in the sixth sonnet:

> If I were you and were, as you are, certain
> as anyone can be, of pages spread
> across long days like crisp sheets on a bed,
> . . . .
> . . .I'd agree
> (and do) the body is a festival.
> Also a house of mourning, and a field
> soldiers have fought and camped on, burned and fouled,
> and a mote in the absence that we whirl
> toward with our metered love-words, almost free. (42)

The body no longer solely a site of love, the speaker evokes the image of the diseased body, which has been a significant representation of the female body in Hacker's post-1994 work. The parallel lineation of "festival-field", as well as its alliteration, shows Hacker looking back to her metaphorical mapping of love onto the body in "Taking Notice", as well as a place of elegies and a battlefield ravaged by illness and cancer in "Against Elegies"; three pivotal representations of the female body – love, death, and disease – in her oeuvre across two collections, *Taking Notice* and *Winter Numbers*. This juxtaposition shows Hacker moving beyond the boundaries of the posthuman aging body to consider, as Braidotti puts it, other forms of embodiment. The speaker is set on embracing the "upside" to aging but is also realistic and honest about its limitations as

she writes, "almost free". The conditional "if" at the start of the sonnet reveals a possibility for the speaker to be the "you", but more importantly, the hope to be "certain" of having the health and time to write new words, new poems, expressed by the "pages spread / across days". In light of the possibility that the ''if'' creates, the speaker "agree(s)" to engage with her temporal embodiment in a nomadic image of the body that is "multifunctional" and "complex" (*NS* 27):

> Untoward, metered love-words, almost free
> to mean a thing and still mean its negation
> to be avowal and renunciation
> in a vexed breath's simultaneity
> once had a different utility.
> The inadmissible elucidation
> is not pronounced, a train that left the station,
> one rainy weeknight wolf-hour, half-past three. (43)

In the final sonnet of the crown, the speaker has learned that in order to break free from the stagnancy of old age, she must accept the unpredictability ("untoward") and contradictions of the self. Her usage of the phrase "metered love-words" suggests the articulations of our wishes as being contradictory, as we can accept ("avowal") something and reject ("renunciation") it simultaneously in one "breath". In other words, we are complex beings; there is nothing simple about our feelings and experiences. It is this disjuncture in the self – the nonunitary self – that allows the speaker to critically reflect on past meanings of her body and her obsessive longings, acknowledging that things "once" had "different" connotations and uses. This moment of clear realisation allows her to further understand that there will always be feelings, ("elucidation[s]"), that are ("not pronounced"), not explained in a vagueness like a train that leaves at a strange hour, in strange weather conditions. The speaker here is pointing toward the instability of the self that can neither be sustained in one bodily form, nor in one narrative, as:

> There's not one story only, there are threads
> of consanguinity and contraband. (43)

Different layers of experience are suggested by the word "story". Human beings have different experiences that cannot be summed up by one story; rather, there are different stories between people, as in her relationship with her husband from her past, and with

oneself, as in her perception of her aging body. There are also different dimensions to her life story: there is the story of her youth, her wishes, her relationships, her illness, and her aging. None of them can be moulded into one master narrative as there are "threads" that come together ("consanguinity") and threads that repel ("contraband"). As the speaker finds no fixed way to transcend stagnancy, she considers the future:

> A risk that is familiar and remote,
> in remembered streets, imagined beds,
> shrugs into its sleeves, extends a hand
> beside the bookshelves, in a borrowed coat. (43)

In these last four lines lies the resolution to the entire poem: the speaker's strong attachment to her past in the sense of memories ("remembered streets") and past relationships ("imagined beds") has sustained a strong presence in her life and has contributed to her "incapabil[ity]" of engaging with her aging self. These "familiar" feelings of her "remote" past have become a "risk", an obstacle holding her back in a conventional narrative of old age. This reflection has empowered her to control these feelings and memories by personifying this "risk" as wearing a coat and extending a hand to leave.

As such, the speaker has reached the end of the sonnet not having found an answer to her struggle with time and intense emotion, but she has reassessed her identity in light of her experience of aging. She has used the formal repetition of the lines to recast her sense of stagnation in different lights within different contexts to understand and trace the source of these feelings. Though destabilising at first, the metaphor of the mirror has allowed her to take a "stranger's" point of view, stepping outside her female body and examining it from the temporal space of the present. As such, in the posthuman sense, the speaker is triggering the pain and working it out in order to move on. Hacker confronts the pain of aging by bluntly writing about it and working through it in language, and in doing so is approaching the process of aging and old age with pragmatism and hope.

"Ghazal: *dar al-harb*": A Feminist 'Politics of Location'

To understand how Hacker's cross-cultural dialogue, from her twelfth poetry collection *Names* (2010) onwards, is a development of her critical nomadic thinking, we must first understand where she politically locates herself. *Names,* dedicated to friends and mentors ("In Memory of Hayden Carruth, Mahmoud Darwish and Reginald Shepherd"), is a poetic colloquy of sorts in that it establishes an ongoing, flowing conversation with poets contemporary and long-gone, spanning generations and transcending national boundaries. Hacker's interest in transnational conversations has influenced her formal choices. Her later work is characterised by a profusion of ghazals, as *Names* consists of thirteen ghazals, *Desesperanto* eleven, and *Stranger's* five. Hacker cites Agha Shahid Ali as an influence on her ghazal writing:

> I've been interested in the ghazal as a form for a long time, an interest that was awakened by Adrienne Rich's free-verse ghazals on one hand, and on John Hollander's witty exposition-by-example of the "formal" ghazal in his prosody handbook *Rhyme's Reason*. For me, as for many others, the interest took focus with Aga Sháhid Ali's work in the form.
> ("Ghazal: Style")

Although Pakistani-American poet Aziz Ahmed is the precursor of the American ghazal, it was Agha Shahid Ali, Kashmiri-American ghazal champion, who made "a place for this eastern form in American poetry" (Mushtaq). On earlier attempts to integrate the form into American poetry, he has said, "the form has really been utterly misunderstood in America, with these free verse ghazals. I mean that's just not the ghazal" (qtd. in Mushtaq). Adrienne Rich was one of the first poets to experiment with the ghazal, publishing a ghazal sequence at a time when America was in a state of political turmoil over the deaths of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, in what historians call "the most *turbulent year in the postwar* history of the United States" (qtd. in Caplan, ''In that Thicket'' 117). Her venture offers early insights into the circumstances of an American woman poet's engagement with non-Western forms, such as how poetic form transfers from one literary tradition to another and how it is modified to deal with new linguistic and cultural challenges. Rich did not conform to the ghazal's repetition of its rhyme and refrain, the *qafia* and *radif*, as the poem's "metrical complexity" was difficult to achieve in English (Mushtaq). However, her couplets "capture the spirit of the ghazal" in their strong emotion as well as in the bewilderment that she felt during the late 1960s

(Mushtaq). In the quote below, she articulates the perplexity she felt as a response to the "Vietnam War, the challenges offered by feminism and the civil rights movements, and New Criticism's waning influence" (Caplan, "In that Thicket" 119), as she explains:

> I certainly had to find an equivalent for the kinds of fragmentation I was feeling, and confusion. One thing that was very helpful to me was working on the translations from the Urdu poet Mirzah Ghalib, which led me to write original ghazals. There, I found a structure which allowed for a highly associative field of images. And once I saw how that worked, I felt instinctively, this is exactly what I need, there is no traditional Western order that I have found that will contain all these materials.
> (119)

She writes in her first ghazal sequence, **"**Ghazals: Homage to Ghalib" (1968), "[we]e are the forerunners; breaking the pattern is our way of life. / Whenever the races blurred they entered the stream of reality" (78). "[B]reaking the pattern" not only summarises the character of the Anglophone ghazal, but also depicts Rich as a nonconformist. In her second ghazal sequence, "The Blue Ghazals" (1968), she writes, "Pain made her conservative. / Where the matches touched her flesh, she wears a scar /.../ *The moment when a feeling enters the body/* is political. This touch is political*"* (33). Here Rich is examining the split, suggested by the line "/", between the personal ("body") and the "political" in both the language we use and in reality at large. The need to restore the "body['s]" connection to "feeling" was important to her politics at this time, a time when the violence ("matches-scar") of the power of patriarchal institutions infiltrated everything, even our "flesh". The couplets illustrate the 'personal is political' motto second-wave feminism, but even more importantly to Rich that the "political is personal", as she notes, "My ghazals are personal and public, American and twentieth-century" (qtd. in Caplan, "In that Thicket" 119). Of Rich's adoption of the form for her feminist politics, Caplan notes, "Rich's cagey, anguished poems searchingly investigate America's difficult racial politics, seeking to forge a cross-cultural poetry of witness, a poetry of reconciliation and cross-racial identification" ("In that Thicket" 118).

As Hacker came to discover the idea of the ghazal from reading Rich's "Ghazals: Homage to fGhalib", Hacker's first real ghazal was "Ghazal on half a line by Adrienne Rich" (1999), written in homage to Rich's early poem "The Tourist and the Town" from *The Diamond Cutters* (1955), as the poems below show:

Rich	**Hacker**
. . . Only sometimes, In certain towns she opens certain letters Forwarded on from bitter origins, (72)	In a familiar town, she waits for certain letters, working out the confusion and the hurt in letters. (36)

When read side by side, the reader sees how Hacker takes a line from the third stanza of Rich's poem, and elaborates it into twelve couplets, each ending with the word "letters". Repeating "letters" at the end of each couplet, Hacker acknowledges and emphasises the literary and political connections between her and Rich, and the way Rich's early poetic and political dialogues, suggested by the form of "letter" writing, enter in dialogue with Hacker's poems, showing Hacker's practise of "a current of poetic colloquy" (MacRae). Here, Hacker pays tribute to Rich not only as an early literary influence and the first American poet to publish a ghazal sequence, but also as a political poet who continuously engaged with the "bitter" and "hurt[ful]" tragedies of the human condition.

Responding to the political challenges of the twenty-first century, Hacker writes "Gazal: *dar al-harb*" (Gazal: Country of War or Gazal: Territory of War). Against a backdrop of the historical and political events of 2009 and 2010 – America's continuous fight in Afghanistan and occupation of Iraq, the nuclear threat from Iran, unemployment, and economic austerity – Hacker criticises America's position as a global superpower with the influence of its unjust policies on the rest of the world. Sense is inverted in this poem, as suggested by the very title, when Hacker defines her own country as the region that generates war and exports it, while other countries live in fear and feel oppressed by it. In the original collection, the poem comes under the eponymous section "Names" as a move to honour her friends in the West and East who are affected by America's policies. The traditional ghazal communicates love; this is both apposite and not so, given that the land of freedom is criticized and the speaker dreams of a country that is not oppressive against others. Over fourteen couplets, Hacker criticises her country's political hegemony over the rest of the world:

> I might wish, like any citizen to celebrate my country
> but millions have reason to fear and hate my country. (263)

The self and the state converge and diverge in the same way as the ghazal couplet above does; "citizen" and "my country" bring the speaker together with her native land, while "but", "fear", and "hate" capture the rift she creates through language. This paradox in the ghazal form is what Hacker means when she says, "There is always an element of play in form, however 'serious' the expression" (Hacker 2010). With the repetition of the refrain "my country", Hacker enacts a 'politics of location' as a North American citizen and takes accountability for her country's position of power with respect to the conflicts in the Middle East. Braidotti explains that this "practice of accountability" is ''a relational, collective activity of undoing power differentials'' (*NS* 19). The repetition of the word "wish" twice in the first two couplets shows Hacker examining what Braidotti describes as the "restrictive" (*NS* 11) power of one's location in that it is a hope for the speaker that cannot be realised. Her rhetorical question in the third couplet shows her understanding of her country's role in fuelling these conflicts: "Who trained the interrogators, bought the bulldozers? /—paper trails all indicate my country".

For Braidotti, the specific location one speaks from is very important in understanding positioned and responsible knowledge practices, as "the importance of where one is actually speaking from" is related to "[d]ifferences of location between centres and margins [that] matter greatly" (*PH* 16). Therefore, read through a patriotic lens, the refrain is an attestation of the poet's sense of belonging juxtaposed with her detestation of war, as suggested by the parallel lineation of "celebrate" and "hate". In a sense, it is a nationalism evoked not from within the country that aligns with its injustices but from the outside, a nationalism from the margins that aligns with the wish for a fair 'country'. The speaker is aware and realises this injustice when she uses "reason" as opposed to "a reason" to show the sense of logic that these "millions" have in "hat[ing]" her country.

Joined in by the same phrase – "my country" – and a variation rhyming with "celebrate", Hacker adheres to the rhyme and refrain of the ghazal, following the traditional model exemplified by Shahid Ali. Unlike the English ghazal that does not employ the *malta*, or the opening couplet, Hacker uses the opening couplet to set the tone of lament and the polemic mood, along with the rhyme to create a narrative that investigates new dimensions of her critique that afford a special individuality to each couplet that can be quoted separately. "[A] refrain which acts as a metrical template", according to David Ward, "reinforces the notion that the poet begins with a seed from

which the poem grows and to which the poem continually returns; in 'free verse' ghazals, the 'poet does not seem to have a way to return'" (64). Shahid Ali argues that without the rhyme established in the *malta*, 'free-ghazals' lack the spoken excitement generated by the original form (213).

While Rich's ghazals were embedded in the events of their time, both personal and public – hence the dates – Hacker's ghazal attempts to construct a transcultural poetry of political accountability that breaks with her country's unjust international politics. The poem depicts contrasts – citizen and exile, celebrate and hate. It is a paradox to love a country and accept responsibility and therefore make oneself accountable for it. The ghazal's double structure invites what Shahid Ali calls a "formal disunity" (210). Shadab Hashmi describes the ghazal as the "dance of the 'contraries'" because "the ghazal, in its structure as well as its sensibility, not only allows contraries to cohabit but, in the best compositions, makes a demand to frame polarity in the same space" ("Ghazal Cosmopolitan"). This paradox of being "complicit" while at the same time "reject[ing]" and "deplor[ing]" is echoed in another poem from the original collection *Names*, "Le Sancerre: September", when Hacker bluntly interrogates her position as an American:

> . . . I'm an American,
> complicit in what I reject, deplore,
> despite every petition, demonstration.
> I tease out metaphors to link desire
> and stasis, coffee, shadows, lavender;
> in my name, sons and sisters die Elsewhere. (94)

Taking a stronger position than the "witness" of her breast cancer narratives, Hacker becomes "complicit" in the injustices against "sons and sisters" that are "in [her] name", despite her "every petition" and "demonstration". Typically used to describe untangling of unruly wool or hair, ''teas[ing]'' shows the poet attempting to make sense of the political chaos by compressing it into ''metaphors''. Existing within language, the metaphor represents writing. Ultimately, connecting politics to the quotidian, to feeling ("desire"), and to the senses ("stasis, coffee, shadows, lavender"), showing writing to be at the root of the poet's politics. Acknowledging complicity becomes a sign of Hacker's accountability and agency. While the witness in Rich's ghazals is external and untouched, taking responsibility offers a way, as Braidotti notes, "to think differently

about ourselves and our systems of values" (*NE* 184), which in turn allows Hacker to open transcultural discourses of difference in order to formulate cultural and political affiliations. In asserting "I'm an American", Hacker is being self-critical of the connotations and power of her American citizenship.

Examining Hacker's treatment of the idea of "Elsewhere" in both poems uncovers interesting connections. "Le Sancerre: September" was originally published in *PN Review*, Mar/APR 2005. In the poem, "Elsewhere" indicates a place that is not America: far, not part of the landscape. It talks of "shore or mountains Elsewheres" that people return from. There is a city that is burned "Elsewhere" that was "reported on the news". There are also the "sons and sisters" who die Elsewhere in the speaker's name. However, three years later, "Ghazal: *dar al-harb*" was published in *The Massachusetts Review*, Spring/Summer 2008. The speaker here does not use the location indicator but creates the same notion in the "millions [that] have reason to fear and hate my country", "the men and women [that] are crushed beneath its weight", and the "friends" that plan their "resistance". Without the specific geopolitical "Elsewhere", the poem becomes general; the oppression becomes general, widespread, felt both in "my country" and "Elsewhere". As such, not only does the poet expand the geographical meaning of Elsewhere, but she also widens its political reach and indiscriminate oppression, at home and abroad.

In addition to citizenship, Hacker locates her mother tongue as a place of privilege and power as she writes, "As English is my only mother tongue, / It's in English I must excoriate my country". She recognizes the power of her native language and thus seeks to deconstruct the hegemony of its very use by "excoriat[ing]" from within, and thus putting it to political use. Experiencing the meanings of her nationality and language as points of location for which she needs to be accountable for leads Hacker to evoke Virginia Woolf's modernist concern with location in *Three Guineas* that "As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world" (99). These statements were used by generations of Western liberal feminists to articulate shared ideals of universal solidarity, as Hacker writes in the second couplet:

> I might wish to write, like Virginia: as a woman, I have none,
> but women and men are crushed beneath its weight: my country. (263)

Hacker's response to Woolf's words of global citizenship echoes Adrienne Rich's citation of Woolf in Rich's article "Notes toward a Politics of Location". Just as Hacker "might wish to write", Rich writes that she

> would have spoken these words as a feminist who 'happened' to be a white United States citizen, conscious of [her] government's proven capacity for violence and arrogance of power, but as self-separated from that government, quoting without a second thought Virginia Woolf. (210)

Rich writes how she "began to experience the meaning of [her] whiteness" and American citizenship as a "point of location for which [she] needed to take responsibility" from the writings of "Black United States Citizens", the "poems by contemporary Cuban women", and her visit to Nicaragua (219). Braidotti explains how corporeal experiences change our understanding of life in the way that "black women's texts and experiences make white women see the limitations of our locations, truths, and discourses" (*NS* 20). For Braidotti, "Feminist knowledge is an interactive process that brings out aspects of our existence, especially our own implication with power, that we had not noticed before" (20). In a similar vein, the writings of Arab peoples living in the diaspora and Hacker's interaction with them in France and the U.S. were instrumental in Hacker's understanding of and accounting for her citizenship and the power that accompanies it.

Including the politics of identity location, Rich's article allows for dialogues of 'difference' by examining the effects of U.S. Cold War dialogue in the way "it allows no differences among places, times, cultures, conditions, movements" ("PL" 221). She credits the material estrangement of her travels in raising her consciousness of the power disparities among cultures. Rich asks,

> [i]s there a connection between ... the attribution of all our problems to an external enemy – and a form of feminism so focused on male evil and female victimization that it, too, allows for no differences among women, men, places, times, cultures, conditions, classes, [and] movements? (221)

Caren Kaplan suggests that Rich's belief in the power of travel to transform is problematic for her 'politics of location'. "Locked into the conventional oppositions between global and local as well as Western and non-Western", as Kaplan argues, Rich is "unable to critique the inherently binary nature of Western travel paradigms" and

"completely writes her 'home' in terms of 'away'" ("The Politics of Location" 141). For Kaplan, a 'politics of location' is beneficial when it interrogates hegemonic power structures: "a politics of location identifies the grounds for historically specific differences and similarities between women in diverse and asymmetrical relations, creating alternative histories, identities, and possibilities for alliances" (139). In addition to her location, Rich also interrogates the privilege of whiteness, which she acknowledges is "mystified by the presumption that white people are the center of the universe" and "[t]o locate myself in my body means . . . recognizing this white skin, the places it has taken me" ("PL" 215-6). Caren Kaplan finds this examination of race also problematic because Rich "deconstructs the equalizations of 'global feminism' by homogenizing the location of 'North American Feminist'" ("The Politics of Location" 141). In other words, Kaplan casts Rich as unable to account for a 'politics of location' because she reinstitutes a hegemony by deconstructing another.

As the idea of a 'politics of location' travelled to different social contexts, "it began a process of cultural translation and transformation" (Caren Kaplan, "The Politics of Location" 138). Third World and postcolonial studies theorists regard it "as a marker of Western interest in other cultures and signals the formation of diasporic identities" (138). Postcolonial and transnational theorist Chandra Mohanty points out that Rich's examination of "difference" illustrates the 1970s feminist and antiracist concern with the "construction, examination, and, most significantly, the institutionalization of difference *within* white, North American feminist discourses" (68). Mohanty modifies and extends the argument by asking: "how does the politics of location in the contemporary United States determine and produce experience and difference as analytical and political categories in feminist 'cross-cultural' work?" (68). Mohanty argues "that historicizing and locating political agency is a necessary alternative to formulations of the 'universality' of gendered oppression and struggles" (69). In this respect, Mohanty finds that a 'politics of location' is beneficial to draw on the "historical, geographical, cultural, psychic and imaginative boundaries which provide the ground for political definition and self-definition" (qtd. in Caren Kaplan, "The Politics of Location" 149).

While the body Rich examines is white ("This body. White, female; or female, white") ("PL" 215), the body that is depicted in Hacker's work is Jewish. Reiterating Cucinella's observation that "the racial-ethnic body that emerges . . . in Hacker's work is

a Jewish one", this representation indirectly "challenges assumptions regarding whiteness and white purity and whiteness's relation to hegemony" (114), where the markings on it connect her to the victims of the Holocaust. To the question "*How are you a Jew?* asked [by] the young Greek woman", Hacker answers in "Despina", "[f]irst, because I haven't the choice not to be", and second, "through my mother's birthright, / turned into a death warrant once; excuse to / seize the farms and villages of a people / 'exiled by exiles'" (66). Although Jewish exile as both metaphor and embodied experience is repeated constantly in Hacker's early work, in "Ghazal: *dar al-harb*", there is a sense in which the speaker envies political refugees for the materialistic reality of their exile:

> Exiles, at least, have clarity of purpose:
> can say my town, my mother and my fate, my country. (263)

After Hacker is embedded in an ethnic and historic position to identify with victims of the Holocaust, the word 'exile' more recently appears in relation to political refugees and asylum seekers. The couplet above is referring to Algerian writer and playwright Kateb Yacine, dedicatee of Hacker's "For Kâteb Yacine", who died in 1989. As Hacker told Anis Shivani in a 2013 interview, she greatly admired Kâteb's "polyvalent and polyglot genius". The words "town", "mother", "fate", and "country" reveal Kâteb's life-long connection with Algeria as he "was not cut off from the literatures or the life of either of his countries [Algeria and France], and his marginality was that of an ideological and aesthetic rebel" (Hacker 2013). His "clarity of purpose" comes in stark contrast to Hacker's view of her country in the next couplet: "There used to be a face that looked like home, / my interlocutor or my mate, my country". The transition to the past tense shows the speaker reflecting on an earlier connection with her country as she employs familiar metaphors of nationalism and patriotism of the "mother country", when personifying it with a "face" and conversing with it like a "mate". With no face, the country is unrecognisable and foreign, just as she is in her adopted country. Hence, in this contrast of images Hacker seeks to examine the exile's attitude toward exile and the politics of exile. For those who are unwillingly exiled and sustain a dialogue with the home-country, exile becomes a fixed presence in their diasporic narratives of identity and belonging as a living experience. For those who are critical of injustice and Western hegemonic power, the mother country is to be a reminiscence, unattainable, and distant

in the way time stops. As she distances herself from her homeland, Hacker defies it by forming political alliances and "join[ing]" the demonstrations in the "street":

> Plan your resistance, friends, I'll join you in the street,
> but watch your backs: don't underestimate my country.
>
> Where will justice and peace get the forged passports
> it seems they'll need to infiltrate my country?
>
> Eggplant and peppers, shallots, garlic and cumin:
> let them be, married on my plate, my country. (264)

By invoking her "friends", Hacker seeks to create a poetic dialogue with other writers of the form, such as British-Iranian ghazal writer Mimi Khalvati, Pakistani poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Palestinian poet Deema Shehabi, all of whom she dedicated ghazals to in *Names.* The political effects of these dialogues with poets from the East through an eastern poetic form show Hacker moving beyond Rich's ghazals, which investigate America's difficult racial politics, to a poetics of transcultural coalition and transnational solidarity. "Transnational and intercultural poetry", as Jahan Ramazani indicates, "imaginatively reconfigures the relations among the ingredients drawn from disparate cultural worlds and fuse[s] them within its verbal and formal space" (18). National narratives of American poetry in English are the themes of Hacker's earlier books as she engages in a "remapping of the field" (Ramazani 32) to show how "cross-cultural and cross-national poetic exchanges, influences, and confluences" (x) – as well as her expatriation – can be reimagined in the context of her later oeuvre. Western poets will continue to remain part of her poetic dialogue because of their longstanding influence or their own cross-cultural engagements. For example, other ghazals came about in dialogues with non-eastern poets like Adrienne Rich and Suzanna Gardinier, who published a book entirely of ghazals entitled *Today* (2008). Hence, Hacker's ghazals emerge to be as much about poetic conversations as about themes.

Hacker announces her defiance in the first couplet above and warns her friends ("watch your backs"). Losing trust and confidence, she warns that facing her country requires careful "plan[ning]". The critical nature of her feelings in the previous eleven couplets toward her country is now clear as she swaps alliances. Her act of "join[ing]" is what Deleuze calls "deterritorialization", a phenomenon that Braidotti describes as something that "estranges us from the familiar, the intimate, the known, and casts an

external light upon it" (*NS* 16). Dagnino notes that increasing transnational dynamics ''gives rise to a breed of deterritorialized citizens'', among whom are

> culturally and physically mobile writers . . . [who] while moving physically and imaginatively across the globe and across different cultures . . . find themselves less and less trapped in the traditional (im)migrant/exilic/diasporic syndrome and are more able instead to embrace the opportunities and the freedom that diversity and mobility now bestow upon them.
> (*Transcultural Writers* 99)

Hacker's deterritorialized estrangement from what she knows of her national self leads to a form of relocation and self-criticism of the power location she inhabits as a result of her American citizenship. The tone of lamentation becomes ironic as she questions how to live in a country that has deported humanity; justice and peace are depicted as refugees that must forge passports to re-enter her country. The country is metaphorically deserted. In its many contradictions, the poem engenders a statelessness, even as it embodies it.

Mirroring the traditional *matla* (opening couplet) at the start of the poem, the *magta* (closing couplet) shows Hacker adopting the food of another culture as her country: "[e]ggplant and peppers, shallots, garlic and cumin". In choosing to claim the food, Hacker enacts the politics of both "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization", which as Deleuze and Guatarri suggest is not a form of imperialism but rather a nomadism "in a paradoxical movement between minor and major – a refusal to admit either position as final or static" (Caren Kaplan, ''Deterritorializations'' 189). It is an "issue [of] positionality" that, according to Caren Kaplan, challenges "the first world feminist critic" to "develop a discourse that responds to the power relations of the world system, that is, to examine her location in the dynamic of centres and margins" (189). In Braidottian terms, it is a model of affirmative becoming in light of a posthuman ethics of affirmation.

Hence, Hacker's adoption of the ghazal, rather than being a cosmopolitan trend or a cultural gesture, as Shadab Hashmi suggests in "Ghazal Cosmopolitan", is essential to her thinking in nomadic terms, imaginatively moving between cultures and diverse power formations. In this respect, Hacker employs a form that has "transcended and transferred the culture of its origins and made its home in vastly different cultures and

times" (Hashmi, "Ghazal Cosmopolitan") to reflect her own nomadic shift, which takes her across spatiotemporal, literary, and cultural borders. Dagnino argues that transcultural writing is an act of

> creative transpatriation, that is, physical, emotional detachment (where detachment means critical distance, not the opposite of commitment) from one's own primordial culture, territory, and roots (the "individual's" motherland) as well as intellectual disalignment from one's own national or ethnic collective fatherland. (*Transcultural Writers* 129)

As such, Hacker draws on the ghazal's paradoxical nature to problematize the relationship between her cultural and national identity. However, Hacker is to discover the materialistic limitations of this form in a collaborative poetics of affiliation. Her attempts to practise a 'politics of location' within the ghazal are analogous to a critical soliloquy of the home country. Although it allows for a critical form of thinking, it does not provide space for the incorporation of voices in dialogues of diversity across the cultural, political, and language barriers of the United States. Donna Haraway's view of boundaries as "productive of meanings and bodies" highlights the importance of borders as specific locations where different interactions can be examined in their complexity ("Situated Knowledges" 595). Hacker's interest in the cross-cultural potential of the ghazal was "awakened" by Rich's ghazals of personal and political anguish; however, as Hacker aspired to a materialistic transcultural poetics, she developed this "colloquy" into another form that braids Hacker's voice with other poetic voices to compose a form that balances out different views and links them with the hope of friendship through the dialogic form of the renga.

Diaspo / Renga: **A Transcultural Feminist Poetics**

As discussed earlier, Rich's concept of a 'politics of location' was inspired by the writings of women of colour, in particular, the African American poet June Jordan, who from the early 1980s articulated transnational feminism years before Rich was to examine it in her essay. Jordan's fight is one against a history of oppression, and her poetry articulates an urgency that rejects this century's atrocities. In "Elegy for a Soldier", from Hacker's collection *Desesperanto* (2005) – also included in *Stranger's* – she pays tribute to Jordan, as Jordan was a long-time champion of the Palestinian cause:

> Twenty years ago, you denounced the war crimes
> still in progress now, as Jenin, Ramallah
> dominate, then disappear from the headlines.
> Palestine: your war.
>
> "To each nation, its Jews," wrote Primo Levi.
> "Palestinians are Jews to Israelis."
> Afterwards, he died in despair, or so we
> infer, despairing.
>
> To each nation its Jews, its blacks, its Arabs,
> Palestinians, immigrants, its women.
> From each nation, it poets: Mahmoud Darwish,
> Kavanagh, Sháhid (147)

In these lines, Hacker is referring to Jordan's 1982 poem "Moving Towards Home" in *Naming our Destiny: New and Selected Poems* (1989), in which Jordan shows what Keith Feldman calls "present-tense becoming-Palestinian" ("June Jordan's Palestine") as a form of solidarity in support of Palestine's decolonisation when Jordan asserts, "I was born a Black woman / and now / I am become a Palestinian" (134). Jordan wrote these lines after the 1982 Israeli Massacre of refugees in Beirut. In the 1980s, Jordan's writing started expanding in focus, reflecting the broadening of her political engagement with countries like Nicaragua, Palestine, and Guatemala. As an African American woman, she connected the suffering of the Arabs to the injustice of anti-black racism and police violence in America. Jordan's statement "I think we can" is a declaration of the shared struggle, resistance, and resilience of the black and Arab people (45-6).

Although Hacker finds a model of transcultural poetics in Jordan's work on Middle Eastern politics, she nevertheless is critical of Jordan's poetic rhetoric that "seems to have no questions and to know all the answers" (*UV* 69). Hacker argues that a poet's grasp of these atrocities is strongly linked to their first-hand experiences, as she writes:

> The best American writing I've read about Vietnam has been by black and white veterans who were there (Yusef Komunyakaa's *Dien Cai Dau* is a moving recent example), not by anti-war activists who weren't. I think the best poetry of the intifada will be written by Palestinians (and perhaps by dissident Israelis)—and that a writer who is neither, who hasn't been

there except by analogy, runs the risk of letting exhortation and indignation replace observation and introspection. (68-69)

However, Hacker excludes Adrienne Rich from this political rhetoric by noting that Rich's "recent poems about the Middle East are essentially the meditations of an American Jew who finds herself implicated in the conflict whether she chooses to be or not" (69). Rich is implicated, as Hacker argues, because the source of her involvement is specific: she is an American that identifies America as the source of evil, or at least the transgressions against the Palestinians, whereas Jordan "creates an undifferentiated 'they' with no stated antecedent . . . because these names do not appear, what 'they' represents becomes unspecified, a monolith" (68). Along with her American citizenship, Rich's ethnic ties to Jews, as Hacker notes, "creates tension and interest" in her poems (69), while Jordan's poetry about the conflicts in Lebanon and Palestine "has at times polarized some readers' responses to her work" (68).

In this respect, Rich's poems about Middle Eastern wars criticize American racism against the oppressed by comparing it to the Holocaust, as she writes in "Eastern War Time", published eight years after Jordan's "Moving Towards Home":

> I'm a corpse dredged from a canal in Berlin
> a river Mississippi   I'm a woman standing
> with other women dressed in black
> on the streets of Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem
> there is spit on my sleeve there are phonecalls in the night
> I am a woman standing in line for gasmasks
> I stand on a road in Ramallah   with naked face listening
> I am standing here in your poem   unsatisfied
> lifting my smoky mirror
> (qtd. in Gubar, ''Jewish American Women'' 246)

In the action of becoming other, or "becoming minor", as Deleuze and Guattari call it (qtd. in Caren Kaplan, "Deterritorializations" 189), the speaker shifts from the third-person at the start of the poem to the first-person inclusive "I", as in Jordan's poem. Voice is reversed in the poem as the "I" becomes the victim and the poem no longer belongs to the poet; rather, it becomes "your poem", belonging to the oppressor. Using the first person "I", Rich speaks through the diverse voices of suffering – a family, an immigrant, an Israeli, a Jew, a white American, and a Palestinian – to show that terror is a global epidemic. The repetition of the "I" creates a community of selves, diverse in

their types of suffering yet interconnected in a shared humanity across boundaries of race, ethnicity, and culture, and across divides of ignorance and incomprehensibility. The speaker is "unsatisfied" for being unable to do their narratives justice and her "smoky mirror" suggests the failure of her artistic efforts. In "lifting" the mirror, the speaker is able to perceive truth from the fog of propaganda and the fabrications of politics. As in the writings of Jordan, all Rich can do is bear witness for the dead and dying through second-hand sources and stories and engage with questions of accountability amid these tragedies.

"Ghazal: *dar al-harb*" ends by juxtaposing two affiliations – an American citizenship and a transcultural orientation – to underscore Hacker's aesthetic and political concern with formulating transnational and transcultural feminist alliances across national, cultural, and racial divides. As Hacker becomes more of an expert in the Arabic language and culture through her integration into the Arab diasporic community in the U.S. and in Paris, her writing explores embodied cross-cultural relationships and the diversity of the diasporic experience. Braidotti notes that at the imaginary and critical levels, even writing acquires mobile features: ''[W]riting is not only a process of constant translation but also of successive adaptations to different cultural realities'' (*NS* 16). *Diaspo/Renga* (2014) is a two-voiced poetic collaboration, in which Hacker interweaves a metaphorical poetic "braid" of voices with Palestinian poet Deema Shehabi about exile, displacement, and Middle Eastern culture and politics.

What began with an image of a traumatised Palestinian girl on screen developed into a tapestry of voices, characters, and settings that create a cartography of her current moment. The narrative in the poem is sparked by the 2008-2009 Gaza war, when Hacker emailed Shehabi a renga about a distraught Palestinian girl. In response, Shehabi wrote a renga about the crisis of the dislocation of the Cherokee people from the east of the Mississippi River to present-day Oklahoma in what is known as "The Trail of Tears". This transatlantic poetic dialogue took five years and many emails, resulting in the poem's publication over two stages in two separate books; the first, a short version, was first part of the collection *Names*, and the second, four years later, was an extended complete version published as *Diaspo/Renga* (2014). Some parts from the poem were republished in *A Stranger's Mirror* as part of an extended "Syria Renga", as the Conclusion discusses in more detail.

The title, *Diaspo/Renga,* combines the word "Diaspo" meaning diasporic, with "renga", which is an ancient Japanese collaborative form, both of which come together to suggest a braiding of diasporic voices, as the exchange below reveals:

Hacker

Five, six – and righteous,
the child in green in Gaza
stands in her wrecked home,

grubby, indignant. Her hands
point; she explains what was done

bombed, burned. It all smells
like gas! We had to throw our clothes
away! The earrings my

father gave me . . . No martyr,
resistant. The burnt cradle . . . (8)

Shehabi

breaks over the cold mountains
of North Carolina where a Cherokee
poet huddles in a cottage

by an indigo fire. She sees
the child and says,

This is the new Trail of Tears.
Calls out, Oh outspread Indian nation
Let's braid our hair

with the pulverized
gravel of Palestine.

Witness, she says, the unpinned
knuckles of this child. Feel
the burlap curtains whip across. . . (9)

Each five-line stanza is called a tanka, and two tanka connect to make a renga. Originally, two poets write one tanka, but then it developed so that poets take turns writing tankas. The form fosters repetition with three lines followed by two lines in a recurring pattern throughout the poem. Hacker and Shehabi's adaptation of the form presents not only a braiding of voices and words but also unique poetic and stylistic sensibilities. There is the combination of the traditional and the contemporary in *Diaspo/Renga*. First, Hacker adheres to the original 5-7-5 and then 7-7 syllable count for the tanka, while Shehabi increased the line count from the original ten to thirteen. Second, Hacker writes about the contemporary Gaza conflict, while Shehabi alternates with the 1939 Native American tragedy of forced relocation, "proceeding not chronologically but anecdotally through the medium of image" (Krysl "The Mosaic").

The traditional renga is composed according to fixed genre conventions. In *Haiku Before Haiku* and "Rules, Rules", Steven Carter examines the various renga rules. First, each sequence should stand autonomous in its theme and tone and afford the poet a

special level of individuality to be quoted separately(rephrase/rewrite). Second, both poets pick up a word, phrase, or image from the preceding renga and embed it in the next renga (Konishi 49). Third, the themes must change from one verse to another, with no theme ruling over the others. Finally, following from the third rule, there must be a variety of settings and characters to move the renga in unexpected directions (Haskins 340).

In the two rengas above, Shehabi responds to Hacker's renga by repeating the phrase "the child". This point of connection emphasises that children are the most vulnerable victims of war because they cannot voice oppression and resistance, as in the way that the girl is "cut off from 'dialogue'", "telling her story to an unseen interlocutor" (qtd. in Krysl, "The Poet" 18). "The girl's anger . . . reverberate[s]" (18) from the destruction that is all around her in her "wrecked home", "clothes", "earrings", and "burnt cradle", all of which create an image of a childhood lost. Like many Palestinian families who fought in the uprising, their sons were either martyred or resistance fighters and separated from their families as the girl is from her father.

Beginning her renga with the tragic word "breaks", Shehabi smoothly leads in with another culture that has been broken. The struggle here is with the harsh cold weather in the mountains of North Carolina. Braiding past with present, and west to east, the Cherokee child is called upon to bear witness to the connection between the Native American struggle and the Palestinian conflict as a new "Trail of Tears". The poet affirms the collective oppression, resistance, and resilience with a cry of solidarity, "Oh outspread Indian nation / Let's braid our hair / with the pulverised gravel of Palestine". The child is also called on to witness the innocence and defencelessness of the Palestinian children in their show of resilience with "unpinned knuckles". The exchange of cultures marks the book as a transcultural work of fiction in light of Dagnino's definition of transcultural writing as ''work that transcends the borders of a single culture in its choice of topic, vision and scope and contributes to feeding the need for a wider global literary perspective'' (''Transculturalism'' 2).

The renga is an unusual choice in English poetry for a poem of political concern. Hacker, however, finds it a useful form for poetic conversation, as she explains that "one of the things associated with the renga form is the collaboration. The poet responds to the short poem written by somebody else" (Hacker 2015). Asked if a poem about the

tragedies of the Arab world would have had the same effect if another eastern form, such as the ghazal, was used instead, she disagreed with this and replied,

> I can't imagine a ghazal going on that long . . . and certainly not with the same *radif* (refrain). One can adhere more or less to the syllabics of the renga form, as I did, but there's more than picking up something from the previous renga. It's more open and also the idea of it is something that could be just an exchange of four or five poems or it could go on for a long time. (Hacker 2015)

The form is very useful in the way Hacker picks up a word or theme from Shehabi, and then Shehabi picks up something else. It is as if their poems develop from one another and at the same time are interwoven. The interplay also seems to push the narrative forward. Hacker continues to explain that "sometimes it even auto-translates. There's one where Shehabi ends with '*Sabâh el-fûll yâ âmar*' (good morning, love) and then I start with 'Morning of roses'. It's answering in a different language" (Hacker 2015).

Moreover, in this choice of eastern poetic form, there is the need to engage in a two-way conversation near to the one she is exploring: the Middle East. The juxtaposition of cultural and political factors challenges this reciprocal interaction of subjects: Hacker being Jewish-American and Shehabi Arab-American; Palestine and Israel are historically, geographically, and politically inimical; and both are contemporary sites of estrangement, loss, and suffering. In addition, Shehabi as a Palestinian necessarily engaged with the tragedies in Palestine draws on familial experience from the homeland of authentic accounts that will not be truthfully portrayed in western media. As such, Hacker is able to move away from second-hand accounts to more legitimate sources. Lastly, as Hacker writes in form, especially sonnets and ghazals, she must have found the formal structure of the renga familiar. When "looking for a western equivalent of the renga", according to Octavio Paz, "one thinks of the sonnet: on the one hand it is the sole traditional form which has remained alive up to our own times; on the other, it is composed, like the tanka of semi-independent and separable entities" (*Renga* 25). Timothy Clark explains that the European renga is translated from the eastern "form into a series of quasi sonnets" as "the sonnet in most of its varieties, articulates or divides itself in ways that recall the Japanese renga, principally in the relation of octave and sestet" ("Babel, Babble" 78).

Grasping the meanings that unfold in the poem demands that the reader read the braided rengas positioned side by side to see the connection. The reader must approach the renga differently than the traditional lyric of European literature. Such an act of reading is asking us to alternate between the two structural movements of the renga: division and integration. Turning to the former, each poet aims to distance his tanka from the themes in the previous tankas; this expanding movement opens up spaces for individuality of voice and artistic background. Here the reader must approach connections from different angles (Haskins 335). The space between the printed rengas and the oral ones requires the reader to "read each section, one at a time, as a self-contained unit, and then move on to the next one" (Clark, "Babel, Babble" 84). This would require reading Shehabi's and Hacker's rengas as responses to each other in the form of a conversation.

In terms of integration, the proximity implied by the image of the dialogue invites the reader to understand and think in relational terms: the relationships between rengas and writers, as well as the reader's relationship to both. The representation of the printed rengas standing in parallel, facing each other requires readers to find connections, comparing voice and style. Also, the reader participates in the reading by seeing the writer as a kind of reader in the way they pick up a word, image, or theme from the previous writer and embed it into a new renga. The reader also must follow the different strands, wanting to see who wrote what line, which is very much part of the narrative of the story. These different levels of reading create an element of interaction between the rengas, poets, and reader. As such, this poetic form can serve as a metaphor for the kind of interconnection that Hacker seeks to create in her later poetry.

There is also the challenge of following the many stories narrated that Anglophone readers might find difficult to relate to because of geographical and cultural distances, especially if they lack background of the political conflict in the Middle East in general, and of Palestine and Israel in particular. The level of detail and attention to cultural specificities that are not necessarily recognisable to Anglophone readers indicates that Hacker is targeting a cross-cultural readership or diasporic Arab communities. Hacker illustrates this cross-cultural dialogue when using hot beverages as a tangible symbol of the diversity of cultures, as she writes, "He steeps black tea. She / boils water for cardamom / coffee" (30). It is customary to drink black tea in the

Western part of the Arab world, while cardamom coffee is popular among the tribes in the Eastern part. An audience that understands this will grasp Hacker's allusion to difference that she depicts in the next three lines, "Would they have / words for each other's sorrow / if they had learned the same words" (30). Hacker makes use of this audience to weave in the Arabic language, particularly regarding political events that resonate with an Arab readership:

Hacker

> "Now they all know one
> word of Arabic: Tahrîr
> means Liberation!"

> "They may know a few others
> before the week is out."

> "Maybe '*ath-thaura*,'
> and why not the resistance
> *al-muqâwama*!"

> "By the end of the week they'll
> hear from *al-mukhbarât . . .*" (94)

Since there was a span of several years during the writing process, many political events in the Middle East were included, such as the Arab Spring in the lines above. During the Egyptian revolution of 2011, Tahrîr Square, as a symbol of liberation and as a central public town square in Cairo, was adopted as the location for political demonstrations, calling for the end of the government of President Hosni Mubarak. This historic and widely televised event made the political word "Tahrîr" well-known outside the Arab world as Hacker indicates in the renga above. Other words, however, such as *ath-thaura* (revolution) and *al-mukhbarât* (federal agents) are only understood through translation, but not so much by the context of the renga. Though challenging to an Anglophone readership, this braiding of languages helps to loosen the renga and create layers of meaning and emotion. Another example shows Hacker comparing the difficulty and harshness of living in exile to the difficulty in pronouncing the Arabic letter *Ayn*:

Shehabi	*Hacker*
The script leaps across the page to smack your lips, light burgundy	a word emerging mid-throat, like the *ayn*, in an emigrant winter,
in the sun – *aleph, ba,. . .kha'a*	a word that casts blue-white flame across the café counter.
this is the language I breathe as love, you say, settling into a cry	Nightfall. It's heady as the red wine they're drinking to hear each other's
the first loss is always (14)	stories in a third language, the bridge on which they first met. (15)

As the lines above reveal, descriptive language emerges as an important dimension of the poem. In an image of love and belonging, Shehabi brings the Arabic language to life as it "leaps" from the page to colour the "lips" with a "light burgundy" when the speaker recites the Arabic alphabet, "*aleph, ba, . . . kha'a".* Here, language is equated with life, with the very breath that exiles take in pain reminding them of their "first loss" before country. It is a remembrance of one's roots and identity as well as the language and heritage of the fathers. Without missing a beat, Hacker cleverly responds to the word "first" with the Arabic letter *ayn* in its history as the first letter of the alphabet in the first Arabic dictionary because it emerges "mid-throat", instead of its current place as the eighteenth letter of the Arabic alphabet. Hacker pairs this knowledge with her understanding of the challenge of pronouncing certain Arabic letters like the *ayn,* for which there is no alternative in English. In this way, language becomes a tangible metaphor of the struggles of adaptation to an "emigrant winter".

In its ability to connect, language is also a means to build bridges using "stories in a third language", as Hacker illustrates in the way she moves in and out of English, French, and Arabic throughout the poem. Hacker seamlessly embeds famous assertions in Arabic of Arab nationalism against Israeli dominance. When she writes, "She'd like to declare / " *'Sajjil, âna 'arabî'* " / the day before Yom Kippour' (116), Hacker is recalling Mahmoud Darwish's famous "Identity Card" poem, when the Palestinian speaker

rebelliously tells the Israeli officer to "Write it down! I am an Arab!", a phrase asserted at the start of the poem and repeated throughout. The poem's interweaving of English with Arabic illustrates Hacker's acquired transcultural sensibility and outlook, allowing her to negotiate literary and linguistic borders. It is a linguistic engagement that provides possibilities of reconciliation at the aesthetic level that might not be possible in our age of constant war.

Hacker complicates Jahan Ramazani's notion of exiles writing a poetics that is a hybrid of their national and displaced cultures in the manner of Dagnino's "creative transpatriation" (*Transcultural Writers* 129). Dagnino's notion is a process that describes how "authors have outgrown the culture in which they were raised and, either by necessity, fate, choice or perseverance, have embraced other cultures and ended up transcending all of them" ("Contemporary Transcultural" 95). Hacker does this by imaginatively crossing the geopolitical and cultural borders of the U.S. and France to the tragedies in the western part of the Arab world. Hacker engages affirmatively with these diverse and distant voices that are outside of her historical experience, as when she speaks in the voice of a despondent Palestinian refugee in a camp in Syria:

> **Hacker**
>
> I slept in Yarmouk
> and I dreamed of Palestine.
> When I'm asleep here
>
> I dream I'm sleeping in the
> camp, dreaming of Palestine
>
> but when they're bombing
> Syrian cities, killing
> Syrian children,
>
> saying it's for Palestine,
> I don't want that Palestine. (108)

Palestine emerges as the ultimate "dream" of the speaker. Syntactically, as the subject of her longing, Palestine should go at the beginning of the sentence, but the end of line parallel lineation creates a visual image of certainty and identification. The repetition, however, creates different resonances: in the first five lines, Palestine is a patriotic song;

in the last two lines, it is an unwanted source of terror. In the repetition of the different forms of "slept", "asleep", and "sleeping", as well as "dreamed", "dream", and "dreaming", the first six lines of the renga create a mesmerising image of the reader asleep and dreaming of a utopian Palestine from her place in the refugee camp in Yarmouk. There is a sudden shift in the second part of the renga as the speaker wakes to the reality of "bombing" and "killing" of Syrian "cities" and "children". In contrast to Palestine, placing "Syrian" at the beginning of the line foregrounds it as the new political disaster. The entire renga is braided with the "ing' form to indicate that these tragedies are continuous, intertwined, and still exist.

As discussed earlier in "Ghazal: *dar al-harb*", Hacker understands this paradox of country and exile and uses it to relate to narratives of Arab suffering. With the Palestinian, Iraqi, Egyptian, and Syrian conflicts, the narratives reach far beyond Shehabi's culturally-informed testimony as an Arab to become a 'Diaspo/Renga', a collaboration of voices and shared creative practices and imagination that weave many conflicts in what Braidotti describes as a "posthuman ethics of collaborative construction of alternative ways of 'being-in-this-together'" (''Posthuman, all too human'' 2017). Thus as émigrés themselves, Hacker and Shehabi are able to grasp the feelings of ambivalence between homelands they remember and the metropolitan cultures they adopt and "speak from the experience of calling many places home" (Hashmi, "Her Hands").

Hacker's *Diaspo/Renga*, therefore, can be read in light of Epstein's ''transculture'' as a dialogue of difference in its depiction of different diasporic experiences. The divisions of the renga helps to maintain the separate voices; it structures difference without blurring the voices and experiences with the braiding, emphasising the positivity in what Braidotti means by developing a strategy to "[r]eassert the concept of difference" (*PH* 100). Hacker's engagement through poetry with the major political conflicts of the Middle East – Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt – shows "an understanding of a set of unequal relationships among and between all peoples, rather than a set of traits embodied in all non-US citizens" (Alexander and Mohanty xix). Braidotti argues that a posthuman subject must "start from those differences of location and, by accounting for them in terms of power, as both restrictive and productive (potestas and potentia), to experiment with different modes of posthuman subjectivity" (*PH* 141). The poem is filled with images that speak of different traditions, different

struggles, and different words, translating "culture for the nuanced understanding of the 'other'" (Hashmi, "Her Hands"). In the following example, language functions for Hacker as a site of diversity in the way it unifies and divides and engages in dialogues about historical narratives of loss and struggle. Presenting it as a double-edged sword, Hacker cautions against translation's one-sided homogenising depictions of Middle-Eastern struggles on the one hand, while on the other asking if language can help address misconceptions and misunderstandings and bring disparate worlds together:

> ### Hacker
>
> *If this be a man. . .*
> don't translate him into
> a single language,
>
> a single landscape of loss,
> claim there's one story only. (30)

In this respect, the renga's interweaving of voices, languages, and imagery echoes the interconnectivity of the braid. The shape described by the renga has something of the slimness of the braid and its flowing movement. Similar to the braid's structure, the renga is a "disordered order" in its multi-layered, nonlinear form. It is the epitome of the braid metaphor that Hacker articulates in "Squares and Courtyards", as it enacts the act of poetic braiding in its intimacy and bonding experience. It embodies Hacker's braided interconnectivity to the culture of a people she loves. She uses the renga to make an abstract image in language tangible through poetic form. This bond becomes fundamental to her poetic dialog with and bold expression of kinship to a writer considered to be the poet of the Arab world: Mahmoud Darwish. As she ends *Stranger's* with her tribute to him, he is to her – as Hacker describes him in his last conversation with his creator – her "last, best interlocutor" (281).

"A Braid of Garlic": A Braid of Losses

"A Braid of Garlic", which concludes the collection, *A Stranger's Mirror*, is an elegy to Mahmoud Darwish and also a reflection on Hacker's own aging and illness in the way it echoes one of Darwish's last poems "The Dice Player", an autobiography in verse

form. "A Braid of Garlic" is a complex weave of the quotidian and the tragic as the opening lines reveal:

> Aging women mourn while they go to market,
> buy fish, figs, tomatoes, enough *today* to
> feed the wolf asleep under the table
> who wakes from what dream? (281)

Opening the stressed syllable of the sapphic quatrain with "aging", Hacker creates the powerful emotion that comes with the many losses of aging: vigour, health, and more importantly, love and friendships. The intimacy that comes with aging is made communal when the female self is enlarged to become "women" who "mourn" for a figure that represents a tragic loss for masses of people. The unstressed syllables at the core of the first line "mourn while they go to" offer a pause for the dailiness of life within the driving moment of the first line, which in Hacker's variation on the Sapphic allows a feeling of immediacy in the women who continue to courageously shop that overshadows the dullness of the rest of the quatrain. The poem pays homage to Darwish in the multiple allusions to his work. The "wolf" is a frequent image in Darwish's work that he used to refer to the Israelis (or "Zionists" as he would call them). The italicisation of "*today*" emphasizes the importance of this particular day of mourning when this wolf must stay fed and asleep so as not to disrupt the mourners. The brevity of the last line of the quatrain offers a tone of uncertainty that questions if this tragedy is a fantasy of the wolf's dream. In its enquiry, this line introduces the despondency in the question at the beginning of the next quatrain:

> What but loss comes round with the changing season?
> He is dead whom, daring, I called brother
> with that leftover life perched on his shoulder
> cawing departure. (281)

This stanza presents the object of the speaker and the women's mourning: Darwish's death. The "loss comes round" refers to the many tragedies that the Palestinian people have suffered before and that recur with the poet's death. On a deeper level, her choice of the word "round" instead of "around" further emphasises the enormity of this tragedy that surrounds all Palestinians and Arabs and that is matched by the question in the first line with the change of season – Darwish's death in August 2008 – bringing

forth more losses. Darwish is not only the object of Hacker's mourning but also the object of her philia love. As Hacker did not personally know Darwish, her love of him stems from extreme admiration of his writings and the public readings he gave in Paris. Fadwa Soleiman describes Hacker as "infatuated with Darwish" (Soleiman). Soleiman asserts that Darwish's work attests to the success of political and patriotic poetry in the twentieth century, admirably remembering how his readings could fill halls with thousands of people, with attendees sitting and standing at the doors.

In placing "daring" between two commas before "I called a brother", Hacker is both recognising the audacity of a Jewish woman calling an Arab man brother and evoking the politics and ethics of positionality by approaching Darwish not as an object of idolisation – therefore appropriating a political, national and cultural figure of freedom of a people – but rather as a sibling who she felt a strong connection to. "Brother", in its love, empathy, and connectivity, is the most emphatic articulation of Hacker's nomadic subjectivity. Braidotti contends the significance of compassion in the posthuman thought of subjectivity as a means to consciousness (*PH* 78). As far as Hacker's admiration of rebels and political refugees goes, Darwish is the epitome of sacrifice to Hacker not only for living estranged from his home country but writing with a love and connection that Hacker both lacks and is envious of. These experiences have allowed him a more direct political engagement than herself. Hacker employs Darwish's recurring image of the crow as it "perched on his shoulder / cawing departure" as an omen that foreshadowed his own death. The crow's cry signifies the many that cry for him. In the third and fourth stanzas, she records how his resilience, and also love of life lasted until the end:

> He made one last roll of the dice. He met his
> last, best interlocutor days before he
> lay down for the surgery that might/might not
> extend the gamble.
>
> What they said belongs to them. Now a son writes
> elegies, though he has a living father.
> One loves sage tea, one gave the world the scent of
> his mother's coffee. (281)

Darwish's poem "The Dice Player" is evoked to emphasize the randomness of tragedies, as he writes, "I'm a dice player / I win some and lose some / just like you or a little less. .

." (16). Together with the onomatopoeic cry of the crow, these two stanzas create a very ominous image indicating that Darwish felt his impending death. The "last roll" captures the "might/might not" gamble of life, which he lost when he laid his life down for a surgery that he did not recover from. The scene is shared with two other characters, "his / last best interlocutor" and a "son" who "writes elegies". Born into a Sunni Muslim family, Darwish was surrounded by spiritual discourse regarding death and the afterlife, and so his "best interlocutor" was perhaps his creator, in this case a discourse that he took to the grave. Since Darwish did not have any children, Hacker is referring to a literary son, the poet and physician Fady Joudah, who is Darwish's long-time translator and friend. Of this last collaboration, Joudah states the following:

> I had become aware of Darwish's deteriorating health when we talked previously on the phone. I could hear in his voice his amazing prescience that this time he was walking towards death, in full dignity, not without a hope for life through a surgery against the odds. The poem's effect was more immense on those of us who knew the circumstances surrounding it. He was writing his own biography in a final verse. A tender, shy man, he wanted to beat his elegists to the punch, so to speak. . . And he asked me to translate 'The Dice Player', a request he repeated when I met him in Houston five days before his passing.
> (qtd. in Darwish, ''The Dice Player'' 16)

The repetition of the present tense "now", "today", and "these days" seems to freeze time and create a cartography of our present posthuman predicament that, according to Braidotti, has seen an increase of illnesses, wars, and the displacement of millions. "[T]he scent of / his mother's coffee" alludes to Darwish's famous love for Arabic coffee that is associated with his love for his mother in poignant poems like "For My Mother" when he writes "I yearn for my mother's bread, / My mother's coffee, / My mother's brushing touch". The reference to Darwish's coffee creates an association with Hacker's own love of coffee that shifts the poem from her elegy of Darwish to an examination of her own life:

> Light has shrunk back to what it was in April,
> incrementally will shrink back to winter.
> I can't call my peregrinations "exile,"
> but count the mornings. (281)

Similar to *Winter Numbers* (1994), Hacker associates the onset of winter as the days get darker and shorter with the start of illness and old age. Hacker creates a linear movement of the seasons from Darwish's death in August to "April" and lastly to "winter", recounting memories of her progression toward a cancer winter. Moving away from the grim side of her exile, "cell-shocked, I brace to do / what I can, an unimportant exiled Jew" (81), Hacker acknowledges that her choice to live willingly as an "exile" is unlike Darwish being "exiled" by forced dislocation through losing entry to his home country. This is another example of her 'politics of location', as his literary articulations of diaspora and creative construction of memories, identity, and dreams of the home land from his exile in Paris, Lebanon, or Cairo motivates her as an American to examine her own travels and expatriation. In Braidottian terms, his is a "disembedded marginalized exile"; hers is an "active nomadism" (*NS* 55). "The figure of the nomad, as opposed to the exile", according to Braidotti, "allows us to think of international dispersion and dissemination of ideas . . . as forms of resistance, as ways of preserving ideas that may otherwise have been condemned to wilful obliteration or to collectively produced amnesia" (*NS* 59). The "central figuration for postmodern subjectivity'', according to Braidotti, "is not that of a disembedded marginalized exile, but rather that of an active nomadism" (*NS* 50). By braiding her own narratives with Arab and eastern writers, Hacker seeks to embody a transcultural feminist solidarity that not only speaks to our shared humanity, but also resists and counters hegemonic discourses of Arab men's and women's experiences and struggles in the diaspora, as she writes:

> In a basket hung from the wall, its handle
> festooned with cloth flowers from chocolate boxes,
> mottled purple shallots, and looped beside it,
> a braid of garlic. (281)

In a traditional eastern kitchen, with the basket from the wall filled with purple shallots entwined with coloured cloth flowers taken from used chocolate boxes, Hacker carefully places a familiar image: a braid of garlic. Darwish referred to braids in the sense of a longing that equates the homeland with one's love, as in the title of his collection "My Country, and that Braid",[91] which represents a form of bonding that Hacker is

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[91] Mahmoud Darwish. *My Country and that Braid*. https://jadh.wordpress.com/.

attempting to articulate. Although both braid of hair, as was discussed in Chapter Three, and braid of garlic signify an embodied interconnectivity, the braid of hair served to connect Hacker to aspects of her identity related to her past, while the braid of garlic in the context of a Mediterranean scene in a poem about an Arab poet communicates a nomadic feminism across geographical, cultural, and political boundaries, similar to the renga with Shehabi. Placing the poem at the end of both collections, *Names* and *A Stranger's Mirror*, parallels the eponymous phrase, "A Braid of Garlic", in the Adonic line of the Sapphic. The position of the phrase intensifies the emotion of the connection and acts as a closure to the Mediterranean scene that is coherently whole with the end-stop placed at the end of the quatrain. Although the structure of the Sapphic implies constraint, it serves to carefully measure and balance the poet's tremendous admiration. Embedding this quatrain in the middle of the poem, between her mourning of Darwish and her memories of her illness, signifies that the metaphor of the braid is at the structural core of the Sapphic to balance the examination of the experiences of both poets, past and present, and as such, holds or binds the poem together as a kind of backbone.

The braid of garlic shares with the braid of hair the artistic qualities of mixing in an aesthetically pleasing form. Rather than gathering garlic strands and tying them with an external piece, the braid is an organic structure that creates a multi-layered form from the different strands involved. In choosing the garlic braid in an elegy about Darwish, Hacker attempts to employ the braid's practical purpose of preserving the harvest for long-term storage, while the garlic in the braid serves to ward off evil spirits and protect their relationship. The garlic can only be braided after harvest, when it is mature, which is suggestive of Darwish's and Hacker's mature voices in the twenty-first century. The garlic braid is a result of a very detailed process of harvesting, sorting, and drying. This process is similar in the way Hacker braids her voice with his after she translates, engages with eastern poetic forms, and learns about Arabic culture, language, and history. The garlic braid is not a dual form, like the renga, and unlike the braid of hair, it multiplies as it begins with two or three voices, then adds voices as the braid progresses. Although the purpose of the garlic braid is to keep the garlic together, the diverse artistic space that the distinctive voices enjoy allows continued prominence in their respective fields. Hence, Hacker is plaiting braids with garlic and poetic form.

Using the braid of garlic, Hacker illustrates "an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others" in a "posthuman ethics for a nonunitary" subjectivity (*PH* 49). Braidotti proposes "becoming-earth" as a productive aspect "of the posthuman predicament and the extent to which it opens up perspectives for affirmative transformations of both the structures of subjectivity and the production of theory and knowledge" (66). The braided garlic suggests a post-anthropocentric connection to the earth that serves the purpose of harvest preservation similar to how Braidotti views the "becoming-earth dimension brings issues of environmental and social sustainability to the fore" (67). By removing the barriers of cultural and human individualism, female, male, and plants fit into these posthuman connections depicted by the braid of garlic.

The temporal significance of the braid creates an association that sends Hacker back into memories connected to illness and mortality in the next stanza. The first two lines provide a counterpoint of mortality as "birthday[s]" celebrate our existence as much as they signify our potential death. The sonic alliteration of "counterpoint", "candlelight", and "caressing" creates the "c" sound that implies the initial sound of "cancer". Like her birthday, the anniversary of her mastectomy constantly reminds her of the traumatic experience:

> So, reprise (what wasn't called a "recurrence")
> of a fifteen-years-ago rite of passage:
> I arrived, encumbered with excess baggage,
> scarred, on the threshold. (282)

Here Hacker is referring to the bodily crisis that she suffered in 1994 that she considers a "right of passage" that transformed her life, in a transition from a "witness" to a "survivor" who, as she explains in "Scars on Paper",

> . . . enact[s]
> survivor's rituals, blessing the crust
> I tear from the warm loaf, blessing the hours
> in which I didn't or in which I did
> consider my own death. (100)

The transition was also literary, as cancer changed her relationship to her body and her subjectivity, which was reflected in a transformative shift in her poetic oeuvre. She

compares this traumatic experience to a journey that she arrives from with "excess baggage", both emotional and physical as "scarred" suggests. In the next three stanzas, Hacker writes of her friends' illnesses. One goes to a mental institute to "get her nerve back", another was a successful war journalist, who with her "gnarled fingers, these days, can hardly hold the pen steady". Here Hacker recalls both the valiant women of the first stanza and the birthday celebration with "wine-glass" in the seventh stanza: "Now in our own leftover lives, we toast our / memories and continence". Her use of "leftover lives" suggests both old age and the fragility of the body after its experiences and illnesses. Returning to her mourning of Darwish, Hacker evokes the scene of his death:

> Thousands mourn him, while in the hush and hum of
> life-support for multiple organ failure,
> utter solitude, poise of scarlet wings that
> flutter, and vanish. (283)

The last stanza of the poem is in direct conversation with the first as it ends with the same powerful emotion that the poem began with. To contrast the effect of his death on people with the mundanity of his death scene, the first syllable of "Thousands" is stressed, while the rest of the line is unstressed. The "h" sound of "hush" and "hum" is to emulate the sound of the "life-support", which is a pun for his own life but also for his country that are in need of "life-support". Hacker evokes another of Darwish's famous images, the butterfly. In his book "The Effect of the Butterfly", Darwish explores the theory of the "Butterfly Effect" regarding the impact of a part on the many. To great effect, Hacker uses the image as an allusion to the influence of Darwish's "wings" on the lives of "thousands".

In its entirety, the poem is a braided elegy in the way it moves from the eulogised to the eulogiser herself, to her friends, and then back again to the eulogised. The essence of the poem is encapsulated in the tenth stanza: "Fragile and ephemeral as all beauty: / The human spirit —". These two lines speak of transience and how lives are interconnected, echoing the braid's utilitarian purpose for long-term preservation of the garlic. Like the garlic, humans have different experiences, but with the braid there is the chance of coming together to make the best of the world we have, which Braidotti considers as an affirmative posthuman position of many affiliations that extends across

differences, while also being fixed and accountable. The nomadic feminist subjectivity in Hacker's later poetry, embodied in the metaphor of the braid, works toward an affirmative model of posthuman nomadic thought that articulates an embedded form of accountability and attempts to create a strong form of interconnectivity that attests to her love of and for poetic and political dialogue.

CONCLUSION

Marilyn Hacker's engagement with the historical and political dimensions of contemporary women's poetry reveals a feminist subjectivity in nomadic mode. By examining the thematic and formal movements in her poetry, we see how Hacker moves from a model of feminist poetics ''influenced'' by Adrienne Rich to a Braidottian feminist, nomadic engagement with self, poetic form, place, history, and politics. Like Rich, Hacker begins her self-analysis from the spatial location of the body, but as she realises that a location is also a place in personal and collective history, Hacker seeks to develop Rich's notion of a 'politics of location' by using the braid to evoke interconnections and engage affirmatively with the multiplicity of her female subjectivity. Throughout the thesis, we have seen that although Hacker ''rejects'' Rich's radical feminism regarding formal verse, she continues to ''assimilate'' Rich's political poetics throughout her career.

Reading Hacker's metaphorical treatment of the scarred "body as map" (Hartman 162) through Braidotti's cartographic method, the female body in Hacker's breast cancer poetry emerges as a cultural and historical territory, thus shifting the relationship to the body from a map of love to a cartography of ethnic history. The mastectomy scar is transformed from a traumatic mark of illness to a traumatic mark of Jewish history, thus becoming part of a historical map that engages the female body into the history of "a Europe that I never knew" (94). The geographical representation makes it possible for Hacker to locate herself in history in the way the scar signifies "presence rather than absence" (Hartman 162). My reading of Hacker's breast cancer experience shows Hacker building relational foundations as she seeks to connect to other victims and tragedies. Examining the relationship of her body to her Jewish heritage, Hacker imagines the braid as a metaphor that allows her to transform a "superimposed" (94) heritage to a historically specific time (1942) and place (Paris, Vel' d'Hiv) by accessing what Braidotti calls "countermemory" through a female genealogy to her paternal grandmother. I argue that the braid radically rethinks relationships between feminist subjectivity, language, and historical and political borders in the way

that Braidotti calls for ''more conceptual creativity'' in considering alternative representations of feminist subjectivity (*NS* 17).

I have highlighted the importance of her French and Francophone translations in informing, as well as sitting alongside, this emerging feminism. The recurrence of memory, of embracing both its labyrinths and intimacies, links Hacker's later work to the autobiographical and historical narratives of her translations. As the braid embodies interconnectivity, Hacker's work moves from a struggle with the bleakness of ''numbers'' to an evocation of ''names'' in the way that she asserts, as she tells Hayden Carruth, that "I have tried to keep myself surrounded by friends".[92] This creative nomadic way of thinking becomes conducive to a transcultural orientation that engages with Middle Eastern narratives, poetics, and politics and confirms her insistence that poetry that responds to what Braidotti calls the posthuman predicament "remains necessary, intrinsic to more than one kind of understanding" (*UV* 198). Ultimately, her work reclaims, affirms, and reinforces a female formal tradition and uses it to call for personal and political redefinition.

Hacker's most recent poems respond to the urgent humanitarian and political crisis in Syria. This issue warrants more space than I can grant in this thesis, but I will look more closely at this tragedy here by way of Conclusion. These poems are part of the "New Poems" section in *A Stranger's Mirror* (2015), which in its many dedications invokes new friendships with writers in exile, particularly Syrian writers that Hacker has translated, such as Zakaria Tamer, Golan Haji, Noury Al-Jarrah, and Fadwa Soleiman. Longlisted for the 2015 National Book Award in poetry for *A Stranger's Mirror*, Hacker said about the inspiration for this collection:

> There are several poems directly or indirectly about Syrian exiles and refugees, and the situation in Syria, a popular revolt for political reform that turned into a civil war. At the time I wrote the poems, I knew several Syrian political refugees, but their situation was not a subject of general public discourse in Europe and the United States. Now, unfortunately—with half a country's population fleeing carnage and seeking refuge—it is. (Hacker, "National Book Foundation")

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[92] Hacker, letter to Hayden Carruth. 1 Oct. 1999. Box 73, Folder 32. HCP.

Hacker's book joins other publications, such as the French literary magazine *Siècle* 21 (Hacker is one of its editors), in shedding light on the massacres and violence in Syria at a time when international organizations stood silent. She seeks to bring the dire circumstances of the Syrian people to an English-reading public to raise awareness and counter the misconceptions and stereotypes of people in the Middle East, as her translations and earlier transcultural writing show. Therefore, Hacker is involved in these conflicts, as her words above demonstrate, through the "several Syrian political refugees" she has as friends. Syrian actress and poet-turned-activist Fadwa Soleiman was one of many of Hacker's close Syrian friends and her Arabic tutor in 2014. "Pantoum", which Hacker dedicated to Soleiman, shows Hacker engaged with the younger poet in a conversation about "freedom":

> Said the old woman who barely spoke the language:
> Freedom is a dream, and we don't know whose.
> Said the insurgent who was now an exile:
> When I began to write the story I started bleeding.
>
> Freedom is a dream, and we don't know whose—
> that man I last saw speaking in front of the clock tower
> when I began to write the story? I started bleeding
> five years after I knew I'd have no more children. (7)

The "pantoum originated in Malaysia in the fifteenth-century", and in its current form is made of quatrains, "in which the second and fourth lines of each stanza serve as the first and third lines of the next stanza. The last line of a pantoum is often the same as the first" (''Pantoum''). The chant achieved by the recurrence of the form creates an open-ended question about freedom suggested by the revision of the full stop ("whose.") into a dash ("whose—"). The echoes of loss create subtle shifts in meaning when the "insurgent" bleeds metaphorically as she writes "the story" of her country, while the "old woman" bleeds after her body begins to age. Although "[b]leeding" is a typically feminine image associated with menstruation, Hacker employs it to depict unremitting sadness and loss of descendants. As the poem develops, reverberations of loss swell into collective narratives of displacement:

> Her nephew, his best friend, his younger sister,
> a doctor, an actress, an engineer,
> are looking for work now in other countries

> stumbling, disillusioned, in a new language.
>
> A doctor, an actress, an engineer
> wrestle, with the rudiments of grammar
> disillusioned, stumbling in a new language,
> hating their luck, and knowing they are lucky. (7-8)

Here the poet depicts the refugee's conflict within a diasporic language and culture: "hating their luck, and knowing they are lucky". The present continuous "-ing" form ("looking", "stumbling", "hating", and "knowing") parallels the repetitive cycle of a new language and a new life. These exiles are not metaphors: they are real people, just as their professions are real, and so are their familial relationships. The repetition of "luck" emphasizes the sense of helplessness articulated in the poem, which likewise runs through these characters' lives:

> Wrestling with the rudiments of grammar,
> the old woman, who barely speaks the language,
> hated her luck. I know that I am lucky
> said the insurgent who is now an exile. (8)

The poem ends with the same characters it began with, but the roles have changed: the "old woman", no longer free, is now "unlucky", while the "insurgent" is now "lucky" in her exile. Like "freedom", "luck" here is a relative concept, and Hacker seeks to examine how it plays differently in different experiences of exile, suggesting that individual stories of exile are each unique.

As I have noted, Hacker engages and converses with the traditions of eastern poetry and with Arab narratives. In keeping with the theme of the Syrian uprising, Hacker writes "Syria Renga", which develops the conflict of the Gaza occupation in *Diaspo/Renga* (2014), to become one long poem of endless Arab tragedies. The sense of togetherness in exile that was articulated in *Diaspo/Renga* becomes a solitary voice of Syrian experience through the "amateur refugees" and "inadvertent exiles":

> Driving a flatbed
> truck of sheep alongside the
> Qalamoun hills, he
>
> glances at the mountains and
> thinks of his brothers who are

> still in Kirkuk. Once
> borders were porous, work meant
> crossings, for those who
>
> are amateur refugees
> now, inadvertent exiles. (16)

Using the renga form to engage in transcultural poetic dialogues is not a new practice. In 1969, a multi-cultural collection of poets consisting of Mexican poet Octavio Paz, British poet Charles Tomlinson, French poet Jacques Roubaud, and Italian poet Edoardo Sanguineti spent one week of collective writing in a Parisian hotel to produce *Renga: A Chain of Poems*, the first quadri-lingual European renga (Clark, "Renga" 32). Paz sought not to "appropriate" the form, but to "translate" it into what he believed to be the "Western equivalent of the renga: the sonnet" (*Renga* 25). Timothy Clark explains that "the European renga translates the Japanese form into a series of quasi-sonnets" and was chosen by the four poets because "it is a pan-European form, still alive in the four literary cultures involved in *Renga"* and "in most of its varieties", the sonnet "articulates or divides itself in ways that recall the Japanese renga, principally in the relation of octave and sestet" ("Babel, Babble" 78).

Although "Syria Renga" is not collaborative, the renga form allows Hacker to create a novel-like sequence, or an extended narrative, where the incantation of tragedies is interminable. In seven pages, Hacker provides a timely historical account of a tragedy with real people and real places. The male sheep seller contemplating the Qalamoun hills in Western Syria refers to how the Syrian-Lebanese borders were once "porous", allowing people free movement to establish trade, lives, and families across the borders. The war has affected the mobility of an entire region that used to be considered one cultural area as Bilad Al-Sham from the Abbasid Caliphate in the 9th century until before the war. The "brothers who are / still in Kirkuk" shows how Syria's relationship with Iraq has also been affected. Thus, the crossing of borders that characterized *Diaspo/Renga* is challenged by the physical borders that wars place on countries and their people:

> Her father will die
> without seeing her again
> He's ninety-four now.

> Safe in exile, they watch the
> insurrection in café's.
>
> She asks her husband
> "But who'll take power after
> your revolution?"
>
> —thinks of the old man she loves,
> the hills near Latakia. (17-18)

The separation and loss of contact between family members depicts the posthuman predicament that Braidotti highlights as one of the main consequences of wars and the displacement of millions of people who become, as Hacker writes, "inadvertent exiles". Hacker uses the renga above like a picture frame that brings together the aging father in "Latakia" and the daughter "safe in exile", by this challenging the contrast ("die-safe") and connecting their lives ("seeing-thinks"). It is telling how Hacker shows that the ties that are severed by war are restored by technology. The act of "watch[ing]", not in its physical but in its virtual form, acts as a counterpoint to this distance that is crossed using the "Internet", "Apple screen", "YouTube", and "tweets". Yet this connection is not always restored, as there are other narratives of silence and departure:

> The telephone rings
> in Reem's apartment. And rings.
> Nobody answers.
>
> She's gone to the market, or she's
> working in the library.
>
> Rings late at night, rings
> early in the morning. Still
> nobody answers.
>
> She's gone to her family
> in the country? She has none. (19-20)

The renga communicates an absence, expressed in the onomatopoeic repetition of unanswered "rings", and embodied in the multiple places – "apartment", "market", and library" – that "Reem" should be in, but is not. The implication of being kidnapped or murdered is built up in the renga, with the alliteration of "n" in "nobody", "nobody", and finally "none". Some stories are more well-known and have dominated social media,

such as those in "Luzumiät: Necessities of what was Unnecessary", which Hacker dedicates to her Syrian and Palestinian friends in exile, Golan Haji and Fady Joudah:

> The Politicians lie, and having lied
> Make grand pronouncements about genocide,
> Red lines, civilization and the rest
> Elsewhere from anywhere anyone died.
>
> Midsummer's lingering azure was misspent.
> The morning light is late and different.
> A man in Ghouta on a shopping street
> Held his son's hand. Now tell me where they went.
>
> The left knows: intervention by the West
> Would be imperial self-interest.
> The teacher came out of the bakery
> And took a sniper's bullet in her chest.
>
> The children whine and sulk or break things but
> The little village school is bolted shut.
> One teacher joined a katiba from Homs
> A week after the other one was shot. (55)

Hacker's choice of title signifies both prosody and politics at the same time. *Luzumiät* is a well-known phrase in Arabic literature, meaning "the unnecessary complexities of structured form, which are nevertheless necessary". In the context of a political poem, Hacker adds a political dimension to the phrase to mean, "the unnecessary suffering of war although it is an expected result of it". Hacker's use of Arabian poetry denotes that this struggle pertains to Arabs, and engages the progenitor of this prosodic philosophy, Abul ʿAla Al-Maʿarri, and his English translations by Amin Rihani in 1903, as Hacker notes in the poem's dedication: "*for Golan Haji and Fady Joudah, because of al-Ma'arri and Amin Rihani*".

The poem follows the rubáiyát, which is a Persian poetic form originating from Al-Maʿarri's quatrains and written in the twelfth-century by Persian poet Omar AlKhayyam, who wrote over 200 stanzas using this form (Morris). Edward FitzGerald's English translation and adaptation, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, is noted for introducing the rubáiyát to the English-speaking world in 1859 (Morris). Rubáiyát is the plural form of rubáiyá, which means four-sided (or made of four parts) in Arabic; hence, the stanzas are written in quatrains with the first and second line rhyming with the

fourth. Originally, the rubáiyát explore themes of existentialism, fate and destiny and is useful to Hacker in engaging in political dialogues about justice in the present while also keeping with the philosophy of the "Luzumiät" to bring forth the truth. Through eighteen quatrains, Hacker depicts a series of scenes from war.

Lies are considered a long-time part of politics, and in the first quatrain, Hacker addresses how "politicians" fabricate information to justify "genocides", crossing "red lines", and injustices to "Elsewhere", which is "anywhere and anyone" that the U.S. is not. The end-rhymes express this logical movement: they "lied", leading to "genocide" and people "died". Hacker uses these rhymes to create mini-narratives of tragedy in the next three quatrains. In the second quatrain, a father and son's lives are "misspent" on a day that seems "different", when nobody knows where they "went". The "West" is driven by "imperial self-interest", when a teacher is shot by a "sniper's bullet in her chest". The children are restless "but" their school is "bolted shut" after a teacher was "shot". Not all aggressions, however, can be traced to the West; danger is also lurking in the community:

> Ghosts in the alleyways, under the eaves,
> With knives and hit lists hidden in their sleeves
> Who were the grocer, neighbour, carpenter,
> At least that is what everyone believes. (56)

The deterioration of humans and the destruction of landscape are other "unnecessary" consequences of war. Familiar people in the neighbourhood, such as the teacher, grocer, neighbour, and carpenter, are transformed into criminals or spies, forced by their dire circumstances, while the land becomes an infinite image of exile:

> Tents stretched to the horizon. Nothing green.
> No bread, no books, no fruit, no gasoline.
> The boy best in his class at sports and math
> Has diarrhea in a trench latrine. (59)

Hacker's description of a place with "nothing green", "no bread", "no books", "no fruit", and "no gasoline" is similar to the many refugee camps in the Middle East, such as the Yarmouk camp in Damascus. The irony is that these people in their displacement are even further displaced under month-long sieges, resulting in starvation and loss of lives. In her depiction of the boy who excels at "sports and math" but is sick of "diarrhea",

Hacker is painting a dismal image of the loss of home alongside the loss of the promise of future generations. The past is no longer embodied in a land but in the "language that was once" spoken by a "balding man" as he becomes a storyteller, "remember[ing] his grandmother's formula, / And begins the tale: *Kan ya ma kan . . .*" (once upon a time).

Marilyn Hacker's later work constitutes a tangible, comprehensive body in American poetry in general, and feminist poetry in particular. It is important to place Hacker within a poetic tradition so as to explore how she carries on a tradition of feminism from her early days as a leftist-activist during second-wave feminism, to her current position as commentator engaged with twentieth and twenty-first century national and international politics and culture as a meaningful form of political protest. Hacker's insistence on "reclaim[ing] the language" echoes Adrienne Rich's assertion that women writers must take part in the act of "revision . . . of entering an old text from a new critical direction . . . [as] an act of survival" ("When We Dead" 18). Scholars have examined Hacker's early feminist poetics in relation to Rich's. Until now, no critical approach has drawn lines of connection between their political work or consulted Hacker's personal correspondence to develop previous studies of the Hacker-Rich relationship. Read alongside the poets' work, these letters suggest an unwavering admiration for Rich's feminist poetics, from which Hacker chooses to depart due to a nomadic consciousness that resists adhering to conventional modes of thought.

As it moves across borders, Hacker's later work fascinates in its multiple engagements with embodiment, memory, history, and politics. What is most striking, though, is her love of poetic form as she speaks to us through another poet's voice in "Fadwa: The Education of the Poet" in *A Stranger's Mirror*:

> "We are dust and ash, and beauty is brief as a flower.
> But a stanza's a room; a single line is the house
> you—*you*—can build, throw open the doors to your vision." (32)

An Interview on Translation with Marilyn Hacker

11 May, 2014. Marilyn Hacker kindly agreed to meet me for an interview at the house of her friend, Mimi Khalvati, in London. This interview took place the day after Hacker's interview at the London Buddhist Centre.

AB: Yesterday at the London Buddhist Centre, you mentioned something really interesting. You said that writing poetry helps you to make better sense of the world and your experiences, right? So, is it okay if we start by talking about your translations? In terms of your translations, do you enjoy translating?

MH: I wouldn't do it if I didn't enjoy it. I wouldn't do it if I didn't, and usually it's because I would've been reading something that really speaks to me and interests me. Translating is, of course, discovering other poets in the world, but at the same time it's kind of a chemical process of taking one language and making or attempting to make it into a poem that stands on its own in the receptor language. It gives the translator the opportunity to have many different voices.

AB: Could you extend that feeling beyond joy, almost to a sense of duty that you feel?

MH: It's not an obligation that one fulfils unwillingly but rather like bringing a bunch of flowers to the house of a good friend. It's an obligation that you perform with joy and with enthusiasm.

AB: I'm asking about your feelings because I remember your preface to Claire Malroux's *Edge.* You mentioned these feelings at the time when *Edge* was published in 1996.

MH: Yes, that was the very first one, the very first translation.

AB: At a time when French women's poetry wasn't in the mainstream of French poetry, is that correct?

MH: That's still the case, actually.

AB: Still the case?

MH: Yeah, yeah.

AB: Do you feel that your translations have participated in bringing women's poetry closer to mainstream French poetry?

MH: I think that they [the translations] have participated more in bringing it [women's poetry] to the attention of Anglophone readers. I have translated both men's and women's work, and with all of it I think it's much more that now Anglophone readers are mostly reading what U.S. presses produce. But Anglophone readers are aware of Claire Malroux and Vénus Khoury-Ghata. In fact, Rashida did some readings in the U.S., which, actually, I've got to email her. She must be flat-out exhausted. But that's a lot farther away from England and from Tangier. Whether it makes any difference in France or not, I don't know. But at least it makes a difference to Anglophone readers.

AB: Could you please explain your approach to the translation process? How do you select a piece for translation? What's the process you go through when you're translating and rewriting multiple drafts?

MH: There's no real set process. With something like Rashida's book, it's a sequence. So it's not just like I think I'll translate a few poems by Hedi Kaddour, where they're very almost sonnet-like poems, and they're not sequences. With Rashida's book, if I was going to do it, I was going to do it all. So, once I started doing it, I just went through it. Not necessarily in order, but the product was going to be the whole sequence. In fact, I think I mostly did translate the poems in order in Rashida's book simply because they build on each other. So, if you just pick one thing [to translate], you might not realise that a certain image, theme, or character in fact comes up four poems earlier or somewhere that you haven't translated yet. So, I read it, and I get into it.

AB: Have you perhaps heard this phrase before: "history is the version of the victors, and literature is the version of the conquered".

MH: I have heard history is the version of the victors, but not the second part of the phrase. However, that could definitely be about Mahmoud Darwish. Of course, it's not always the case that the version of the conquered is expressed more often [in literature]. In fact, I think that the unique thing about Darwish is that he does give the

version of the conquered. Certainly, he's hardly the only Palestinian poet or even the only Palestinian from his generation that does this, but I think he both chronicles and goes beyond it [chronicling], goes into the nuances that you might not realize, and in a way that nobody else does from his generation or from earlier that I know of. Also, he's a great poet. In whatever language, Mahmoud Darwish could sell out a theatre in Paris for a poetry reading, and there is no living French poet who could do that. Paris is a large Arab city, and I have attended several of his readings. There was another one at the UNESCO auditorium, which is huge, and there were 2,000 people there. He had Marcel Khalife and oud players.

AB: Regarding your translations of French, did they pose any problems for you as a translator? For example, English does not have masculine and feminine forms to the extent that French does. What cultural or linguistic aspects are lost in English translation?

MH: I suppose you try to give back for anything that is lost. You try to think what your language has that is equivalent or different. In general, in language, when it's not referring to living creatures, gender isn't really gender. It's a linguistic thing that has to do with word formation. There might be some significance in the fact that *sun* is feminine, and *moon* is masculine, whereas in French it's vice versa. It's often a linguistic accident, or it has something to do with the root of the word. So, in translating, you sort of think that in most cases, it doesn't make much of a difference. Sometimes when there's something that is personified, like, for example, the sun or the moon, you might say, you might give it a gender. Unfortunately, I suppose for Anglophones, we're used to thinking of the moon as feminine as it is in French and the sun as masculine as it is in French too. It would be interesting translating a poem from Arabic in which the sun and the moon were personified because there would have to be the moon as 'he', the sun as 'she'. There are some things that are easier in English than French because the pronoun in French, as in Arabic, agrees with the thing it is being defined as. So, for example, in English you could say, "he put his hand on her knee", and you know who is doing what to whom. But in French, the pronoun would be 'son genou' because it's masculine, so "il a mis la main sur son genou" could also mean that he put his hand on his own knee. So, you would have to specify "son genou a elle", while in English you don't have to, because you know who did what and with which and with whom.

AB: I'm not French–English bilingual, so I sat with a French graduate student who has been helping me go through your translations. He told me is that he usually finds translations a nightmare, but when he went through poem after poem of your translations, he kept saying 'precise'. I'm interested in the transference of gender through translation. In the collection *Edge*, as you read through it, the feminine 'el' comes up more than once. But in your translations, it's not feminine, it's neutral. Is that correct?

MH: For me, as long as you say the water is sobbing, the water is already personified. For me, there is something a little bit precious about giving it a gender.

AB: My question is, is the French gendered, but the English isn't?

MH: It is true that I made that decision, to go along with English rather than pushing the personification, and I agree that it is more personified in French, because of the gender pronouns. However, at the same time, there would be no other way to write about water in the most banal way. It is pushing it to a degree of preciosity, whereas in French, there is no other way of saying it. So, I just opted for what seemed natural in English. Someone else perhaps might have chosen to gender the personifications, but I did not want to push English to be something that it isn't.

AB: I understand, okay. There's an interesting trend in feminist translation that I've come across in Canadian feminist work. It's how they use methods to bring out the feminine voice in their translations. For instance, there's Luise von Flotow and some other feminist translators.

MH: Gosh, there was a book I had for ages. It was a French–Canadian book about translation.

AB: Right, and they use methods and strategies. It can amount to a big degree of interference, but it's to bring out the feminine voice that they [the translators] believe won't be explicit in just a direct translation. What I find in your translations is that they are quite faithful to the original. That's what I and the French graduate student felt

when we were going through the poems together. He said, "She really sticks to it". So, what's your theory of translation of doing it this way?

MH: I don't feel like I have to illustrate any theory about the writer being female, post-colonial, or immigrant. That's their writing, and it will come through. If there is some sense of metric in the original text, then I'll keep to that. I think I would be more likely to play a bit with that [metric]. I know because some of the Hedi Kaddour poems are so sonnet-like that I permitted myself to introduce a little rhyme when he didn't have it, and he didn't mind. It doesn't distort the poem at all, and it seemed so easy to tie it up.

AB: What I found about your translations is that the poems stand on their own as an English poem. I was at a poetry reading by Sujata Bhatt, and she was reading English translations of her husband's – Michael, I think – German poems, and what I immediately found interesting is that I could connect those translations to yours. When translations are done well, they don't sound like translations. Reading your translations, they're like English poems on their own. How do you do that? It doesn't sound like a copy or imitation, just like an English poem.

MH: I'm very glad it works that way. I mean, one of the interesting things about translation for me is putting your hands into the clay of language and leaving your ego somewhere else, but nonetheless making something out of that clay.

AB: So, do you feel it's like an impersonal process?

MH: It's not impersonal. It's rather like inhabiting another person.

AB: I remember reading Spivak saying, "In post-colonial translation, the translator should surrender herself to the text". Is that more or less what you're saying when you say ''it's like inhabiting another person''?

MH: Perhaps inhabiting sounds too colonial, but there is something of a fine line between staying true to the poem and to the voice of the poet and keeping enough of one's own entity as a translator-poet, so that it's a poem that works in English. I don't mean changing the meaning or changing the tense, but somehow there being that kind

of interplay of one's skills as a writer and poet, and to take material apart and recreate it as something that also exists independently in the recipient language.

AB: Regarding your translation of Francophone poets, do you feel they write as immigrant writers or as expats?

MH: That depends on who, of course. Rashida is neither. She's Moroccan from Morocco, but she writes in French.

AB: What about Vénus Khoury-Ghata?

MH: She manages to be both at once. I mean, she is 300% Lebanese, but at the same time, she's a very intrinsic part of all the prize juries and rights for journals and knows everybody. Of course, that's a Lebanese thing. She herself says that the Arabic language is certainly behind her French, and, I mean, she grew up writing in both languages, and sometimes the structure of the sentence *and, and, and…* or just the amount of metaphor build up, and the building of metaphor takes place within something that nonetheless has a narrative structure. I think that has something to do with thinking in Arabic and French at the same time.

AB: Now that you're talking about Rashida and about her Arabic informing her French, Hue [the French graduate] and I came across the image of the "bread" in "The First Tale - I" of Rashida's poem *Tales of a Severed Head* (2012). I would like to ask you about that.

MH: Oh, the young man who's leaving for a piece of white bread.

AB: Exactly, yes. He [Hue] felt that this image is informed by something. At that point I suggested that, to me, it comes across as Arabic. But he said that the French "comes across as metropolitan French". So, could this be an example of what you are saying about the Arabic informing or being behind the French, as an example?

MH: It's true, but it's in a different way from Vénus. There's so much political reality behind Rashida's highly metaphorical poetry. The context of 'la sa ne du pon', or repression, is in Morocco. People are being hauled away to jail for publishing articles. So many of her friends and colleagues are slightly older, like Abdellatif Laabi, who spent eight years in prison. As well as the economic realities, I mean, the young man leaving

for a piece of white bread, he has to get a job somewhere else. So, I think what Rashida succeeds in doing here is making a highly figurative narrative through which one could nonetheless perceive the political realities that are behind it. She's not writing about it literally, but all the same, it's informed by that experience all the way through.

AB: What do you make of writers like Rashida whose native language is Arabic but choose to write in French?

MH: With Vénus, it's completely understandable because she lives in France, but Rashida lives in Morocco. I was just thinking of what you said about your grandmother. This isn't about being illiterate. She [Rashida] said that all her education had in fact been in French, so her Arabic culture and a part of her background is Berber. So, she felt herself literate in French and not literate in Arabic. Although people, of course, exaggerate. You know, she was saying that, and then we were being interviewed by some young man from some online Lebanese newspaper, and she just went on in perfectly fine classical Arabic. However, I know she has lived her professional life in French, and she taught French in Alsace.

AB: Doesn't French give her a wider audience?

MH: Now it does. Very few editions of books were published in the 1980s. Then she had a French edition a decade or so later, and now a bilingual edition. If you're Lebanese, you can write in Arabic for a wider audience for all publishing houses in Beirut, and your book will be published, and people can read it in Cairo, Riyadh, etcetera. However, there are people like Kateb Yacine who write these terrific novels in Arabic. He's Algerian, and they [his books] get translated into French. So, I don't know the audience for poetry. I would have to live there to really know.

AB: Alright. So I'm also interested if you've heard of Assia Djebar?

MH: Oh, sure, yes.

AB: Is Djebar's situation similar to Rashida's and Vénus's? In having that wider audience because of French?

MH: Yes, and she [Djebar] also came to live in France when she was in her early 20s. In that sense, she writes in French more than Vénus, and I don't think Djebar ever wrote in Arabic. All her books were written in French, and she was a film producer, but in French also, and perhaps she wrote in French to tell the French that she was not French.

AB: I read that Spivak advocates a literalist approach in the translation of post-colonial texts, so we [Hue and I] also talked about that, and about you sticking to the original text.

MH: I would like to ask Spivak what she actually meant by that. My approach is not literalist in the sense of writing something that is much prosier than the original for fear of losing some nuance because I don't understand the nuance. I work very close to the meaning of the original text. I have been lucky in translating mostly living writers whom I know, so I could always say, "What is that?" or "Is there something behind this that I don't know about or should know about?".

AB: So, do you work closely with the original writers?

MH: Not in terms of co-translating but in terms of showing them [the finished translation] and also literally, if there's something that's a cultural reference that somehow I don't know about.

AB: In your preface to *Edge* you talked about working closely with Malroux regarding the translation. So, do you sometimes show the authors parts of the unfinished translation?

MH: Well, with Claire, of course, that's very different, because she is herself a translator from English into French. I didn't really have that same kind of relationship with Vénus and Rashida simply because English is not their language. Whereas with Claire, I've translated three books of hers, and she has translated work of mine as well as people like Derek Walcott and Emily Dickinson. So, there is that constant back and forth about translation. She would ask me about this poem of Emily Dickinson, so back and forth and back and forth. But that's not a dialogue you can have unless both people are bilingual in the same two languages.

AB: Because a lot of the poets you translate are bilingual.

MH: Well, it seems like it. Emmanuel Moses certainly speaks English and German. Hedi Kaddour, Arabic and German. Vénus and Rashida both speak Arabic, and also Marie Etienne.

AB: I've read that your friendship with Richard Howard goes back to when he read your first poems. I've also read that he's a translator himself. I came across something where he had said that the relationship between the translator and the writer is an intimate relationship. Do you feel that your relationship is closer with the writer or the text itself?

MH: They're two completely different relationships. I mean, in some cases the writers I've translated are people who happen to be good friends of mine. But the relationship to the text has nothing to do with the friendship other than the fact that I can call them and say, "I've done this" or "What about this word?". But it really is about being alone with the text, and that would be primary. It wouldn't be that different to translate something by someone I know well versus translating something by someone whom I've never met but whose work I have read.

AB: I think Richard Howard meant that he tends to know more about the writer than the writer himself. I found that interesting, because if I were to translate a text, I would feel closer to the text, as you mentioned. It [the text] would be primary and then would come my relationship with the writer. That would be secondary.

MH: And different.

AB: Do you feel that your own writing has been shaped by these writers? Have you been influenced by form or themes?

MH: It's hard to tell. But I do think there's an interesting spillover, whether formally or not, there's a preoccupation with ideas that have come to my attention because of me being so deeply involved in somebody else's work. It's the most intimate form of reading.

AB: That's interesting as I came across that same exact phrase too, by Gayatri Spivak. She wrote that translation is the most intimate form of reading. In what sense?

MH: How much more intimate can you get with something that you're reading, actually taking every word, phrase, and sentence and transforming it? You're literally handling it with your mind.

AB: In Annie Finch's book *A Formal Feeling Comes* (1997), your essay in the collection states that using structured form has always been one of the pleasures of writing poetry. Do you feel that your translation practice stems from your formalist tendencies?

MH: No, but I suppose that translation is connected to form, in the sense that [translation] is another structured form. Even if what you're translating is in open form or a prose poem, translation is in itself a kind of structured form.

AB: So, in those terms, we can connect translation and formalism.

MH: Yeah, I suppose in that way I could connect them together.

AB: Now to the question that I've been asked more than once about your writing. Do you think that your formalism conflicts with your political activism?

MH: Absolutely not. Whether you're talking about poetry, fiction, paintings, or even music, any association with a kind of politics is really deceptive. A lot of the great modernists were fascists, but that doesn't mean that I think that fascism led to modernism or vice versa. I don't think Darwish began writing in formal verse, and he doesn't always use rhyme, which is part of the beauty of his poems. Well, for one thing, there's just as much history of structured forms in English being associated with revolutionary politics or social change, innovation, etcetera, as there has anything else. One of the interesting things about the sonnet, for example, is that it's a form that came into existence in Italian, which is to say in the vulgate language, not in Latin. It's not a form that came from romance languages, and those include English, which is from Latin. You didn't have to be able to read Latin in order to read or write. There is something populist and inclusive about not having to be able to read Latin or Greek to read poetry, so a lot more women were included just incidentally, and people who were not of the

learning classes. I think it's a fallacious association, and I think one can examine political and social ideas in any possible kind of structure, and sometimes the structure helps thinking.

AB: Thank you so much for this interview.

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