

Article

Appraising Newness:

Whiteness, Neoliberalism, and the Building of the Archive for
New Poetry¹

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ABSTRACT

The Archive for New Poetry (ANP) at the University of California San Diego was founded with the specific intention of collecting alternative, small press publications and acquiring the manuscripts of contemporary new poets. The ANP's stated collection development priority was to acquire alternative, non-mainstream, emerging, "experimental" poets as they were writing and alive, and to provide a space in which their papers could live, along with recordings of their poetry readings. In this article, I argue that through racialized understandings of innovation and new, whiteness positions the ANP's collection

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development priority. I interrogate two main points in this article: 1) How does whiteness—though visible and open—remain unquestioned as an archival practice? and 2) How are white archives financed and managed? Utilizing the ANP’s financial proposals, internal administrative correspondences, and its manuscript appraisals and collections, I argue that the ANP’s collection development priority is racialized, and this prioritization is institutionally processed by literary scholarship that linked innovation to whiteness. Until very recently, US Experimental and “avant-garde” poetry has been indexed to whiteness. The indexing of whiteness to experimentation, or the “new” can be witnessed in the ANP’s collection development priorities, appraisals, and acquisitions. I argue that the structure of the manuscripts acquired by the ANP reflect literary scholarship that theorized new poetry as being written solely by white poets and conclude by examining the absences in the Archive for New Poetry.

...for archivists and other recordmakers, “the political” is unavoidable.

- Verne Harris²

Whiteness: business as usual.

- Sara Ahmed, *feministkilljoy*³

INTRODUCTION

This article stems from several roots. The first was my dissertation research into archival documents, from wanting to do extended archival research into the finances of artistic movements, and from making a travel budget to begin this examination. While considering where I *wanted* to go versus where I *could* financially manage to visit, I began to see how certain poetry movement papers existed in concentrations, while others were dispersed. I came to the financial and theoretical understanding that while some archives held the papers of *movements*, the papers of other movements were scattered across the United States, or remained uncollected. While my graduate institution, the University of California San Diego (UCSD), holds a comprehensive selection of papers belonging to the founding Language Poets—housed under the umbrella of “Archive for New Poetry” (ANP)—the same archive seemed to have no accessible⁴ papers for Black, Asian American, Latin American, and Native poetic movements.⁵ In my larger project I argue that “new

² Verne Harris. *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007).

³ Sara Ahmed, Twitter post, December 14, 2015, 11:06 p.m., <http://www.twitter.com/feministkilljoy>.

⁴ I have been informed that Tony Seymour’s papers have been acquired by the ANP in 2012 and are being processed. Seymour will be the sole non-white poet linked to the ANP’s collection priorities.

⁵ There are collections and libraries devoted to collecting Black, Asian American, Latin American and Native poetic movements. The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a part of the New York Public Libraries collects the works and manuscripts belonging to cultural producers documenting and researching the African American, African Diaspora, and African experiences. Centers such as the Museum of Chinese in America, the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, and the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University have also worked to collect the papers and documents of immigrant and indigenous cultural producers. The work of libraries, centers and museums committed to this approach are indispensable and essential. However, the labor that centers, archives, and museums such as these do not eradicate the responsibility for public archives across the United States to develop and manage desegregated collections.

poetry”⁶ breeds an internal and explicit logic of whiteness⁷ wherein whiteness becomes indexed to innovation. If, in making this argument, I had aimed to do a comparative study of the politics, aesthetics, and economies of the Black Arts Movement⁸ to the Language Poets, this task would have its own financial and political barriers, beginning with archival housing, placement, and location.

The second root was my attendance at the “Paul Blackburn” anniversary reception held at UCSD on May 7th, 2015. The anniversary reception was to celebrate the origins of the “Archive for New Poetry,” which fiscally began with the acquisition of Paul Blackburn’s archive for \$35,000 over the course of the 1970s, consisting of recordings of poetry readings and manuscripts. Paul Blackburn was a white male poet associated with the US avant-garde and experimental movements, known for organizing and recording poetry readings. During the reception, the audience heard a sample of Blackburn’s recordings, with a short commentary by the poet Jerome Rothenberg. When Rothenberg stood up to offer his commentary of the archive, he described Blackburn’s efforts: how he traveled everywhere with a recording device, the invaluable originality of his collection and subsequent acquisition. He proceeded to describe Blackburn who, apparently into his forties, appeared to have a “baby face” with wisps of a beard. This led all of Blackburn’s friends (including the speaker, Rothenberg) to call him the “oriental fu manchu.” Pronounced with no hesitation, no laughter, no pause.

Rothenberg’s usage of a racialized slur, which shook me and a few others in the audience but for the most part left no impression and garnered no later remarks, stood audaciously as an entry point from which I could critically engage with the archive. Rothenberg, consciously or unconsciously, describes a member whom he believes to be an heir of “new” poetry as abjectly racialized. He did not appear to be an adult, and in his

⁶ “New Poetry” is defined by the ANP as English language US poetry post 1945. See Proposal by Kathleen M. Woodward for Roy Harvey Pearce, Feb 1, 1974, box 2, folder 10, Coll. mss 0143, Roy Harvey Pearce Papers, Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego.

⁷ This is a point being taken up by contemporary figures in poetry studies. In particular by Dorothy Wang, *Thinking its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

⁸ The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture holds the papers of members of the Black Arts Movement, including Bill Gunn, Julian Mayfield, Michele Wallace and others. However, additional archival research on the founding Black Arts Movement poets would be require extensive travel. Amiri Baraka’s papers from 1945-2014 are housed at Columbia University, and the University of California Los Angeles holds select correspondences from 1958-1966. Nikki Giovanni’s manuscripts from 1943 are currently at Boston University, while Gwendolyn Brooks’s papers are situated at the University of California Berkeley and the University of Illinois Champaign. Etheridge Knight’s papers are held at the University of Toledo, Butler University, and Indiana Historical Society. Sonia Sanchez’s published writings and photographs are held at Boston University, though as of May 2016 I could not find information regarding her manuscripts.

unadult, baby ways he appeared closer to *them*. The fact that “oriental” and racialized “others”—their recordings, papers, and memorabilia—are not part of ANP’s collection or development priorities did not figure in his comments or the description of ANP. This effacement and racial fungibility comes with scholarly explanations of “ethnicization,” a point I will return to later.

The third root of this article was the afterword written by Frank Chin in John Okada’s *No-No Boy*. *No-No Boy* was published at the end of World War II and became foundational to the organizing of Asian American literature and studies. Chin writes about visiting with Okada’s widow Dorothy and learning that John had written a sequel to the novel. Chin cites a passage John wrote in 1957: “When completed, I hope that it will to some degree faithfully describe the experiences of the immigrant Japanese in the United States. This is a story which has never been told in fiction and only in fiction can the hopes and fears and joys and sorrows of people be adequately recorded.”⁹ Chin describes how Dorothy informs the interviewers that John had almost finished a first draft of the sequel before passing away. The afterword also shares how Dorothy, after John’s passing, met with the University of California, Los Angeles Japanese American Research Project to see if they might keep his manuscripts, papers, and drafts. UCLA “refused to so much as look at the Okada papers.”¹⁰ Dorothy states that, “I could not afford to keep the house and put the children through college... Nobody had any use for them. Nobody wanted them.”¹¹ In fact, the research project encouraged her to “destroy the papers,”¹² and so as a widow preparing to move from a home to a smaller apartment, she burned John’s papers, including the draft of the sequel, away.

Though individual moments and encounters have led me to examine the financial and racialized structures of the archive, I would like to state that this article is not about individual actions. My critique of the Archive for New Poetry is not about one individual’s biases or failings, or even a grouping of individuals¹³ but of institutions.¹⁴ This article is an

⁹ Dorothy Okada speaking about John Okada’s papers in the afterword. John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1976), 257.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Archive building—particularly in the case of ANP—was a collaboration between university faculty and archivists. A defense of previous and current acquisition practices might be that there were/are no faculty at the university interested in setting up a “Black Arts archive” or a Chicana experimental poets archive. This defense however, would not be a defense of current/previous archiving practices but a statement as to how institutionalized racism (faculty hiring, course listings) are expressed in the archives, and how the archives are not immune to the formations of institutionalized racism.

¹⁴ In a letter on May 30th, 1975 from Michael Davidson to Roy Harvey Pearce, Davidson informs him of the various publications that have received a resume of ANP, which are “APR, *Boundary 2*, *Journal of Modern Literature*, *20th Century Lit.*, PMLA, *Antaeus*, *Paris Review*, *Poetry*

examination of the institutional and financial efforts to keep whiteness the norm. I am arguing that whiteness structured ANP's collection development priorities, and this prioritization was institutionally justified through literary scholarship that links innovation to whiteness. I wish to show in my research of the planning and budgetary papers, how the building of the archive was not the decision of one person but a concerted effort of institutional and financial investment, and that this investment secured the "racial 'unconsciousness,'"¹⁵ of the collection development priorities.

The two major frameworks this article will address are: 1) How does whiteness—though visible and open—remain unquestioned as an archival practice? and 2) How are white archives financed and managed? Terry Cook poses that it is necessary to investigate "Why records were created rather than what they contain ... what formal functions and mandates of the creator they supported."¹⁶ In taking up the question of why were these records created, I work to address how, through the trends of historiography and scholarship, and without ethical appraisal processes, whiteness underlined collection development priorities at the Archive for New Poetry at the University of California, San Diego. Without critical race theories and the praxis of structural racism, it is unclear how various institutional actors might explain the large absence of nonwhite poets in the finding aid—and the absence of nonwhite poets in the collection strategy.

There are manuscripts desired by the institution, sought after, and handsomely compensated. There are manuscripts that, even when donated, cannot be accepted into the archive. How are these racialized divisions of "emergent" literature catalogued, uncatalogued? And how are we to inspect the blueprint for decisions that collect some and destroy others? Terry Cook denotes that this happens because of the appraisal process, that appraisal "[D]etermines which documents are destroyed, excluded from archives, their creators forgotten, effaced from memory..."¹⁷ I would add that the undercurrents of the appraisal processes of the Archive for New Poetry is what Toni Morrison describes as the "racial unconscious" of US literature. Regarding the "Africanist presence and persona" in US literary tradition, Morrison writes, "What I am interested in

Chicago, Poetry Review, Tri-Quarterly, Contemporary Literature and the St. Marks Poetry Project." The archive's objectives were not to be insulated or obscured from the literature community. I cite this note as visualizing a structural problem: where whiteness can be seen again and again, distributed and circulated without question or inquiry. Letter. Michael Davidson to Roy Harvey Pearce. May 30, 1975, box 2, folder 11, Coll. mss 0143, Roy Harvey Pearce Papers, Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego.

¹⁵ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1992), xiii.

¹⁶ Terry Cook, "Mind Over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal," in *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor*, ed. Barbara L. Craig (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992), 47.

¹⁷ Terry Cook, "We Are What We Keep; We Keep What We Are: Archival Appraisal Past, Present and Future," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 32, no. 2 (2011): 174.

are the strategies for maintaining silence and the strategies for breaking it...How does excavating these pathways lead to fresh and more profound analyses of what they contain and how they contain it.”¹⁸ The appraisal practices of the ANP can read, in this light, as processes of maintaining silence. In this article, I hope to interrogate the financial and appraisal strategies maintaining open segregation so that we might one day entirely break them.¹⁹

ARCHIVE BUILDING, NEOLIBERALISM & MONEY

You will find that the Archive has developed beautifully.

- Roy Harvey Pearce to James Laughlin, May 14th 1980²⁰

The archive for New Poetry at the University California, San Diego, represents an attempt to collect all poetry written in the English Language since World War II.

- Proposal, 1975²¹

Currently, there is no other institutional archive that boasts a “new” poetry collection. “New”—according to the definition on University of California San Diego’s finding aid—is post-war poetics, from 1945 and on. “New” also, as I will argue later, has a specific racialized fixation. The ANP was built with the specific intention of collecting alternative, small press publications. The singularity of the ANP’s collection is both its valor and its branding. I think many scholars working in literature and cultural studies would agree that we must pay attention to alternative cultural formations as they are manifesting. The ANP’s stated collection development priority was to acquire alternative, non-mainstream, emerging, “experimental” poets as they were writing and alive. To provide a space in which their papers could live—along with recordings of their poetry readings—was ANP’s aim.

¹⁸ Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 51.

¹⁹ While I am deeply invested in issues raised by critical archival studies, I myself am not an archivist nor an archival studies scholar. I examine the Archive for New Poetry and utilize archival theory, but my training is in cultural studies and English literature, so the horizon for this article will be an examination of the archives from the perspective of an active user.

²⁰ Letter. To James Laughlin from Roy Harvey Pearce. Roy Harvey Pearce Subject file. ANP curator correspondences and subject files Rss 1034, Box 5, folder 24, Curator’s Correspondence and Subject Files. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

²¹ Proposal. Kathleen M. Woodward for Roy Harvey Pearce, May 22, 1974, box 2, folder 10, Coll. mss 0143, Roy Harvey Pearce Papers, Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego.

The first and foundational acquisition for the ANP was Paul Blackburn's collection acquired June of 1973 for \$27,800. ANP would eventually pay \$35,000 for Blackburn's "complete" papers.²² When adjusted for inflation,²³ \$35,000 would amount to about \$187,089 today²⁴. In a 1980 "Paul Blackburn Preface" to the bibliography of the collection, Kathy Woodward²⁵ narrates the acquisition of Blackburn's archive as a momentous event. The Blackburn collection situated the shape and tone of the Archive: the direction for US American "Newness" was set to a particular definition of counterculture. The Blackburn acquisition set the foundations of ANP.

According to the records, it is unclear what processes were involved in the appraisal of the Blackburn manuscripts, or for the preceding appraisals, or even to what extent archivists were involved in the procedure. There are differing discussions regarding the methodologies²⁶, stakes²⁷ and politics²⁸ of appraisal. Terry Cook describes several trends and histories of appraisal,

First, the archivist as curator who did not do appraisal, but left that to the creator; secondly, the archivist-historian indirectly appraising based on values derived

²²Additional funds were needed for the Blackburn archives, as the papers from 1950-1955 had not been acquired in 1973. Pearce looked first to private donors writing, "The collection is a paramount one, both intrinsically and in relation to our possession of the rest of the Blackburn materials." Letter. To Charles Taubman from Roy Harvey Pearce. Oct. 11, 1979. Roy Harvey subject file. ANP curator files. RSS 1034 Box 5, Folder 24. Archive for New Poetry Curator Papers. Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

²³ I used this inflation calculator in order to calculate inflation rates:
<http://www.usinflationcalculator.com>.

²⁴David C Sutton notes that, Gabriel García Márquez's papers were auctioned at Christie's with a price guide "between \$80,000 and \$120,000" (289). The acquisition price for the Blackburn and Rothenberg papers are well situated in previous sale points of highly noted writers. See David C Sutton. "The Destinies of Literary Manuscripts, Past Present and Future." *Archives and Manuscripts* 42, no. 3 (2014): 295-300

²⁵ Woodward writes, "In the summer of 1973, the Archive for New Poetry at the University of California at San Diego was fortunate to acquire the Paul Blackburn Archive. Consisting of poetry manuscripts, personal journals, over 650 books, a vast correspondence with other poets and publishers, some 350 reels of tapes of poetry readings, 1150 little magazines, and memorabilia of all kinds, it is a magnificent collection of research materials for both Blackburn studies and American poetry." Paul Blackburn Documents. ANP curator files, January 17, 1980, RSS 1034 Box 6, Folder 7. Archive for New Poetry Curator Papers. Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

²⁶Though not exhaustive, see Carol Couture, "Archival Appraisal: A Status Report," *Archivaria* 59 (Spring 2005): 83-108.

²⁷ For a discussion on this see Helen Willa Samuels, "Who Controls the Past," *The American Archivist* vol. 49, no. 2 (Spring, 1986): 109-124.

²⁸ Cook, "Mind Over Matter," 38-70.

from trends in historiography; thirdly, the archivist directly appraising based on researching, analyzing, and assessing societal functionality and all related citizen-state activities; and now, fourthly, perhaps we are ready to share that appraisal function with citizens, broadly defined, where we engage our expertise with theirs in a blend of coaching, mentoring, and partnering.²⁹

From the acquisition records and correspondences from Roy Harvey Pearce to research assistants and librarians, the appraisal and collections development for the ANP seems to have been wholly executed not by archivists but administrators and professors who situated the leanings of their scholarship as the bases for the acquisitions. Regarding the politics involved in appraising personal papers Riva Pollard writes, “Where the question of ‘value’ is mentioned, it is in a vague manner, often deferred to ‘experts’ or ‘personal knowledge’³⁰.” The appraisals for the ANP seem to have been the tastes/values of certain figures of the literature department, particularly Roy Harvey Pearce.

Pearce’s appraisals founded the ANP. In a 1973 draft of the proposal³¹ titled “Notes Towards a Center for New Poetry” Kathy Woodward, then a research assistant to Roy Harvey Pearce, writes,

The need for a center on this UC campus that is humanities based is enormous, crying, desperate. UCSD is not only now known and branded as “science-oriented” branch of UC, but the new college additions are floundering and will not take up the slack in the cause for the humanities... We must have, it seems to me, a semi-independent ‘center,’ one, that is, which is not associated with the vested interested of any one college here, but which will serve and symbolize the campus as a whole, something which will put UCSD on the map as a campus for the humanities as well one for science.

Woodward, working with Roy Harvey Pearce—former Dean of Graduate Studies and a founding member of the literature department—argued that a “Center” for new poetry at UC San Diego would distinguish the “science-driven” appearance of the campus. A Center for New Poetry would fill the necessary humanities void; “New” poetry could symbolize the university.

²⁹ Terry Cook, *We Are What We Keep; We Keep What We Are: Archival Appraisal Past, Present and Future*, *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 32, no. 2 (2011): 182.

³⁰ Pollard, Riva. "The Appraisal of Personal Papers: A Critical Literature Review." *Archivaria* 52 (2001): 136-150.

³¹There are several drafts of this proposal, dating from September 1973 to late 1974. Proposal. Kathy Woodward for Roy Harvey Pearce. September 1973 Coll. mss 143, Box 2 Folder 10. Pearce, Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

In the proposal, the Center was imagined as what Stuart Hall described as the potential of a living archive³², what several archival theorists have described as a record continuum.³³ The Center would facilitate poetry readings that would be recorded and archived, there would be summer workshops, a poet-in-residence program, publications, and the Archive for New Poetry (ANP). The two components of this proposal that found funding and still remain on the UCSD campus are the Archive for New Poetry and the poetry reading series, which remain recorded and archived in the ANP.

The updated 1974 proposal³⁴ stated that the budget for three years of the poetry reading series, counting for inflation, would be at around \$19,363.50 (\$93,215 today). The budget³⁵ included a reading and travel fee for the invited poet, and estimated that to record and archive all the poetry readings would be \$4384.77 (\$21,108 today) for three years. The budget for the Center was proposed at \$30,000 (\$144,423 today) with \$12,000 (\$57,769 today) being the director's salary.³⁶

On the last page of the proposal, Woodward writes,

³² Stuart Hall, "Constituting an Archive," *Third Text* 15, no. 54 (2001): 89.

³³See the work done by Frank Upward and Sue McKemmish in particular. Frank Upward, "Continuum Mechanics and Memory Banks," *Archives and Manuscripts* 33, no. 1 (May 2005): 84-109 and Sue McKemmish, "Placing Records Continuum Theory and Practice," *Archival Science* 1, no. 4 (2001): 333-359. In addition, in *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory and the Photographic Record in Cambodia*, Michelle Caswell writes, "In the view from the continuum, all of these activations—past, present, and future—form the never-ending provenance of these records, each adding a new layer of meaning to a constantly evolving collection of records that open out into the future." Michelle Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory and the Photographic Record in Cambodia* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014).

³⁴The May 22 1974 proposal prefaces that it is for a "three-year grant a San Diego New Poetry Series administered by the Archive for New Poetry at the University of California, San Diego." The proposal seems to have been written for a broad and unspecified audience as it reads, "We are therefore requesting _____ [sic] for the following..." What is clear is that the University is part of the dialogue. At the end of the first page it reads, "The University of California, San Diego, is ready to finance this proposal with matching funds representing one-fourth of the total." Proposal. Kathleen M. Woodward for Roy Harvey Pearce, May 22, 1974, box 2, folder 10, Coll. mss 0143, Roy Harvey Pearce Papers, Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego.

³⁵ The budget indicated that acquisitions for the Archive for New Poetry, as imagined under the "Center for New Poetry," would be handled by the libraries' budget. Later in the article I will discuss how the manuscript acquisition for the archive seem to have happened through the assistance of private donors, friends of the library committee, and funds matched through the chancellor's office.

³⁶ "Proposal for: Contemporary American Voices" Kathy Woodward for Roy Harvey Pearce. May 22 1974. Coll. mss 143, Box 10, folder 2. Pearce, Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

Contemporary American Voices will present nine poets and three scholars per academic year. Each quarter the three readings and one lecture will be unified by a single theme or topic such as Black Mountain Poetry, Women’s Poetry, Confessional Poetry, Ethnopoetics (Native American Poetry in Translation), Black Poetry, Poets and Sciences, and Inter-media Poetry. The lectures, which will be of broad appeal and serve to clarify the cultural impact of contemporary poetry in general, are planned to give critical perspective to the quarter’s readings and to stimulate research in the field.

Every effort will be made to co-sponsor these events by such groups as the Black Student Union, Salk Institute, Women’s Groups, etc. [marginalia indicates a question mark here]

In the paragraph “Every effort” there exists a question mark. The gesture of inclusion in the first paragraph, with its subsequent question mark is one way to read the collection development priorities of the ANP. If the “Center for New Poetry” is to symbolize a collective University appearance, one might deduce that the symbolization must at least appear inclusive, diverse—such are the operations of neoliberalism. Grace Hong argues that neoliberalism is “...the ideological and epistemological shift that occurred with the emergence of the current stage of racial capital following the worldwide liberation movements of the post–World War II period, movements that encompassed struggles for decolonization, desegregation, and revolutionary engagements over the state.”³⁷ Neoliberalism is the ideology formed against worldwide decolonization and revolutionary movements, by appropriating and manipulating the language of diversity, inclusion, and safety in exchange for accelerated state violence and neocolonial expansion. In regard to its praxis Grace Hong writes, “Neoliberalism is a structure of disavowal, an epistemological framing, a way of seeing and not seeing.”³⁸ The categories in the proposal: Black Mountain Poetry, Women’s Poetry, Confessional Poetry, Ethnopoetics (Native American Poetry in “Translation”),³⁹ Black Poetry, Poets and Sciences, and Inter-media Poetry, might represent the makeup of academic categorizations of poetry. Much like the construction of ANP, they are categories of “seeing” and “not seeing.” Additionally, the phrase “Every effort...” is revealing in that the proposal acknowledges

³⁷ Grace Hong, *Death beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 17.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁹ I do not know what to make of ethnopoetics or its formal definition as described in the proposal. The collapsing of “Native American Poetry” and “Translation” as its own category, spearheaded by a white male poet, Jerome Rothenberg, is deserving of a much longer critique and critical attention.

how the expertise of these divided categories might not be held by the center and its directors alone. Lastly, the question mark is revealing marginalia, as it shares with users and viewers the drafting process. The editor—presumably Pearce as the papers are in his collection—might agree that the Center could symbolize something for the University and that for this reason, neoliberal inclusion would be its rhetoric, but would *outside* consultants be necessary?

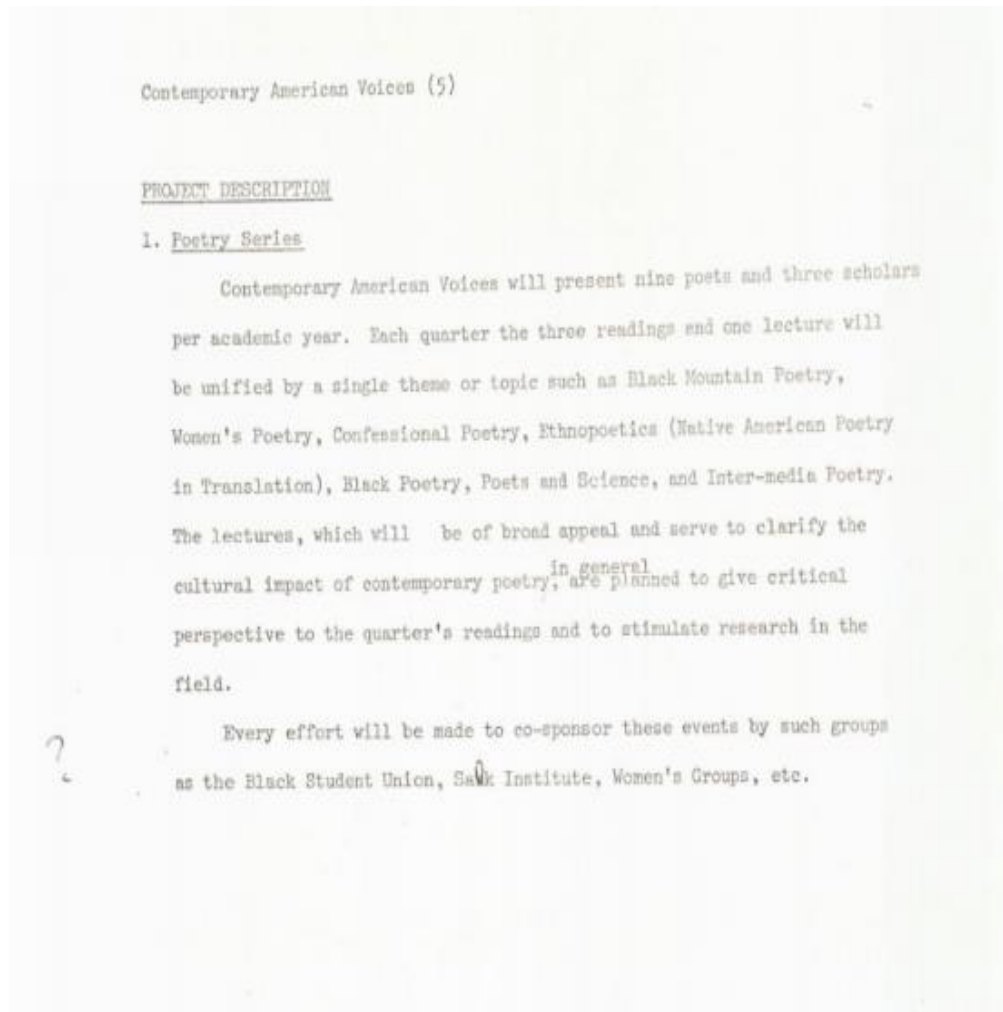


Figure 1. Detail from the 22 May 1974 proposal. Mss 143, Box 2 Folder 10

Furthermore, the gesture of inclusion in this proposal denotes the qualities of addition, trial and error, and the necessity of approval. Art historian Susan Cahan

describes this phenomenon as “the quality debate,”⁴⁰ as it explains the exclusion of specific actors as a quality question; the lack of quality becomes the reasoning non-white artists and writers were and are unable to bypass the borders of institutional gatekeeping.⁴¹ Fundamentally eluding conversations regarding structural history and institutional policies, the “quality debate” reduces structural categorical segregation to efforts of individual persons, being examined by other individuals. The “quality debate” allows for the institution to remain innocent arbiters of objective value. In thinking about the inseparability between institutions, archivists, and records, Helen Samuels articulates, “Individuals and institutions do not exist independently,”⁴² meaning that “Institutions do not stand alone, nor can their archives.”⁴³ Put simply, could Pearce have worked to exclusively collect the manuscripts of poets associated with the Black Arts Movement? How would the quality debate be situated in this non-hypothetical thought experiment—as the Black Arts Movement too was an innovative, new poetic movement situated during the same historical moment as Language Poetry? How did whiteness and normalizing whiteness configure into what was deemed collectable? It is because of institutional policy and structures that certain kinds of “individual acts” are not questioned.

Verne Harris argues that appraisers,

[A]ssume that they can remain exterior to the processes that they are seeking to document. That, of course, is not possible. They participate in those processes; they are complicit in the recording of process. The appraiser's values, quality of work, perspectives, interaction with the creators and owners of records, engagement with the policy he or she is implementing, and so on, all become markings in the appraisal and determine what becomes the archival record. The appraiser is a co-creator of the archival record.⁴⁴

Pearce was institutionally in a position to appraise, assess value, and remain unquestioned. Pearce’s values, perspectives, and interactions are part of the ANP. I have examined the correspondences of Roy Harvey Pearce and his work with the ANP, and I can state with some confidence that I have yet to see any dialogue between him and the

⁴⁰ See Susan E. Cahan, *Mounting Frustrations: The Art Museum of the Age of Black Power*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 6.

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² Helen Willa Samuels, “Who Controls the Past,” *The American Archivist* 49, no. 2 (Spring, 1986): 111.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁴⁴ Verne Harris, “Postmodernism and Archival Appraisal: Seven Theses,” *South African Archives Journal* 40 (1998): 48-50.

Black Student Union, Women's groups, *etc.*⁴⁵ This is not to assert that dialogue may not have transpired between such groups, but from the correspondences and acquisition endeavors it is clear that "every effort" was made to collect the manuscripts and invite the figures of the Language Poets and white avant-gardists. "Every effort" was most definitely made there.

In thinking about value and in order to provide a frame of reference regarding "every effort" I turn to a correspondence that Pearce had with the librarian John Haak on November 20th, 1974.⁴⁶ Pearce is informed via a dealer⁴⁷ on November 19th, 1974 that while Columbia University has an original set of Allen Ginsberg's poetry collection, ANP might acquire one of the two sets of Ginsberg's archives, about "400 hours" of programming for about \$7500 (\$36,105 today). One day later on November 20th, 1974, Pearce writes Haak and states,

I urge you in the strongest possible terms to do all you can to acquire one of the two sets of tapes which will be produced... With those tapes added to what we have in the Blackburn archives and others we are acquiring, the Archive for New Poetry will be even more a major national source of such materials.

Pearce's enthusiasm for one of the "sets," and the urgency in which he wrote to Haak, is a clear example of "every effort." It is also an opening into the speed of the appraisal process, as well as what manuscripts were considered valuable. When we look at the absences in the archive, I think it is helpful to situate that institutional actors had focused

⁴⁵ I have spent some time looking through the chancellor's office papers, but I have been unable to procure the final draft proposal sent. However, in a correspondence between Roy Harvey Pearce, John L. Stewart, and Andrew H. Wright from Paul Saltman from the office of the Vice Chancellor, Saltman states, "[T]he possibility of moving towards such a program or center, within the context of the University. Obviously, outside funding will necessarily have to be sought. It should be done in the context of a total understanding of the role of the center in the education and research plan before the campus as a whole and the department in particular. We also have to put it into the priorities of our fund-raising activities." The proposal received positive interest and initial institutional support. Letter, Oct. 2 1973, box 2, folder 10, Coll. Mss 143, Roy Harvey Pearce Papers, Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego.

⁴⁶ Letter. Roy Harvey Pearce to John Haak, 20 November 1974. Coll. mss 143, Box 2, Folder 10. Roy Harvey Pearce Papers. Special Collections, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁴⁷ Laurence McGilvery to Roy Harvey Pearce. 19 November 1974, Coll. mss 143, Box 2, Folder 10. Pearce, Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

and clear collection development priorities, and that their priorities are documented in the archive.⁴⁸

The proposal passages are also helpful in understanding the intricacies of racialized collections. If the archive is intended to be a continuation of previous, present, and ongoing poetry, and the archive is intended to actively expand by inviting poets through a reading series, then how the reading series is structured and organized will be how the archive will continue to be structured and organized. Thinking about the racial dynamics of the archive should not be the gesture of symbolic diversity, inclusion—Public Relations—but part of its design and praxis. I state this to call attention to how a proposal for a poetry center could be put together, executed, funded, and continued with little to no examination of its approach to race relations. Information studies scholar Todd Honma argues that “[L]ibraries were also guilty of perpetuating a corollary system of racial exclusion.”⁴⁹ Given this history Honma writes, “LIS needs to embrace this spirit of social justice if it is to truly engage in meaningful discussions about race.”⁵⁰ Cultural sites of instigation and memory, archives and poetry, in this sense, must have everything to do with racial justice.

Harris declares that, “Appraisal will always be closer to storytelling than to scientific endeavour despite the claims assumed by the term ‘archival science.’” And that, “Oppressors claim that their story is the truth and they hide evidence of the story's telling. ‘This is not a story, an interpretation; it's the truth.’”⁵¹ I wished to investigate the story constructed in the archive further, and to explore different kinds of evidence. This led to another 1974 Proposal⁵² for Contemporary American Voices: A three-year grant to fund a San Diego New Poetry Series administered by the ANP at the University of California, San Diego, submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities. I found this reference in the storytelling, to echo the institutional gestures of inclusion above,

The Department of Literature is ... most exceptionally strong in the field of modern American poetics...Prof Shirley Williams [sic], a specialist in Black Poetry.⁵³ And what is of significant importance, most of these scholars are also

⁴⁸ I should note that for reasons unknown, the Ginsberg set was not acquired by the institution.

⁴⁹ Todd Honma, “Trippin’ Over the Color Line: The Invisibility of Race in Library and Information Studies,” *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 1, no. 2 (2005).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Verne Harris, “Postmodernism and Archival Appraisal: Seven Theses,” *South African Archives Journal* 40 (1998): 48-50.

⁵² This version of the proposal was not approved for funding and it is unclear whether the proposal was resubmitted. Letter. Roger Rosenblatt to Roy Harvey Pearce. Oct 21, 1974 proposal. Coll. mss 143, Box 2 Folder 10. Pearce, Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁵³ This is clearly the incorrect spelling for Shereley Ann Williams, but this is how her name appeared in the proposal.

practicing poets. Their expertise will be crucial in creating the context in which this project will interact with students and community.

Harris continues that, “This power of the storyteller is ultimately a political power. Which is why, in a democracy, society must find ways of holding archivists accountable for their appraisal decisions.”⁵⁴ In thinking about accountability, I looked through all of the correspondences between Pearce and Williams. If Sherely Ann Williams was ever consulted about the ANP, there is no record of this in the archive. There are no correspondences between her and Pearce, or her and the curator of the archive regarding its collection development priorities, or their appraisal decisions. Of course, in a game of conjecture one might argue that communication between the figures might have been misplaced, that inquiries were made verbally, or some other set of circumstances we cannot imagine prevented them from being preserved. But seeing as how the manuscripts of black poets were not collected during this time, or thereafter, it is safe to deduce that her consultations were limited, though her expertise on the subject matter was advertised on behalf of the archive. In fact, in a 1977⁵⁵ letter to Williams from Pearce regarding her essay⁵⁶ “A Review of Onwuchekwa Jemie, LANGSTON HUGHES: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE POETRY,” Pearce claims, “What I miss in such writing about Black writing as I know (admittedly not enough—but then do you know all⁵⁷ of Hawthorne?) is a sense of the psycho-cultural issues involved in such matters.” While Pearce admits⁵⁸ to

⁵⁴ Verne Harris, “Postmodernism and Archival Appraisal: Seven Theses,” *South African Archives Journal* 40 (1998): 48-50.

⁵⁵ Letter. From Roy Harvey Pearce to Sherely Ann Williams. 28 May 1977, MSS 492, Box 2, Folder 32. The papers of Sherely Ann Williams. The Archive for New Poetry, Special Collections, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁵⁶ Essay, draft by Sherely Ann Williams. May 28 1977, titled: “A Review of Onwuchekwa Jemie, LANGSTON HUGHES: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE POETRY” MSS 492, Box 2 Folder 32. The papers of Sherely Ann Williams The Archive for New Poetry, Special Collections, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁵⁷ I am preserving the punctuation marks of the original letter. In the letter, Pearce underlines “all.”

⁵⁸ Toni Morrison has remarked that such confessions of “lack” are often made with a sense of pride. In fact, Pearce, after confessing his lack, proceeds to list book recommendations for Williams, entrusting that while he lacks knowledge in black writing, he has the knowledge to supposedly mend the critical framing in Williams’ essay. Regarding this stance Morrison writes, “It is interesting, not surprising, that the arbiters of critical power in American literature seem to take pleasure in, indeed relish, their ignorance of African-American texts. What is surprising is that their refusal to read black texts—a refusal that makes no disturbance in their intellectual life—repeats itself when they reread the traditional, established works of literature worthy of their attention.” Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1992), 13.

not knowing much about black writing, he believes he can assess its lack. Additionally, Pearce believes his admissions of a lack of knowledge in black writing is excused by his expertise in other matters such as Hawthorne, expertise that Williams surely could not possess.

I highlight this part of the letter not to speculate, but to situate how the inclusion of Williams' expertise in the proposal for funding does not align with how her literary expertise affected the archives. Pearce's private letters to Williams were exclusively patronizing and condescending—yet her expertise is flouted in public. Perhaps it was clear to Pearce that it would be unacceptable to describe the archive as it was actually being built: through a segregated⁵⁹ imagination, segregated collection development priorities, and segregated appraisal decisions and acquisitions, conditions made possible by an unexamined "racial 'unconsciousness.'"⁶⁰ Perhaps it was clear to the proposal committee and the institution that such unambiguous phrasing could not be utilized in university budgets and public grant proposals.

Harris continues, "Appraisal is the activity whereby archivists identify societal processes they think are worth remembering and the records that will foster such remembering."⁶¹ Williams' expertise did not shape the appraisal process nor the collection. However, the societal processes, interactions, and values that would represent the ANP became more and more clearly defined. The 1975⁶² guidelines for the archive demonstrate how the proposal above became implemented and translated. The "I. History of the Archive for New Poetry" reads,

Ten years ago, under the direction of Roy Harvey Pearce, the central University Library began collecting books and little magazines of contemporary poetry in the English language. *The aim was and still is to contain every item of such poetry published since 1945*, thus serving as one of the richest sources for reading and research in its field [emphasis mine].

⁵⁹ Segregation here is not an abstraction. While Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Brown Vs. Board of Education in 1954 was to overturn federal segregation, desegregation did not happen immediately. In fact, Alexander vs. Holmes County of Education in 1969 exemplifies the ossified pace of desegregation. The historical context for ANP's proposal year of 1974 is a period in which desegregation was in transition (amidst the Vietnam War), and yet as Michelle Alexander argues, transformed into our current system of mass incarceration. See Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*. (New York: The New Press, 2010).

⁶⁰ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1992), xiii.

⁶¹ Harris, "Postmodernism and Archival Appraisal," 48-50.

⁶² Michael Davidson to Roy Harvey Pearce. Document. June 18, 1975, Coll. mss 143 Box 2, Folder 11. Roy Harvey Pearce Papers. The Archive for New Poetry, Special Collections, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

Regarding objectively research-driven archives Riva Pollard articulates, "The notion that acquisition should be researcher-centred not only promises uneven representation of a society within archives, but also leads inevitably to more questions. Which researchers, for instance, are to be considered when making such decisions?"⁶³ Who did ANP imagine as its researcher? The proposal copiously outlines how the archive/imagined center would keep their book collection current for this imagined researcher, it states in its "III. Ordering Procedures" that there will be,

A. Blanket order. The ANP receives most of its materials through a blanket order held with Sand Dollar books in Berkeley. The terms of this blanket order are as follows:

1. Coverage: new U.S., Canadian and Australian small press publications with emphasis on the "new poetry" published since World War II. Significant American translators may be supplied, but British imprints are to be excluded. Large presses are to be excluded as a rule.

What is telling about the specificity of these requirements is the careful exemption of English from non-European nation states and the collapse of settler colonialism and English. English language poetry from India, Singapore or the Caribbean is outside of the ANP's *coverage*. Are we to conclude that indigenous poetry from Australia and Canada were to be included? The proposal includes the *potentially marginalized* white English poets from around globe; its imagination thorough in what it considers theirs, and what it cannot consider.⁶⁴

The ANP kept its collection current through a "blanket order" with one bookstore in Berkeley. If the aim of the ANP was to "*contain every item of such poetry published since 1945*" it is unclear how such aims might be achieved by placing a blanket order from one bookstore,⁶⁵ at least not without serious flaws in its execution. Surely the task of collecting "*every item of such poetry published since 1945*" is a limitless undertaking; the mandate could loom and loom. Depending on one bookstore to deliver all the materials is a curious approach. In regard to collecting methodologies, Anthony Dunbar writes that,

⁶³ Riva Pollard, "The Appraisal of Personal Papers: A Critical Literature Review," *Archivaria* 52 (2001): 136-150.

⁶⁴ I wish to thank Dorothy Wang for a conversation in which these questions were raised.

⁶⁵ The Sand Dollar Bookstore was run by Jack Shoemaker. Discussions regarding the "blanket order" began as early as fall of 1974. In a September 25, 1974 letter to Pearce, Davidson outlines the guidelines. See Letter. Michael Davidson to Roy Harvey Pearce. Sept 25 1974. Coll. mss 143, Box 2 Folder 10. Pearce, Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

Archival holdings that are rich with evidential and informational value are useful in reconstructing historical moments in that they reflect the values of the individuals and historical eras in which the records were created. Examination of such records can reveal the subjective bias of the record creators or the circumstances in which records were created to document.⁶⁶

It is unclear from the records how and why one particular bookstore was selected to supply a blanket order. According to the logic of Dunbar, the direct channel from the ANP to Sand Dollar Bookstore articulates the dynamics of an historical moment and the organizations' subjective leanings; it highlights further a blueprint of institutional gatekeeping. This blueprint is illuminated in a 1974 letter⁶⁷ to Pearce and David Antin, in which then-project coordinator and former ANP curator Michael Davidson drafted a document entitled "Poets to be given extensive coverage in the Archive for New Poetry." Out of 84⁶⁸ poets, David Henderson and Amiri Baraka are the only black poets listed. There are no other poets of color included, and absolutely no women of color, though there were powerful poets working at the time, such as Bob Kaufman, Gwendolyn Brooks to name a few from the many. According to the list, "Poetry published since 1945" is filtered through a very specific racialized and gendered framework.

Additionally, Baraka's inclusion in the "coverage list" is curious, as he is without a curator's file,⁶⁹ and aside from this listing, there are no other correspondences indicating how his poetry would receive attention or focus. There is a note in the fall of the 1976

⁶⁶ Anthony Dunbar, "Introducing Critical Race Theory to Archival Discourse: Getting the Conversation Started," *Archival Science* 6 (2006): 117.

⁶⁷ Letter. Michael Davidson to Roy Harvey Pearce. Sept 25 1974. Coll. mss 143, Box 2 Folder 10. Pearce, Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁶⁸ The 84 poets listed in this document overlap with the poets from *The New American Poetry 1945-1960* edited by Donald Allen (whose papers are in the ANP), considered a canonical anthology. In the Spring 1978 "Archive Newsletter" announcing the acquisition of the Donald Allen archive, it states, "If the names O'Hara, Ginsberg, Olson, Snyder, Creeley, Kyger, Whalen and Welch mean anything to us today, it is largely through the efforts of Donald Allen, the editor of the landmark anthology, *The New American Poetry*. When it came out in 1960, the book virtually defined the field of contemporary poetry in its most progressive stage by presenting poets such as those mentioned above along with prose statements in the back of the book which articulated poetic stances." The book it seems, also defined the archive. Newsletter. Spring 1978. Coll. mss 143, Box 2 Folder 12. Pearce, Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁶⁹ I raise this point as it seems like almost every poet who visited to read at UCSD has a file in the curator's archives. The files often contain poems, interviews and the curator's introductory remarks that introduced the poet. I was excited to see that he did in fact, visit the campus and found the absence of a file to be puzzling.

Archive Newsletter that he is to give a “Black Marxism” talk, and to read poetry on November 12th. But other than these references, there is no other archival indication that he or Henderson received any care. In contrast, many of the white poets on this list did receive “extensive coverage” and their papers were eventually acquired by the ANP.

The blueprint of the ANP demonstrates the reliance on specific actors to create the bulk of the records. The strict methodology of trusting one bookstore and ostensibly one anthology, and the initial appraisal list demonstrates how the architects of ANP envisioned its space as quarantined and screened through an unexamined heterosexual white male gaze. Whiteness is not articulated as a preference, as an objective in either of the proposals, but whiteness grounds the blueprint and development of the ANP. The discussion of whiteness and the archive is not additive, or complementary to discussion of archives and collections, but foundational. In discussing how critical race theory must be part of the conversations regarding archives Dunbar argues,

In the most practical sense, CRT challenges the privileges of dominant culture—particularly whiteness—as the normative benchmark of social acceptability. All whiteness theories problematize the normalization and naturalization of whiteness. Rejecting the notion of white values as a generic or colorblind norm, they point to how the very status of whiteness as a norm is a privilege.⁷⁰

According to the proposal records or ANP’s current collection, while whiteness is neither articulated⁷¹ nor discussed, whiteness is the norm. The Archive of New Poetry is not white because New Poetry is white, or because poetry is white. The Archive of New Poetry is white because whiteness was naturalized, normalized, and unexamined. The whiteness of the Archive of New Poetry mirrors an historical moment in which institutions unabashedly practiced—perhaps without the intention to do so—the whitewashing of cultural production. Normalizing whiteness is a strategy, a theory, in praxis⁷². It is neither objective nor reflective of new poetry. Rather, it reflects the politics of the institutions.

⁷⁰ Dunbar, “Introducing Critical Race Theory to Archival Discourse,” 113.

⁷¹ As Ruth Frankenberg writes, “The phrase ‘the invisibility of whiteness’ refers in part to moments when whiteness does not speak its own name. At those times, as noted, whiteness may simply assume its own normativity. It may also refer to those times when neutrality of normativity is claimed for some kinds of whiteness, with whiteness frequently simultaneously linked to nationality.” I first found Frankberg’s essay in Anthony Dunbar’s article. See Ruth Frankenberg, “The Mirage of an Unmarked Whiteness,” in *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, eds. Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Irene J. Nexica, Eric Klinenberg, Matt Wray (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2001), 72-96.

⁷² See George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Benefit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998).

In *Workshops of Empire* Eric Bennett discusses the formations of the prominent Iowa workshops as vitally linked to the Congress for Cultural Freedom.⁷³ Bennett states that in 1967 Paul Engle, the then director of the University of Iowa's writing program (as of then, not established as prominent)⁷⁴ was approached by a CIA cultural front, the Farfield Foundation, to discuss the possibility of a funding partnership. Bennett argues that this financial partnership—along with private sources driven by Cold War interests—catapulted Iowa to its now familiar, contemporary MFA writing program throne. Bennett's research situates how the CIA would facilitate a mixture of public funds and private, often acting as a conduit for funding relationships between public institutions and private donors. Like Bennett, I, too, prioritize financial accounting history as a way to grapple with the architecture of culturally prized programs.

Similar to how Bennett charts the intersections between private and public funding for Iowa's MFA, funding for the manuscripts and publications related to the ANP seems to have come from a mix of private donors and public funding through UCSD. The funds from UCSD matched private funds or took the shape of research assistant funding.⁷⁵ To provide an example of the private/public coordination, in 1977 the ANP wished to begin a publishing press to print literary pamphlets. Pearce wrote that, "Its aim would be to make available documentary/archival material central to the making of poems in our time. No such enterprise, so far as I know, is presently in operation. So that we should be pioneering." The first endeavors would be to print an interview with Ed Dorn and the archival materials of Charles Reznikoff. In securing funding for this Pearce wrote to a frequent donor to state that the project would cost \$5000 (\$19,582 today) and wished to request for a \$1000 core fund.⁷⁶ In January 5th of 1978, the UCSD librarian Ronald L. da

⁷³ Eric Bennett, *Workshops of Empire* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2015).

⁷⁴ Today University of Iowa's writing program is considered to be one of the best MFA writing programs in the country, and has produced a slew of well-known writers and poets. However, Bennett argues that this was not the case when the program began. For more on Iowa's accounting history see, Eric Bennett, *Workshops of Empire*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015).

⁷⁵ Starting in 1976 there is consistent correspondence to renew a 12-month research assistant stipend for the ANP. Financial discussion regarding the RA occur on January 11 1977 and February 28th 1979. In February 25th 1982 Pearce writes to Manuel Rotenberg requesting that the RA remain at 12 months rather than 9, as the ANP "now constitutes one of the three or four major collections of its sort in the world. It is the most used of the division of Special Collections. It attracts researchers not only from the United States but from abroad." It is unclear if his request was met, but in the least the RA position continued from 1976 to 1982. See Coll. mss 143 Box 2, Folder 12. Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁷⁶ Letter. To Kenneth Hill from Roy Harvey Pearce. November 7, 1977. Coll. mss 143 Box 2. Folder 12 Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

Silveira informs⁷⁷ Pearce that the library would provide \$1000 to be matched by the chancellor's office. And on January 20th, 1978, the chancellor's office agrees⁷⁸ to match the amount.

Another example of this triangulation is the appraisal and acquisition of the Jerome Rothenberg archives. In a 1976 letter⁷⁹ from Davidson to Pearce, it is noted that Jerome Rothenberg requested \$50,000 for his collection. When adjusted for inflation this is approximately \$208,555 today. The matter seemed to be resolved in 1982⁸⁰ with a new appraisal. Pearce writes a donor asking if they could provide funds to acquire the Rothenberg collection, now set at \$30,000 (\$71,486). The donor agrees to provide⁸¹ \$15,000. The other \$15,000 must have been found by other means as ANP holds the Rothenberg papers today.

In the 1978⁸² "Archive Newsletter," the ANP announces that it will begin purchasing dissertations. It states that it has been purchasing dissertations on "Gary Snyder, Robert Duncan, Robert Bly, James Wright, Sylvia Plath, Robert Creeley, Charles Olson, the Beats, the Black Mountain School, Heidegger and postmodern poetry, Eastern Religion⁸³... Lew Welch and Philip Whalen, and others. We will continue to purchase them as funds become available." Every imaginable filament in the development of white modernism, white avant-garde traditions was procured, managed, and financially tended to via public and private funding. Regarding this kind of omnipresent yet unspoken

⁷⁷ Letter. Ronald L. da Silveira to Roy Harvey Pearce. January 5th, 1978. Coll. mss 143, Box 2, Folder 12. Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁷⁸ To Ronald L. da Silveira, from William D. McElroy Chancellor. January 20, 1978, Coll. mss 143 Box 2, Folder 12. Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁷⁹ Letter. Michael Davidson to Roy Harvey Pearce. October 13, 1976. Coll. mss 143 Box 2, Folder 11. Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁸⁰ Letter. To Charles Taubman from Roy Harvey Pearce. Roy Harvey Subject file. March 4 1982 ANP curator correspondences and subject files Rss 1034, Box 5, folder 24, Curator's Correspondence and Subject Files. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁸¹ Letter. To Kenneth Hill from Roy Harvey Pearce. Roy Harvey Subject file. April 16, 1982. ANP curator correspondences and subject files Rss 1034, Box 5, folder 24, Curator's Correspondence and Subject Files. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁸² Newsletter. Fall 1978, Coll. mss 143 Box 2, Folder 12. Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁸³ It is curious to see how the East is fragmented and invoked here.

whiteness Mario H. Ramírez challenges, “But what are the factors that contribute to this disparity and which continue to support whiteness as an archival norm?”⁸⁴

Before concluding this financial and historical overview of the ANP I want to comment that the makeup of the poetry readings series (which was then mostly recorded and entered into the ANP) seemed to have a different approach in its curation from the acquisition of manuscripts in the ANP. Or rather, they do not seem like yearlong lists of whiteness and maleness, though there certainly was quite a bit of this. Regarding the race relations of poetry readings and poetry circles of this time period, poet and scholar Harryette Mullen states that in terms of racial make-up, “We do know that these communities were not completely separate.”⁸⁵ There is a glimpse of this “non-separateness” in the poetry readings.⁸⁶ As mentioned above, Baraka visited the campus in 1976, David Henderson also read in 1976,⁸⁷ as did Wai-Lim Yip—who was a professor at UCSD—in 1976,⁸⁸ Wanda Coleman read in 1979,⁸⁹ Ishmael Reed read in 1978,⁹⁰ Lonny Kaneko in 1980,⁹¹ Gozo Yoshimasu read in 1981,⁹² June Jordan read in 1982,⁹³ and Lawson

⁸⁴ Mario H. Ramírez, “Being Assumed Not to Be: A Critique of Whiteness as an Archival Imperative,” *The American Archivist* 78 (Fall/Winter, 2015): 349.

⁸⁵ Harryette Mullen (Poet, Professor at UCLA) in discussion with the author, Personal Interview. January 2016.

⁸⁶ The majority of the reading dates come from: ANP curator files: Coll Rss 1034, Curator’s Correspondence and Subject Files. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁸⁷ David Henderson subject file, ANP curator correspondences and subject files: Coll Rss 1034, box 4 folder 48, Curator’s Correspondence and Subject Files. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁸⁸ Wai-Lim Yip subject file, ANP curator correspondences and subject files: Coll Rss 1034, box 6 folder 2, Curator’s Correspondence and Subject Files. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁸⁹ Wanda Coleman subject file, ANP curator correspondences and subject files: Coll Rss 1034, box 4 folder 11, Curator’s Correspondence and Subject Files. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁹⁰ There is no file for Ishmael Reed so this date is from the Archive’s Newsletter. Winter 1978, MSS 143 Box 2, Folder 12. Roy Harvey Pearce, Papers. Special Collections, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego. Roy Harvey Papers. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁹¹ Gozo Yoshimasu subject file, ANP curator correspondences and subject files: Coll Rss 1034, box 6 folder 3, Curator’s Correspondence and Subject Files. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁹² Lonny Kaneko subject file, ANP curator correspondences and subject files: Coll Rss 1034, box 4 folder 55, Curator’s Correspondence and Subject Files. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁹³ June Jordan subject file, ANP curator correspondences and subject files: Coll Rss 1034, box 4 folder 54, Curator’s Correspondence and Subject Files. Special Collections: The Archive for New

Fusao Inada read in 1983.⁹⁴ A founder of the Nuyorican movement poet Jesús Papoleto Meléndez read, and Atukwei Okai, Alma Villanueva, Gina Valdes, Inés Talamantez all gave readings. Poets Darío Galicia, Bruno Montane, Mara Larrosa, Roberto Bolaño, Mario Santiago, Inma Marcos, Cuauhtemoc Mendez, Rubén Medina can also be found in the curator's files.⁹⁵ This may not be the exhaustive list of non-white poets whose readings were sponsored by the Archive for New Poetry, but they are the names provided by the information currently on display in the curator's files.

The point is not that the ANP was insulated—that is, removed from contemporary poetry. Detailed financial compensation and budgeting was involved in inviting the poets

Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego. Curiously enough, in this file the introduction for Jordan states, "June Jordan has been at the center of Black Literature for almost twenty years...Her fame has been earned the hard way: by paying attention to her craft. Where many another poets coming of age during the sixties could rely on the sheer power of political polemic or expressiveness, June Jordan has relied on her unerring sense of line and phrasing..." This was the official introduction for the poet who wrote ten years before,

Calling on All Silent Minorities (1973)

HEY

C'MON

COME OUT

WHEREVER YOU ARE

WE NEED TO HAVE THIS MEETING

AT THIS TREE

AIN'T EVEN BEEN

PLANTED

YET

Jordan is a poet who cannot be said to have privileged craft or form above politics, but rather worked fluidly with all of the parameters.

⁹⁴ Lawson Fusao Inada subject file, ANP curator correspondences and subject files: Coll Rss 1034, box 4 folder 51, Curator's Correspondence and Subject Files. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

⁹⁵ Darío Galicia, Bruno Montane, Mara Larrosa, Roberto Bolaño, Mario Santiago, Inma Marcos, Cuauhtemoc Mendez, and Ruben Medina are grouped under "Latin American Poets" and the subject file indicates an "n.d." or a no date. It is unclear whether this means the date for the reading was not recorded, or if a planned event did not come to fruition. Latin American Poets subject file, ANP curator correspondences and subject files: Coll Rss 1034, box 4 folder 61, Curator's Correspondence and Subject Files. Special Collections: The Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

to campus and in deciding how to acquire manuscripts. Suffice it to say, specific decisions were made in both inviting poets to read, and deciding which manuscripts to then acquire.

ROGUE-COUNTING “INNOVATION” AS WHITENESS

*Racism: How your exclusion is assumed as self-exclusion*⁹⁶

*To be honest: pointing out whiteness is almost as tiring as whiteness.*⁹⁷

- Sara Ahmed, *feministkilljoy*

In “Whose New American Poetry? Anthologizing in the Nineties,” poetry critic Marjorie Perloff links experimentation—a venture into the poetic new—with whiteness. She writes,

...the eighties witnessed the coming of the minority communities: first women and African-Americans, then Chicano and Asian-American and Native American poets, gay and lesbian poets, and so on. In their inception, many of these poetries were, ironically, quite *conservative* so far as form, rhetoric, and the *ontology* of the poem were concerned. *But counterculture poets and critics couldn’t—and still can’t—say this out loud*⁹⁸ *because they would have immediately been labeled racist or sexist* [emphasis mine].⁹⁹

Perloff’s statements might help construct the ideological impetus for why certain kinds of white poetry has been structurally defined as ontologically not-conservative, or New. Perloff explicitly suggests that the exclusion of non-white, non-heteronormative poets in US American poetry anthologies is, well, their fault. This is explicitly due to their inability or recalcitrance to embrace the formal innovation practiced by *radical* white poets. Perloff’s argument situates “Other” poets as unsophisticated, outdated, behind, lesser

⁹⁶ Sara Ahmed, Twitter post, December 11, 2015, 10:32 p.m., <http://twitter.com/feministkilljoy>.

⁹⁷ Sara Ahmed, Twitter Post, December 14, 2015, 11:44 p.m., <http://twitter.com/feministkilljoy>.

⁹⁸ Perloff implies here that counterculture experimenters of ontology and form were polite enough not to label “Other” poetry as conservative, though clearly Perloff is unafraid of doing so and being labeled racist and sexist. So. Let’s call it what it is.

⁹⁹ Marjorie Perloff, “Whose New American Poetry? Anthologizing in the Nineties,” *Diacritics* 26, nos. 3-4 (1996): 118.

craftspeople more vested in an older, passe, white¹⁰⁰ articulation of confession of self and identity than in the creation of new emergent white politics and white¹⁰¹ forms.¹⁰²

The shift that glorifies form (innovation) in poetry—or argues that form is in itself a category—does so by marking race as the epithet. The marking of race becomes the epithet that denounces the work as outside the realm of experimental, conceptual, New. Haryette Mullen has argued that aesthetic categorization and race produce what she describes as “aesthetic apartheid.” The marking of race renders the poet, their poetry, and their poetic archive somehow as *readily available*, readable, clear, formally uninteresting, and conservative. Whether or not their work is literally available (in bookstores! in archives!), or is actually being critically examined seems to be of no concern to those who have abided by the Perloff tradition.¹⁰³

In order to read clearly how this racialized theorization of “newness” affects the Archive for New Poetry, I have performed a kind of *rogue-counting* within the ANP. I call this method rogue counting because it involves gathering numbers for a purpose other than what is intended. While gathering historical information in the archives I looked through the finding aid listing under “American Poetry: Manuscript Collections” and counted how whiteness composed this collection. All 69 poets listed¹⁰⁴ in the finding aid for the Archive of New Poetry are white. Most of them are linked to the “Language

¹⁰⁰ Note: the forms “Other” poets are engaging with, in this argument are not their “own.” They are simply the old forms new white poets no longer wish to engage with.

¹⁰¹ For a full reading of Perloff’s approach to race and poetry see, Dorothy Wang, *Thinking its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

¹⁰² With little contest, Perloff defends the exclusion of “Other” poets via the standards of formal innovation. And though according to this standard, this camp IS exclusive, both in terms of members and desires articulated, this genre cannot be labeled racist or sexist. It will merely practice segregation as it sees fit: without explanation or discussion of any formal terms.

¹⁰³ I am inclined to argue that the “Perloff Tradition” is the one in which the ANP operates in its inception, design, curatorial, and acquisition practices. During February 9th-11th 1982, the ANP held a conference titled, “San Francisco Renaissance Conference” in which Perloff, and an all-white speaking list, discussed the innovation of “San Francisco Poetry.” Whose San Francisco, whose new, whose poetry? See, ANP Curator files, RSS 1034, Folder 12 and 13. Archive for New Poetry Curator Papers. Archive for New Poetry, University of California San Diego Library, San Diego.

¹⁰⁴ At times, there were two different finding aid links separating correspondence & papers for the same poet. Though there are two links, I counted this as a single poet. I did not count press materials (Momentum Press Archive, Moramarco and Zolynas Editorial Files, Sun & Moon Press Archives, United Artist. Records) nor did I count the curator files. My decision not to count the press and curator files comes not out of a decision to exclude their narrative/politics, but out of one to examine the papers of poets in the archive. In addition, the press papers reflect the correspondences that occurred between the poets in the archive, and their publishing endeavors. For this reason, I did not count them twice.

Poetry”¹⁰⁵ movement—a movement more recently¹⁰⁶ critiqued for its whiteness. The racial makeup of this list is patently reflective of contemporary and Perloffian theorizations concerning “new,” “experimental,” “US,” “poetry.” The finding aid does note that other poetry manuscripts not listed under “American Poetry: Manuscript Collections” may exist. For example, the late Sherley Ann Williams, emeritus professor at UCSD, prolific writer and poet, is not listed in this section. However, UCSD does hold her papers, so it is possible that other entries such as hers may exist. However, other than this example, and during the immense time I have spent in the poetry section of UCSD’s archives, I have not come across a significant manuscript collection belonging to a non-white poet other than Williams. And to repeat: she is not collected under the ANP collection priority.

The argument of how deliberate or indirect exclusion, neglect, and misreadings have shaped historical cultural segregation and continue to do so is not a new one. The examples are countless. Writers and literary scholars have written endlessly and historically on issues of race and literature, from modern US American literature,¹⁰⁷ to British colonial works,¹⁰⁸ to science fiction,¹⁰⁹ and avant-garde studies.¹¹⁰ Regarding art, Susan Cahan argues that US museums have been and remain resistant, if not hostile to racial integration.¹¹¹ She supports this argument through an extensive examination of museum acquisition and exhibition records. The policies of contemporary exhibitions and

¹⁰⁵ Language Poetry was/is a movement comprised of poets living in the San Francisco area from the 1960s to the 70s. The poets articulated a commitment to moving away from traditional lyric and narrative poetry and dismantling language by producing what at times appeared as “unreadable” language games. Unreadability and purposeful fragmentation are defining aesthetic tropes of the Language Poets. For a full synthesis on their practices see in particular see, David Marriott. “Signs Taken for Signifiers” *Assembling Alternatives*. ed. Romana Huk (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003): 338-346.

¹⁰⁶ See Dorothy Wang, *Thinking its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

¹⁰⁷ Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, and Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Woman Native Other* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989).

¹⁰⁸ See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,” *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 235-61.

¹⁰⁹ See André M. Carrington, *Speculative Blackness: The Future of Race in Science Fiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

¹¹⁰ See in particular: Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Grace Kyungwon Hong, *The Ruptures of American Capital: Women of Color Feminism and the Culture of Immigrant Labor* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); and Wang, *Thinking Its Presence*.

¹¹¹ See Susan E. Cahan, *Mounting Frustrations: The Art Museum of the Age of Black Power* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

biennales regarding race and art remain unaltered.¹¹² Of archives, Ramírez has argued, "...whiteness persists as the *terra firma* of the archives profession in the United States and, in turn, informs the very formation of its praxis."¹¹³ Terry Cook argues that parallel trends of exclusion, neglect, and mismanagement can be witnessed in archive development. He writes,

In many societies, certain classes, regions, ethnic groups, or races, women as a gender, and non-heterosexual people, have been de-legitimized by their relative or absolute exclusion from archives, and thus from history and mythology—sometimes unconsciously and carelessly, sometimes consciously and deliberately. Perhaps the more germane pithy assertion about appraisal should rather be: we are what we do *not* keep, what we consciously exclude, marginalize, ignore, destroy.¹¹⁴

Cook's assessment concerning the processes of appraisal and collection's development correspond with contemporary critiques made in literary, art historical, and cultural studies scholarship. Archives do not necessarily need to reflect the under- and over-tones of dominant narratives, and yet in the case of the ANP, they do.

Regarding whiteness and the archive Todd Honma states, "With respect to LIS, libraries have historically served the interests of a white racial project by aiding in the construction and maintenance of a white American citizenry as well as the perpetuation of white privilege in the structures of the field itself."¹¹⁵ The structures of the field—subjective appraisal methodologies and institutional collections development priorities, as well as literary scholarship—functioned in tandem to normalize the whiteness of the archive. Perloff's definition of a "non-conservative" approach to formal innovation extrapolates clearly how an experimental, US American poetry archive comes to find the acquisition logic of its manuscript collection to be based in segregation. The ANP, as I have displayed above, was constructed meticulously to be a "living archive" of "new" US American poetry. How "new" was defined in the ANP's blueprint and in its original collecting efforts, as well as its ongoing acquisitions, strictly reflects Perloff's articulation for the New, for innovation, in poetry. Somehow in this structural diagram, the framework of race and otherness is theorized as excluding itself out of the present, out of the future, and out of innovation only to be rootly stuck in a dystopic past. Though let's be honest, if

¹¹² The Whitney Biennale of 2014 is evidence of this. For discussions see Eunsong Kim and Maya Mackrandilal, "The Whitney Biennial for Angry Women," *The New Inquiry* (April 2014).

<http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/the-whitney-biennial-for-angry-women/>

¹¹³ Ramírez, "Being Assumed Not to Be," 340.

¹¹⁴ Cook, "We Are What We Keep," 174.

¹¹⁵ Honma, "Trippin' Over the Color Line," 4.

they can barely be found in the archives today, which past¹¹⁶ are they so adamantly stuck in? And how might we get there.

Almost since its inception, the Language Poets have been theorized as direct heirs of western “avant-garde” poetry and art. The “Archive for New Poetry” acquiring the manuscript of living Language Poets in the late 70s and 80s might be one way to think about how the Language Movement, while heralded as “radical” “new” “avant-garde” and even “marginal,” received epistemological and financial institutional support from its composition. However, this is not the way the Language Poets are usually theorized.¹¹⁷ Timothy Yu lays out a peculiar argument regarding “ethnicization” and the avant-garde in order to contextualize Language Poetry. In the second chapter of his book, *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry since 1965*, titled “Ron Silliman: The Ethnicization of the Avant-Garde” Yu argues that Language Poetry sustained the thrust of “innovation” and all that comes with the “avant-garde” by adopting a form of “ethnicization.” Yu gets to this point by pointing to letters in the ANP from Ron Silliman to Charles Bernstein and other Language Poets. Yu cites a letter to Peter Glassgold of New Direction from Silliman that reads,

I am not a language poet.

I hope, in choosing your title, that you are aware of the comparability of the phrase “language poetry” to epithets such as nigger, cunt, kike or faggot
(Letter to Glassgold 6/9/1986)

In the letter, Silliman rejects the aesthetic framework his poetry received. The framework of “language poet” – he believes – is an epithet. Silliman implies that “language poet” is a category of degradation, by arguing that racial and gendered slurs are analogous to term “language poet” as it too is not of one’s selection, but a term that signifies obvious mistreatment and violence. With regard to this letter Yu states, “Silliman’s equation seems, on its face, absurd. Yet it is also true that the equation of Language writers with a racial or gender grouping flows logically out of Silliman’s earlier pronouncements on poetry and politics...”¹¹⁸ Yu claims that this political line of reasoning can be witnessed in previous proclamations—so at least Silliman is consistent? Yu then extrapolates that Silliman’s positioning is not only consistent, but avant-garde. Yu explains,

¹¹⁶ A footnote cannot suffice in covering the current “absences” in what might constitute the new in US American poetry. And absence is a failing word, as though their absence in the ANP is in any way an indicator of their lives elsewhere.

¹¹⁷ There are been meaningful critiques of Language Poetry. In particular, see David Marriott, “Signs Taken for Signifiers,” in *Assembling Alternatives* ed. Romana Huk (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003): 338-346.

¹¹⁸ Timothy Yu, *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry Since 1965*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 58-59.

Silliman's *powerful, possibly offensive*, equation of "Language poetry" with racial slurs suggests the bluntest version of this latter position: "Language poet" is not simply an aesthetic but a social identity. Ultimately, this ethnicization of Language writing can be seen as an attempt to *reclaim* the *moral authority extended to the writing of women and minorities*—a kind of redemption of white new left discourse¹¹⁹ [emphasis mine].

I am not sure how Silliman's statement could "possibly" be offensive: it is offensive. It is not offensive *and* powerful: it is offensive. It is astonishingly violent to equate racial and gendered slurs—slurs that are utilized in daily, lived experience—to a body and social position protected from the history of racialized and gendered slurs. Clearly "Language Poetry" is not an epithet—it is witnessed as an academic and formal poetic category, supported institutionally with an exclusive archive at UCSD. "Language Poetry" has never been a slur and will never be a slur. Yu's argument suggests that the political/aesthetic positioning of the Language Poets and those grouped under this category through celebration and hostility constitutes the process of ethnicization. This argument of marginalization is supported through the personal accounts of individual members rather than through a structural and institutional examination of the collective, which is how social theories of race and ethnicities are currently utilized and formed.¹²⁰

Is Yu attempting to explain the absence of poets of color¹²¹ in the Language Poetry movement by suggesting that Silliman and others were "ethnic"—in private, in their poetry? That their reach into the ethnic was a reach into the "moral authority" stemming from an imagined "lower position" whose actual structural position could be appropriated into what appeared like a "new" white movement? "Ethnicization" is a theorem contemplating the possibilities of a "different kind of ethnicity" or a "different kind of white" for Silliman, one that deserves its own categorizations, theorization and regard. By suggesting that whiteness can be "ethnicized" through a false identification with racialized violence and experience, Yu's argument attempts to enact a pathway that nuances Silliman out structural whiteness. In the context of the argument and by default, the whiteness of Language Poetry and the whiteness of the Archive for Poetry can be

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 60.

¹²⁰ There are many scholars that have written on the construction of race. Though not an exhaustive list, see, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003); Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1983); George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Benefit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014).

¹²¹ Or conversely, did the absence of people of color not occur for Yu?

appeased. I find Yu's defense of the politics and aesthetics of the Language Poets as being akin to an ethnic category to be useful in imagining how the composition of the "New Archive" might also be defended.

However, Yu's misreading of Language Poetry and Silliman's "ethnicization" could not amount to a defense, as both Silliman's reaction and Yu's analysis might be better expounded as the dynamics of white fragility.¹²² In the letter to Glassgold, Silliman is reacting to a situation: Silliman feels that he is not afforded the centralized and proper role and care he is entitled to. Instead, his aesthetic project is categorized under a phrase he does not like, and marginalized in a way to which he is not accustomed. DiAngelo writes that "White Fragility may be conceptualized as a product of the habitus, a response or 'condition' produced and reproduced by the continual social and material advantages of the white structural position."¹²³ What is being expressed in Silliman's usage of racialized and gendered epithets is not a form of solidarity with "underdeveloped" writing and writers of color—as writers of color in the case of *The Archive for New Poetry* experienced and experience ongoing erasure, absence and marginalization. Rather, Silliman's usage of racialized and gendered slurs display the astonishment that one's superior white structural position was not immediately reflected. Though as the *Archive for New Poetry's* collection development priorities denotes, Silliman's hierarchical expectations for Language Poetry was part of ANP's horizon.

By theorizing that the formation of Language Poetry functioned as processes akin to "ethnicization," Yu's argument avoids how pre-existing formations of whiteness might operate within Language Poetry, and exempts whiteness from being structurally addressed as a pre-existing social identity and form of property.¹²⁴ In lieu of discussions regarding whiteness and Language Poetry, how does the focus of the argument become ethnicization and Language Poetry? While Silliman and various and ancillary members of the Language Poets may have felt disrespected, misaligned, and devalued individually, these individual experiences are not reflective of the structural, financial, and

¹²² Robin DiAngelo defines white fragility as, "[A] state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves." For a discussion regarding white fragility see Robin DiAngelo, "White Fragility," *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3 no. 3 (2011): 54-70.

¹²³ DiAngelo, "White Fragility," 58.

¹²⁴ The whiteness unaddressed in Yu's argument is a function of whiteness, as whiteness is ideology as well as a structural position. There is a growing archive of critical whiteness studies but as a succinct guide Robin DiAngelo writes, "Whiteness is thus conceptualized as a constellation of processes and practices rather than as a discrete entity (i.e. skin color alone). Whiteness is dynamic, relational, and operating at all times and on myriad levels. These processes and practices include basic rights, values, beliefs, perspectives and experiences purported to be commonly shared by all but which are actually only consistently afforded to white people." See DiAngelo, "White Fragility," 56.

epistemological support the movement received and receives. Rather than analyzing the individual and private pains of the various members of Language Poetry, it would be historically and institutionally illuminating to examine the conditions¹²⁵ that allowed for Language Poetry to rise into institutional prominence.¹²⁶ The Archive for New Poetry is evidence of this. It begs the question how theories regarding ethnicity can exist without structural examination. Robin DiAngelo writes that “Racism is not fluid in the U.S.; it does not flow back and forth, one day benefiting whites and another day (or even era) benefiting people of color. The direction of power between whites and people of color is historic, traditional, normalized, and deeply embedded in the fabric of U.S. society.”¹²⁷ How might we understand ethnicization in a history and present in which racism remains fixed, its circulation rooted and unchanged? Silliman’s usage of racial and gendered slurs to describe his situation is not a powerful aesthetic moment. It’s a moment of white fragility and white privilege in which the white actor, in a structural position of power, expresses his utter confusion regarding the dynamics of race (because he does not have to think about them). Silliman’s usage of slurs is not a gesture of reclaiming power, but rather of privilege and insulation.

Returning to Yu’s assessment, is “moral authority” a term that denotes a sense that there are issues in which women and minorities might write about, with not only

¹²⁵ Art historian Anna Chave argues that it is not inconsequential that Minimalism became important and valued in museum settings during the Civil Rights Movement. Minimalism, in its early formation, was an aesthetic movement comprised mostly of white men. Minimalism, Chave argues, is a reflection of the military, state, and corporate power that the social movements of the 60’s and 70’s protested. Minimalism’s identification with and representation of corporate and military power ensured its museum prominence—as museum prominence is not in itself reflective of cultural popularity or political impact. The example of minimalism is useful in delineating “new” Language Poetry as catalogued by the ANP versus other “new” aesthetic movements uncollected by the ANP. See Anna Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” *Arts* 64 no. 5 (January 1990): 44-63.

¹²⁶ It’s important to note that information studies scholarship has been considering how to archive societal value and social movements rather than scholarship trends. Terry Cook proposes macroappraisal, which would “[S]anction for archival appraisal ‘value’ of determining what to keep by trying to reflect society’s values through a functional analysis of the interaction of the citizen with the state.” In addition, macroappraisal creates the possibility that the archive function as a cultural memorial site where it “deliberately seeks to give voice to the marginalized, to losers as well as winners, to the disadvantaged and underprivileged as well as the powerful and articulate, which is accomplished through new ways of looking at case files and electronic data and then choosing the most succinct record in the best medium for documenting these diverse voices.” (180-181). Cook proposes a radical approach to the process of memories and collecting. See Cook, “We Are What We Keep,” 173-189.

¹²⁷ DiAngelo, “White Fragility,” 56.

authority but with a sense of *morality* not entrusted to white male writers?¹²⁸ To state that women and writers of color are “extended moral authority” is an argument that views racialization as a set of privileges that whiteness is deprived of—and that must be *reclaimed*.¹²⁹ It is an argument that attempts to dance around how white supremacy organized an almost all-white movement, and an almost all-white archive. Yu posits that,

If language-centered writing is, as Silliman argues in his earlier letters, a form of poetry just as “underdeveloped” as the writings of women or Third World writers, and if its social origins (progressive white male writers of the “industrialized” tradition) is just as particular and marginalized, why should a caricature of such writing not be as offensive¹³⁰ as racist or sexist caricature, since both rely on the same logic of social marginalization?¹³¹

If Language Poets occupied an “authentic” social position of dissent, how did their social positions as heterosexual white men un-figure into this “new” “authentic” positioning?¹³²

Yu’s extension of Silliman position situates that white men—without ever having to address whiteness—were able to transcend their bodily and social positioning to create other “authentic” identities. The argument replicates Perloff’s crass dichotomy of

¹²⁸ For an accounting of how systematic and institutionalized gendered and racialized violence permeates academia, see *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*. eds. Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, Yolanda Flores Niemann, Carmen G. González, Angela P. Harris. (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2012).

¹²⁹ Yu’s argument offers Silliman’s self-victimization as proof as to why “ethnicization” is a possible theorem. This rationale deduces ethnicization—whatever this framework is supposed to situate—as a site of redress from wrongdoing. Essentially, a feasible “playing the race card.” The undercurrent of the argument is that “women and writers of color” are evidently ethnicized—because they are inherently ethnic—and that this is a favorable position in which to redress wrongdoing. Something they are evidently doing so, through a *moral position* in which they are allotted for being “ethnic” and not “ethnicized.” This rationale is without historical premise, and is rather situated in fantasies of the post-racial. For whiteness studies that critiques this position see, Lisa Cacho, “‘The People of California Are Suffering’: The Ideology of White Injury in Discourses of Immigration,” *Cultural Values* 4, no. 4 (2000): 389-418.

¹³⁰ Being racist and sexist as a white male is still racist and sexist. Because to “use” racist and sexist caricatures is not a “privilege” that white men are denied, that “women and minorities” practice in their writing.

¹³¹ Timothy Yu, *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry Since 1965* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 59.

¹³² Yu does not shy away from the positioning of Language poetry, he writes, “There can be no doubt that Silliman is making an analogy between such categories as “women’s writing” “black writing” and “Language writing” -- understood as “white male heterosexual writing.” See Timothy Yu, *Race and the Avant-Garde*, 50.

“innovative whiteness” and “conservative others” as it collapses the politics and positions of “women and minorities” as fixed, knowable, yet fungible.

Yu argues, “Silliman’s utopian gamble, and the gamble of all Language writing, is that experimental techniques can render the Language poem both particular and universal.”¹³³ The particular, we are to assume, is an appropriation of an imagined racialized, gendered position. The universal is whiteness. Language poetry, through its “ethnicization,” is able to instantiate both the absence of whiteness (property) and whiteness (property).¹³⁴ It is able to swallow it whole. Since it can reach into the particularities of racialized and gendered bodies while remaining universal, it needs not their flesh, their language, their presence,¹³⁵ their forms, nor their papers and archives.

CONCLUSION

Simply stated, it is no longer acceptable to limit the definition of society's memory solely to the documentary residue left over by powerful record creators.

- Terry Cook¹³⁶

Toni Morrison argues that a racial “unconscious” structured the US American literary imagination. She writes,¹³⁷

For reasons that should not need explanation here, until very recently, and regardless of the race of the author, the readers of virtually all of American fiction have been positioned as white. I am interested to know what that assumption has meant to the literary imagination. When does racial ‘unconsciousness’ or awareness of race enrich interpretive language, and when does it impoverish it?

I am interested in connecting the reading position of assumed whiteness to the archive’s position of whiteness. Additionally, the archive position is not merely the position of the imagined white user but the archivist who has historically been imagined as being exempt from racialization and politics. Ramírez describes the working praxis of

¹³³ Yu, *Race and the Avant-Garde*, 70.

¹³⁴ This comes from Cheryl Harris’s pivotal article, “Whiteness as Property.” See Cheryl I. Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* (1993), 1707–91.

¹³⁵ The notion of a poetic presence comes from Dorothy Wang’s book *Thinking its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).

¹³⁶ Terry Cook, “What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift.” *Archivaria* 43 (1997): 19.

¹³⁷ Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, xiii.

the 'racial unconsciousness' in archives and archive scholarship. He writes, "I maintain that continued assertions of neutrality and objectivity, and a rejection of the 'political,' take for granted an archival subject that is not only homogeneous ... but that also supports whiteness and white privilege in the profession."¹³⁸ Both the history and tradition of literary scholarship and archival studies and practices have operated with a 'racial unconscious' that has assumed white readers and user positions. Such are the institutional presences that have shaped literary scholarship and their archives. The Archive for New Poetry embodies this presence.

Terry Cook asks, "Upon what basis, reflecting what shifting values, have archivists decided who should be admitted into their houses of memory, and who excluded?"¹³⁹ In thinking about the dynamics of exclusion—and keeping in mind that it is essential to critically view the stock and shape of the ANP—I wish to conclude this essay by reflecting on absences, and the complicated histories their absence holds. In "Records and Their Imaginaries," Anne J. Gilliland and Michelle Caswell examine the politics and potential of "imagined records." Gilliland and Caswell describe "imagined records" as spaces of potential, where victims of state and structural violence long for and situate the evidence that exists in collective memories, yet live without their artifacts. Gilliland and Caswell argue that these "imagined records" recognize the power of the archive and the record as legible forms of evidence.¹⁴⁰

What petitioners to the state and to the archive long for—this presence of longing—is the site of "impossible archival imaginaries."¹⁴¹ It is the space in which what the archive could not imagine, could not fathom, could not collect, reverberates. In the imaginary, we can witness what the archive has collected, catalogued as evidence; in the imaginary, we can see the absences as well as their parallel horizons.

In discussing "impossible archival imaginaries" and absences, Gilliland and Caswell cite Anjali Arondekar, who asks, "What if the recuperative gesture returns us to a space of absence? How then does one restore absence to itself? Put simply, can an empty archive also be full?"¹⁴² I find Arondekar's call to examine the absences as "full" to be useful in examining the ANP. I also find that it is a pre-emptive critique against neoliberal approaches to inclusion and the rhetoric of additive mending, which also applies to the ANP. Rather than inclusion or additions to the archive, I am interested in seeing how we might grapple with its absences. And the absences are long, prevalent, and often invisible. The "solution" to the whiteness of the ANP is not the rapid addition of manuscripts

¹³⁸ Ramírez, "Being Assumed Not to Be," 340-341.

¹³⁹ Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," 19.

¹⁴⁰ Anne J. Gilliland and Michelle Caswell, "Records and Their Imaginaries: Imagining the Impossible, Making Possible the Imagined," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (2015).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009): 1.

belonging to non-white poets. This approach assumes that the structure of the archive does not need to be examined, that the structure of the archive works to encompass more and expand endlessly. This approach also assumes that historical absences can be rectified through present-day additions. Such an approach would replicate the ANP's initial proposal of "inclusion." I hope I have demonstrated that this inclusion was a gesture of public relations. Because it was limited to public relations, it could not be executed.

Regarding the Asian American social movement exhibition, "Serve Your People" curator and archivist Ryan Wong¹⁴³ states that, "Information regarding people of color organizing and movement history is not readily available. This information is not in textbooks, so people don't know to look for this material. And a lot of the materials are in private collections. It was a long, multi-tiered process to do just a small exhibition." When absences have been institutionalized, what to even look for, and how to even look becomes an *impossible, imaginary* task. The absences in the archive rupture narratives of institutional desire, prioritization, and care. For this reason, to see what is *not there*, and to ask why, and to long that it were otherwise is imperative to interrogating what is *there*. Institutionalized absences ensure that the processes of putting together New archives, exhibitions, and histories will be an incredibly vast, laborious, directionless route—and one which must be pursued.

Gilliland and Caswell write, "[A]ctual and imagined records confront each other with alternate realities, one representing 'the establishment' and the other, disaffection with or opposition to the establishment. In others, they interact in ways that co-constitute new realities or open up new possible futures."¹⁴⁴ The imagined manuscripts, the manuscripts refused, burned, thrown away, uncollected, never inquired or appraised speak to the materialized poetry manuscripts in the Archive for New Poetry. The imagined, unforgettable¹⁴⁵ archives of nonwhite poetic movements permeate the Archive as "spectral content,"¹⁴⁶ "spectral context," spectral forms.

¹⁴³ Ryan Wong (Curator, Writer) in discussion with the author, December 2015.

¹⁴⁴ Gilliland and Caswell, "Records and Their Imaginaries," 16.

¹⁴⁵ Regarding the "unforgettable," Giorgio Agamben's writes: "The exigency of the lost does not entail being remembered and commemorated; rather, it entails remaining in us and with us as forgotten, and in this way and only in this way, remaining unforgettable." Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 40.

¹⁴⁶ Verne Harris, "Hauntology, Archivry and Banditry: An Engagement with Derrida and Zapiro," *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies* 29, no. 1 (2015).

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