



FORUM

University of Edinburgh
Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts
Issue 25 | Autumn 2017

Title	Poetry in the Post-Truth Era: Formal Structures in Claudia Rankine's <i>Citizen: An American Lyric</i>
Author	Olivia Djawoto
Publication	FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & the Arts
Issue Number	25
Issue Date	Autumn 2017
Publication Date	18/12/2017
Editors	Vicki Madden and Maria Elena Torres-Quevedo

FORUM claims non-exclusive rights to reproduce this article electronically (in full or in part) and to publish this work in any such media current or later developed. The author retains all rights, including the right to be identified as the author wherever and whenever this article is published, and the right to use all or part of the article and abstracts, with or without revision or modification in compilations or other publications. Any latter publication shall recognise *FORUM* as the original publisher.

Poetry in the Post-Truth Era: Formal Structures in Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric*

Olivia Djawoto

Nanyang Technological University

*In the unbridled relativism of this post-truth era, poetry seems more out of place than ever before. In particular, works with an impulse towards fiction are perceived as incapable of participating in the non-fictional world at large. Yet, writers like Claudia Rankine still return to the poetic form to confront the issue of race in an America that sees itself as post-racial. Rather than contest such existing claims of "truth" with one of her own, Rankine, in *Citizen: An American Lyric*, chooses instead to examine what it means to be a "citizen" as an African-American. Through a self-reflexive mode of inquiry, she provokes readers to consider the state of race-relations within America. This article thus argues that poetry can have a stake in our reality not merely in spite of, but precisely because of the dissonance arising out of so many competing "truths".*

Jan Mukařovský claimed that "the question of truthfulness does not make sense at all in poetry" because of its discursive role as a form of expression rather than documentation (11). According to this belief, the aesthetic agenda of poetry not only precludes it from contending with the ontological realities of the non-fictional world, but places it in an entirely separate belief system. Even though the experience of poetry is inevitably situated in reality, the implication of Mukařovský's claim is that we are always able to maintain a boundary between the two. Truthfulness, or the inclination towards the making of accurate claims about the non-fictional world, operates in a different "sense" than poetry does as incompatible systems of logic. Poetry's relationship to the question of veracity thus goes beyond disinterest or inaptitude. Rather, Mukařovský is sceptical about whether this relationship exists in the first place.

The lines that Mukařovský wishes to draw between fiction and reality, however, do not seem to fall into place as neatly as he envisioned. Poetry, or any act of fiction, can in fact introduce and birth its own veracity. To illustrate through an example from John Hayden Woods, events and characters that were once a figment of the imagination can be reified into truth-statements like, "Sherlock Holmes lives on Baker Street" (13). These statements do not inhabit the same degree of reality we are in, but are nonetheless significant in the way they instantiate a once-imagined item into language, language that we participate in to describe, alter, and represent the world. Sherlock Holmes and Baker Street might not exist tangibly as a person and place in our world, but they exist as signifiers that invoke concepts understood and shared by those who are familiar with the fictional detective. Even in their immateriality, these signifiers that originate from within fiction "call into existence" ...possible worlds" that are poised to become ours in the way that they persist in our language as words that embody meaning within collective consciousness (Doležel 10). It is through his fiction that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle could turn the utterance "Sherlock Holmes" into a recognizable name.

Poets and authors of fiction thus inadvertently expand our semiotic reality with the introduction of new signs and symbols. What happens, however, when this semiotic reality is denied? In this era of post-truth, signs become untenable. Factual evidence is dismissed and displaced by a reckless and uninhibited relativism that renders any claim convincing through “appeals to emotion and personal belief” (*OED*). The notion of “post-truth” has developed new implications within the context of the 2016 U.S Presidential election. With a presidency that has consistently demonstrated blatant disregard for facts, America has quickly become the site in which the anxiety between truth and fiction has pervaded political rhetoric and public discourse, proliferating down to the everyday.

It is this quotidian conflation of truth and fiction that Claudia Rankine foreshadows in her 2014 collection of poetry, *Citizen: An American Lyric*. Rankine’s interests lie within an intersection of a post-truth culture and the experience of being black in America. African-Americans’ subjectivity — their intimate knowledge of the minority experience in America — is constantly at odds with a public that often thinks of itself as post-racial. In Mark Orbe’s 2010 study conducted across more than three hundred individuals about the public’s sentiment towards then-President Barack Obama, a large number of participants reflected the desire to circumvent the issue of race in their responses. There were calls “[not to] bring up race, because it doesn’t matter” (93), and at least one invoked the phrase itself by referring to Obama as “a post-racial President” (99). Most problematically, one respondent said that “a lot of things about [Barack Obama] radiate ‘white’ and not ‘black.’ And maybe that’s why I don’t think about his race” (92). This last response perhaps encapsulates the misguided notions about what a post-racial society entails, in which the concept of “post-race” here is thought of as synonymous with “not black”. What is more concerning, however, is the respondent’s lack of awareness to the irony of his or her statement: that in speaking of Obama’s “whiteness”, they have already and explicitly started a conversation about race.

In his analysis of the results, Orbe reflects that the responses of participants who think that America has progressed into a post-racial state proves that this is not the case (105). We see this more recently in the “All Lives Matter” and “Blue Lives Matter” counter-movements that arose in response to the “Black Lives Matter” campaign, which sought to highlight the unjustified brutalities black people face on a quotidian basis. The former positioned themselves rhetorically as supporters of an egalitarianism that they accused “Black Lives Matter” of forgetting. The truth that those of “All Lives Matter” forget, however — which is also the truth that white America wants to forget — is the one that individuals like W.E.B. Du Bois capture with his metaphor of the colour-line or the Veil in *The Souls of Black Folk* (9, 2). It is the spectre of slavery that haunts America and the implications of those systematic differences that manifests itself as a pervasive racism. The truth is that even though all lives should matter, black lives are often denied this condition—a condition they have to contend with as part of their hyphenated identity of African-American, while others who are white can afford to feel unimplicated by this injustice. The truth is that America is not as post-racial as it believes itself to be.

African-Americans are confronted with these self-effacing moments of post-truth when told to “get over” slavery (Patterson 212) or when the television news-show host interviewing Ta-Nehisi Coates would rather direct the audience to a photograph of a black child hugging a white police officer

in wake of the Ferguson shootings than deal with Coates' answer to the question of "what it meant to lose [his] body" (Coates 10, 6). They are confronted with an unwillingness to recognize America's struggle with race when football player Colin Kaepernick's body, genuflected to the sound of *The Star-Spangled Banner*, is read by the white majority as unpatriotic and even treacherous rather than an emphatic response to the state of race-relations in the country. The post-truth era is the time of a burgeoning fiction in which its own authors are unaware of their own complicity. Instead of critiquing those questionable representations of the world or offering a counter-argument, however, Rankine seeks to lift the veil from the eyes of post-truth believers themselves by casting doubt upon the veracity of their claims of America's post-racial state, and revealing the artifice of their fiction. Rather than add to the multiplicity of voices clamouring for their own version of truth, poetry opens these truth-claims up as sites of contestation by revealing the fiction behind them.

Intercorporeality and Intersections

The title of *Citizen: An American Lyric* suggests a hesitance to include "American" in the same breath — that there is something amiss in a declaration of citizenship that most can take for granted as part of their own identity. Already, we see the beginnings of Rankine's self-reflexive impulse in unsettling the ease with which the phrase "American Citizen" comes, splitting it across the two rows of title and subtitle rather than allowing the reader to apprehend it as a whole. "American Citizen" has to be put together in the reader's mind as a product of their mental association. Before this can happen, however, the reader also has to contend with a photograph of David Hammons' 1993 installation titled *In The Hood* that takes up most of the front cover of *Citizen*. In this image, the decapitated hood of a black sweatshirt is suspended against a white wall or, in this case, a white background. It is a provocative emblem that harkens back to a history of slavery and lynchings, and foreshadowed the murder of Trayvon Martin, whose hoodie became a symbol of racialized violence almost a decade after Hammons' installation. With this image, Rankine directly places the issue of race within the declarative statement of individual citizenship. It is a necessary part of constructing an American identity, Rankine insists, and even those who believe in America's post-racial state will have trouble ignoring the visceral resonances of Hammons' evocative image. For those who are black, the voice that demands to be seen as American belongs to a body that is broken by the very thing it calls upon.

In an interview with *The Guardian*, Rankine reflects: "I called it *Citizen* because I wanted to ask: who gets to hold that status—despite everyone technically having it? How is it embodied and honoured? The title contains a question." (Kellaway). Rankine's method of contesting the prevalent post-truth, post-race rhetoric thus begins not with an answer, but with a question. It cuts through the white noise of multiple "truths", a deluge of various beliefs and opinions that buries the issue of race in America instead of giving it more clarity. In the midst of this epistemological impasse, Rankine's deliberate and inquisitive pause here provides a space within which a meditation on the visceral experience of racism in America can replace the competition of truths. If cerebral arguments have failed to sway public discourse away from its post-racial inclinations, Rankine looks towards

phenomenology and individual expressions of blackness as another possible way to contend with it. It is not just the singular experience that she is interested in, however. Rather, in examining race which has implications upon a certain kind of body shared by many, Rankine engages in what Gail Weiss calls an “intercorporeal” discourse in which the racism is not just reckoned with by the individual alone, but by attending to the heterogeneity of experiences of racism (6). Even though its subtitle implies a series of poetry written in the first person, Rankine writes from the perspective of the many black individuals who have spoken about their experiences of being black in America to form this series of microaggressions captured as vignettes. In an interview with National Public Radio (NPR), Rankine reveals to her audience the kind of fictionalizing of reality in which she partakes:

Many of the anecdotes in the book were gathered by asking friends of mine to tell me moments when racism surprisingly entered in, when you were among friends or colleagues, or just doing some ordinary thing in your day. (00:03:25-00:03:44)

In contrast with Mukařovský’s insistence that there is no place for reality in fiction, we observe, in *Citizen*, a correspondence between the two that makes sense considering today’s discursive climate: what is the state of fiction when the line between fiction and reality has been blurred, and the former begins to supplant the latter? If that which is posited as “truth” now yields suspicion more than anything else, then fiction is perhaps left as the only recourse to accessible meaning. Unlike the misinformation that thrives in a climate of epistemological confusion as it operates under the guise of “alternative facts”, fiction that is forthcoming about its own contrivances and constructed nature appears to be the most authentic. In *Citizen*, Rankine gestures towards this idea by offering fiction as the possible site in which some semblance of truth can be reclaimed. Yet, her poetic impulse is not directed towards a sense of veracity in the sense of affirming that something is real and has happened. Rather than offering up proofs, Rankine is more interested in renegotiating the persona-reader relationship in a way that places the reader directly within the moment of recollection, at the intersection of these everyday experiences of racism, shared amongst many individuals. Amalgamated into the singular voice of a persona that transcribes them into the second-person, the events described in the book are told to us by a voice that refers to the reader as “you”, placing them within the text.

The Acousmatic Voice and Discursive Authority

Invoking readers as part of the text forces them to relinquish the sense of autonomy that exists for them outside the realm of the text. Personal motivation or beliefs no longer function as the reader’s subjective experience, which is the only kind of experience they can have. Rather, it is replaced by the awareness of someone else’s self, someone else’s phenomenological experience that the persona puts the reader through. The persona begins the first vignette with this: “You smell good. You are twelve attending Sts. Philip and James School...” (Rankine 5). The comparison of the persona’s diction to the language of hypnotic induction becomes compelling here as an acousmatic voice, an unseen voice that coaxes the listener. Behind closed eyelids, the hypnotist’s patient stares into the veil of darkness as an acousmatic voice provides the “guidelines of the gaze” — the reader’s

gaze in this instance (Dolar 66). The notion of the acousmatic voice hearkens back to the story Pythagoras who would sit behind a curtain talking to his disciples, teaching them only through the use of his voice (Dolar 61). Self-consciousness of one's presence detracts from apprehension of the voice and presents an impediment to learning and listening. The sense of assured selfhood and autonomy that pervades in the awareness of one's body is read as a distraction that needs to be curtailed in order to clearly apprehend the significance of the voice. As the acousmatic voice supplants the patient's awareness of their body, Rankine likewise denies the reader the comforts of their own identity as they are subjected to the visceral experience of another. Returning to that first vignette in *Citizen*, Rankine introduces this complex dynamic through the simple and nondescript statement of "you smell good". Engaging in the sense of smell is also an experience of the body that the smell emanates from, even if unseen. To qualify it as a good smell further attests to a consciousness that is aware of the presence of its own body, but one that still remains unable to visually apprehend its own materiality. It is a figurative disembodiment, a blinding of readers to their own bodies in a corporeal curtailment that introduces, in its place, the re-embodiment of a "citizen" according to the persona.

The reader's discursive experience of the text is thus oriented towards the persona's voice. Michel Chion elaborates on the mechanics of the acousmatic voice as it appears in film, which yields some resonances with the act of reading involving the imagined image. He describes the acousmatic voice occurring in several ways, one of which involves a sound with unknown source before the speaker is revealed in image, thus "de-acousmatizing him" (72). Likewise, the persona in *Citizen* assumes a largely unseen position in which the readers are first made privy to the persona's phenomenological experience before being able to identify it as a person; the vignettes in *Citizen* turn the reader into a witness of *what* has happened to the persona rather than a testament to *who* the persona is. Yet, Steven Naylor gives the reader reason to anticipate that by the end of the book, the identity of the persona—the titular "citizen"—might be clarified. He suggests that the acousmatic voice acts "as an invisible source, rather than an unidentifiable or ambiguous one", that the persona occupying the acousmatic role is not interested in making herself unknowable, but just unseeable, to have her body recede as her voice resounds (207). Likewise, the use of the second-person voice estranges the reader from his or her own phenomenology and effaces his or her sense of an autonomous self so that the visceral accounts of racism can come through more emphatically.

The Anxiety of Unanswerable Questions

Citizen rarely leaves space in which the reader might feel comfortable. Rankine unceasingly denies readers any convenient sense of hope or respite that might be engendered by offering a solution to America's difficulties with race. Rather, she keeps readers in this state of tension through a series of questions that yield no immediate answers in order to demonstrate the impossibility of arriving at a totalizing truth. Although *Citizen*, at first glance, appears to be the prelude to a personal and patriotic exaltation of America, Rankine abandons the first-person "I" and the lyric form entirely as if to say that her experience of citizenship is always qualified by the second-person "you" with which she articulates her critique instead. Racism in the American context is thus never something

that can be claimed or denied by an individual, but exists beyond them as a shared condition of being an American citizen. As to whom “you” or “I” actually refers, Rankine refuses to satisfy readers with an answer. The figure of the citizen becomes more indeterminate as Rankine appears to oscillate between speaking from her own perspective and taking on the voice of the poetic persona — readers are thus not entirely sure who is speaking at which moment. Ultimately, however, it is the way in which she has collected the observations and events that occur in *Citizen* that forces us to rethink the idea of a totalizing, singular mode of citizenship that many who subscribe to a post-truth ideology often take for granted. Colin Kaepernick’s critics, to return to an earlier example, operate on the notion that the experience of American citizenship can be united into a single demonstration of solidarity such as standing during the national anthem. Rankine, in collecting these anecdotes, thus frames *Citizen* as a project that is still in the process of figuring out the question of “who gets to hold that status [of being an American citizen]”, but remains nevertheless aware of the capaciousness of that question and the difficulty in arriving at a straightforward answer.

Indeed, *Citizen* thrives in its frequent moments of ambiguity in spite of the discursive authority of the acousmatic voice; the events in the texts are often brought forth with more questions than explanation, a recollection of visceral rather than cerebral reactions that sometimes catches even the persona herself by surprise. In an instance exemplifying this, the persona recalls a situation in which a classmate asked “us” to help her cheat in an exam, and gets away with it even under the strict supervision of Sister Evelyn. “Sister Evelyn must think these two girls think a lot alike... or she never actually saw you sitting there” (Rankine 5). These are neither suggested thoughts for the reader, nor are they facts. The hypothetical “or” also reveals this comment as part of the persona’s own extrapolation and evaluation of the situation, even if she insists on articulating it in the second-person. In the span of that brief sentence, the persona assumes that narrative space as an almost confusingly autobiographical moment in which their sarcasm transitions into the realization that Sister Evelyn’s ignoring of “you” could also potentially imply an unwillingness to acknowledge them. The persona is thus not an omniscient narrator, but experiences the very same epistemological limitations she accuses “us” of having—limitations that she tries to reveal. “And you never called her on it (why not?)” (7), she asks in another one of the early scenes. This parenthetical aggression makes no sense in a hypothetical scenario to which the reader cannot possibly offer an answer. It is only the persona, the one who has invoked those moments to begin with, who can offer us an answer to that question. As with the case of Sister Evelyn, however, she relinquishes that discursive authority and leaves readers in a questioning silence that no one can seem to answer. Yet, the space of a question also impels the reader to consider the difficulties in filling that silence and experience the disabling effects of the impulse to do so.

In many ways, therefore, *Citizen* is about being captured off-guard and acknowledging the possible vulnerabilities that arise in reaction to racism, and, more importantly, the vulnerabilities that are engendered within one’s experience of racism. Oftentimes the underlying question in each of these episodes is, “Is this racist behaviour?”, or, “Why am I feeling this way?”. It is the destabilising of that phenomenological sense of judgment that ultimately makes the individual feel vulnerable, a constant second-guessing and undercutting of the self that Rankine wishes her readers experience. It is in the

unrelenting indeterminateness of the situation and in the giving of the benefit of the doubt that a black person is reminded of the possibility that someone might have just called him or her out for their race. The persona itself is as mystified as the reader here, with no answer as to whether or not Sister Evelyn was ignoring “you” because of appearance. Rankine, in modelling this indeterminateness through the formal structures of her poetry, thus creates an environment where questions are frustrating in their unanswerability — where any attempt at uncovering the truth ceases to make sense because the experience is characterized by its complexity.

A Return to Self-Reflexivity

All these instances of inscribing the reader within the text so far involve a play on perspectives: a shift from the state of autonomous self-assured individual to a character subjected to the suddenness and indeterminateness of a racial discourse that cannot be escaped. No version of the “truth” can efface the pervasive, visceral implications of race—or at least, Rankine refuses to allow this to happen within the pages of *Citizen*. She affirms that, in spite of beliefs in America’s post-racial state, race itself exists as a project that has been under construction for a long time. If the design of *Citizen*’s cover evokes the ways in which the notion of the “American Citizen” has been constructed and the artifice that it engenders, then it is at the end of the third chapter where Rankine continues this endeavour, explicitly framing the relationship between black bodies and white America as an image-object with an explicit attention to the agents responsible for its creation. Here, she turns to another artwork: two out of four drawings made by Glenn Ligon in his 1992 work, *Untitled: Four Etchings* (see fig. 1).

Two sentences appear, each occupying facing pages across a full spread: the left is occupied by the phrase “I do not always feel coloured”, and the right by “I feel most coloured when I am thrown against a sharp white background” (Rankine 52-53). These recognizable lines are taken from Zora Neale Hurston’s essay “How It Feels to Be Colored Me,” in which she recounts the moment in her childhood when she realized what it means to be “coloured” for the first time. As an attempt to speak of blackness from a personal perspective, Hurston’s essay fits in with the rest of *Citizen*’s biographical leanings. Rankine here joins Ligon in addressing the issue of race through modern forms of representation. Their confluence of voices provides a reinterpretation of Hurston’s dyadic refrains, “I do not always feel coloured” and “I feel most coloured when I am thrown against a sharp white background” (828). Hurston’s words are repeatedly printed down the page as a seemingly endless string of text. Here, the conventions of typesetting we have been following to this point fall apart. The words in their repetition immediately run onto the next line once they hit the margins. Unpunctuated and uninterrupted, they carry a momentum that refuses to adhere to the formal structures of poetry or the progression of prose—they have no visible end or beginning.

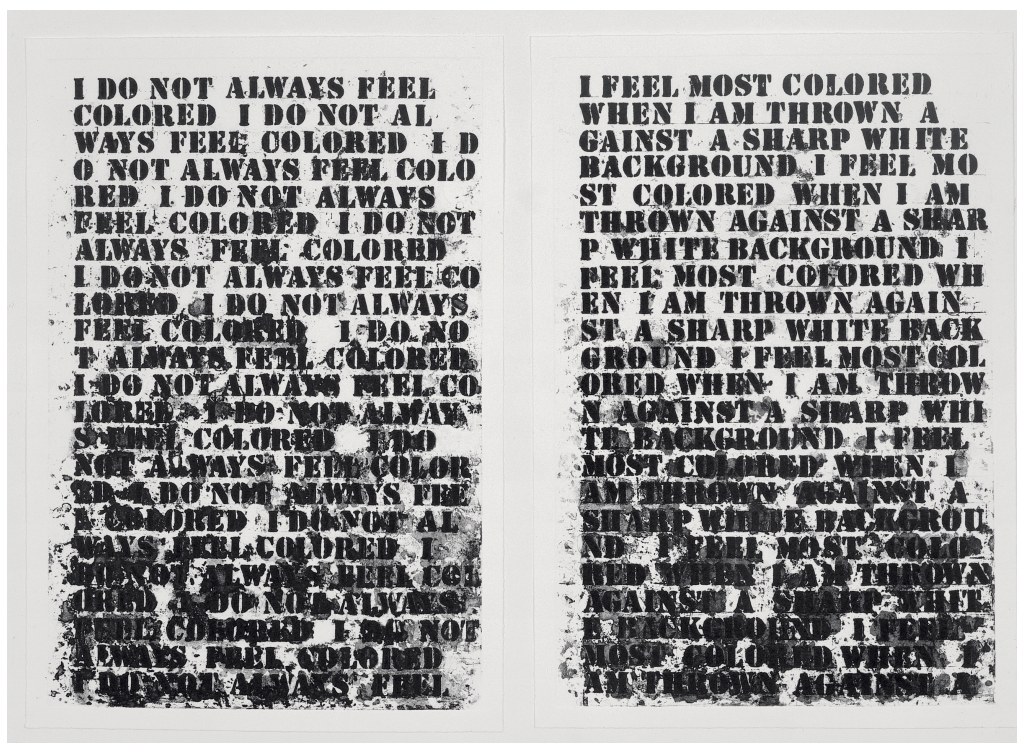


Figure 1. Detail of *Untitled: (Four Etchings)*, 1992 by Glenn Ligon; 2 of 4 etchings. Credits: © Glenn Ligon; Courtesy of the artist, Luhring Augustine, New York, Regen Projects, Los Angeles, and Thomas Dane Gallery, London.

Set in a bigger and bolder type, the words are typographically stylised to look like spray-painted lettering that has been stencilled upon a surface. Representing the words as a physically printed object gives them a certain texture. The illusion of being written on a wall and the text's resemblance to graffiti resists the flatness of the page upon which it is marked. It is in this moment that *Citizen* shows its temerity as it uses Ligon's work to play with the conventions of textual production with which *Citizen* must reckon as a book of poetry. We observe, turning the page, how the words we were reading previously are now starting to operate beyond a merely textual level in which the reader is made aware of its existence as printed matter. Adding to a sense of tactility, the words eventually blur in a manner that resembles the smudging of ink. In this way, Rankine brings our attention to the constructed nature of the image by incorporating it within the moment of failure when the creator's artistic vision is compromised: when the smudging of ink reveals the unintentional brushing of hands, the moment when that perfect image on the page fails.

The resonances between the corporeal form of the black body and the image thus suggest the presence of greater forces at play that forcibly inscribe the body, like an image, onto a surface. The moments of microaggressions Rankine discusses in *Citizen* reflect the dynamics between foreground and background in which the black body comes forth more conspicuously. More significant, however, is Rankine's subtle interpretative gesture where she construes blackness as text and image. The confluence of mediums shared between her and Hurston now interact with each other to suggest that blackness is a product of reading and construction which can and should be dismantled, just as the smudging of the stroke and texture of the ink are indicative of the hands of the artist. This moment of

self-reflexivity in *Citizen* therefore compels the reader to observe the dirt upon their fingers, and interrogate their own complicity in the racializing of the black body.

Conclusion

Citizen demonstrates an alternative way to address the post-truth rhetoric prevalent in contemporary public discourse in America. Instead of offering a series of counterarguments, Rankine makes use of poetry's openness to unique formal structures in order to displace the reader from any pretensions of personal belief and ideology. The use of the second person, the persona's relinquishing of their discursive authority, and self-reflexive impulses compel the reader to consider not merely cerebral truth, but also the visceral realities of racism in a society that is often tempted to consider itself post-racial. In doing so, Rankine demonstrates that poetry can indeed grapple with reality in the post-truth era, perhaps even as a necessary part of its opposition in a time where claims of truth are more suspicious than ever. In this moment, a fiction that is more interested in attending to the experience of the individual than making claims about the world may emerge as a more resonant voice.

Works Cited

- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015. Print.
- Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. Print.
- Doležel, Lubomír. "Truth and Authenticity in Narrative." *Narratology I: Poetics of Fiction*, special issue of *Poetics Today*, 1.3 (1980): 7-25. Print.
- Dolar, Mladen. *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006. Print.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Chicago: Dover Publications Inc., 1994. Print.
- Hammons, David. *In The Hood*. 1993, installation, Mnuchin Gallery, New York.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. "How It Feels To Be Coloured Me." In *Zora Neale Hurston: Folklore, Memoirs, And Other Writings*, edited by Cheryl Wall. New York: Library of America, 1995, pp. 826-829. Print.
- Kellaway, Kate. "Claudia Rankine: 'Blackness in the white imagination has nothing to do with black people'". *The Guardian*, 27 December 2015, theguardian.com/books/2015/dec/27/claudia-rankine-poet-citizen-american-lyric-feature. Accessed 19 August 2017. Web.
- Mukařovský, Jan. *On Poetic Language*. Translated by John Burbank and Peter Steiner. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976. Print.
- Naylor, Steven. "Voice: The Persistent Source." *Organized Sound*, 21.3 (2016): 204-212. Print.
- Orbe, Mark P. *Communication Realities in a "Post-Racial" Society: What the U.S. Public Really Thinks about Barack Obama*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011. Print.
- Patterson, Robert J. "Black Lives Matter, Except When They Don't: Why Slavery's Psychic Hold Matters." In *The Psychic Hold of Slavery: Legacies in American Expressive Culture*, edited by Soyica Diggs Colbert, Robert J. Patterson, and Aida Levy-Hussen. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2016, pp. 212-220. Print.
- "post-truth, adj." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2017, www.oed.com/view/Entry/58609044. Accessed 11 September 2017. Web.
- Rankine, Claudia. *Citizen: An American Lyric*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2014. Print.
- . Interview by Eric Westervelt. *NPR*, 3 January 2015, npr.org/2015/01/03/374574142/in-citizen-poet-strips-bare-the-realities-of-everyday-racism. Accessed 19 August 2017. Web.
- Weiss, Gail. *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality*. London: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- Woods, John Hayden. *The Logic of Fiction. A Philosophical Sounding of Deviant Logic*. Paris: Mouton, 1974. Print.

Author Biography

Olivia Djawoto is currently pursuing an M.A. in English Literature at Nanyang Technological University. Her primary field of research is in the representation of the black body in contemporary African-American literature, and her thesis specifically examines works by Ta-Nehisi Coates, Claudia Rankine, and Suzan-Lori Parks. Her other research interests include performativity and the intersections of phenomenology and space. Olivia has also previously been published in *Moving Worlds: A Journal of Transcultural Writings* and the online culture magazine *Mackerel.life*. In addition to her own research, she is currently involved in research projects related to digital humanities and literature pedagogy.