

### **Panel 10: Testimonial Writing Across the Americas**

1. Lisa Ortiz-Vilarelle, The College of New Jersey [[ortiz@tcnj.edu](mailto:ortiz@tcnj.edu)]

#### **Milk Poems and Blood Poems: Autobiographical Poetry and the New Nicaraguan Woman**

In 1967, *La Prensa Literaria*, Nicaragua's most highly regarded literary magazine, laments that Nicaragua is "overpopulated" by "poetesses" who outnumber male poets 1,000 to 700 in the capital alone. Nicaraguan women were virtually invisible in their nation's literary history until the future of a revolutionary "new Nicaragua" was being imagined by an idealist, nationalist, socialist, but not always feminist, Sandinista movement. Through the literary magazines founded by the Sandinista National Liberation Front, these spokeswomen and activists published transformative autobiographical poetry chronicling the aesthetic, social, and political birth of the "new woman" in Nicaragua. This poetry introduced a new voice – that of a self-reflective revolutionary womanhood. The focus of this paper is the construction Sandinista womanhood through its autobiographical depiction in a full range of embodied self-expression. This paper will examine the poetry of six influential guerilla poets of the revolution – Daisy Zamora, Gioconda Belli, Yolanda Blanco, Michele Najlis, Vidaluz Meneses, and Rosario Murillo, wife of Sandinista leader and president of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega – all of whom vocalize the emergence of the "New Nicaraguan Woman" as experienced in the physical body. Unapologetically presented in cycles of menstruation, states of pregnancy, labor of childbirth, and climaxes of erotic ecstasy, these poets challenge the bourgeois chivalry of the ruling class for which graphic references to the female body are considered indecent. Depicted as well in acts of volunteerism, advocacy, and armed rebellion, these poets reveal bodies in the act of creating the New Nicaragua and defy the overshadowing masculinist content typical of testimonial poetry dedicated to the insurrection of macho rebel leaders.

#### **Poemas de Leche y Poemas de Sangre: Poesía Autobiográfica y la Nueva Mujer Nicaragüense**

En 1967, *La Prensa Literaria*, la revista literario más estimado de Nicaragua, lamenta que Nicaragua es "superpobaldo" por "poetistas" que superan a poetas masculinos 1.000 a 700 en la capital solamente. Mujeres Nicaragüense eran prácticamente invisibles en la historia de la literatura de su nación hasta que el futuro de un revolucionario "nueva Nicaragua" fue imaginado por un idealista, nacionalista, socialista, pero no siempre feminista, movimiento de Sandinista. A través de las revistas literarias fundadas por el Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, estos portavoces y activistas publicaron poesía autobiográfica transformadora que relata el nacimiento de la estética, social, y político de la "nueva mujer" en Nicaragua. Esta poesía presentó una nueva voz - la de una mujer revolucionaria auto-reflexiva. El enfoque de este trabajo es la construcción de la vida como mujer Sandinista a través de su representación autobiográfica en una amplia gama de expresión encarnada. Este ensayo examinará la poesía de seis influyentes poetas guerrilleras de la revolución - Daisy Zamora, Gioconda Belli, Yolanda Blanco, Michele Najlis, Vidaluz Meneses y Rosario Murillo, esposa del líder Sandinista y Presidente de Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega - que vocalizan el surgimiento de la "nueva mujer nicaragüense" como experiencia en el cuerpo físico.

Presentado sin disculpas en ciclos de menstruación, estados de embarazo y parto, y en clímax del éxtasis erótico, estos poetas impugna la caballería burguesa de la clase dominante para que referencias gráficas al cuerpo femenino se consideraron indecentes. Representado así en actos de voluntariado, la abogacía, y la rebelión armada, estos poetas revelan cuerpos en el acto de la creación de la nueva Nicaragua y desafían contenido ofuscador masculinista típico de la poesía testimonial dedicada a la insurrección de los dirigentes rebeldes macho.

Lisa Ortiz-Vilarelle is an Associate Professor of English at The College of New Jersey. She specializes in 20th-century Multiethnic and Inter-American literature and autobiographical studies with specific interest in narratives of exile, immigration, and dictatorship throughout the Latin American diaspora. Her recent publications include “Julia Alvarez and the Autobiographical Antojito” in Emily Hipchen and Rebecca Harrison’s *Inhabiting La Patria: Identity, Agency, and Antojito in the Work of Julia Alvarez*, “‘Becoming a Butterfly’: Julia Alvarez’s In the Time of the Butterflies as Autoethnography,” (*a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*), “‘The Place My Grandmother Made’: Diaspora Genealogy in Michelle Cliff’s *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*,” forthcoming in *Life Writing Annual*, and “‘Distinguished Ladies’ and the Doctrine of Womanhood: Auto-surveillance and Auto-performance in Diamela Eltit’s *E. Luminata*,” forthcoming in *The Journal of European Life Writing*. She is currently at work on a manuscript about Latin American women’s autobiographical writing and dictatorship. The work shared in this panel is a selection from a book chapter on autobiographical innovations within the Sandinista movement.

2. Lisa R. Brown, U of West Indies at Mona [chia@cwjamaica.com](mailto:chia@cwjamaica.com)

“It’s good that I write this down”: Caribbean Life Writing by Danticat, Marshall, and Nunez

In *Transnational Negotiations in Caribbean Diasporic Literature* (2010), Kezia Page considers the work of generations of Caribbean writers whose work functions as cultural remittances which posit returns of varying kinds both to the Caribbean and the wider diaspora. She writes: “Indeed, neither exile nor diaspora can be considered outside of return, despite the different subject positions that drive return in each-in one, return functions as an antidote to displacement” (9:2010). While Page’s work examines fiction as well as life writing, she does articulate the ways the texts function within the wider framework of border-crossings, travel, loss and reclamation that characterize transnational narratives. My paper considers the memoirs of three Caribbean women writers to explore the ways the texts function as cultural remittances which offer sites of possibility for reading the intersection of class and gender. The three texts are Edwidge Danticat’s *Brother, I am Dying* (2007), Paule Marshall’s *Triangular Road* (2009) and Elizabeth Nunez’s *Not for Everyday Use* (2014). I want to explore how these texts offer new ways of reading by investigating the deployment of fundamental concepts of life writing namely performativity, positionality and relationality within the framework of the transnational text to chart shifts, changes and repetitions which might reveal the nature of the cultural remit for future generations. Smith and Watson (2009) note that and understanding of these key terms continue to: “enable more flexible reading practices and more inclusive approaches to the field of life narrative” (16:2009). By mapping the deployment of these concepts across texts, I hope to raise

questions about the specific concerns of women writers from the Caribbean; the changes in strategies of self-representation and the possible readings on both sides of the cultural ‘return’.

“É bom que eu escreva isto”: a escrita da vida caribenha de Danticat, Marshall e Nunez

Em ‘Transnational Negotiations in Caribbean Diasporic Literature’ [Negociações transnacionais na literatura diaspórica caribenha, em tradução livre] (2010), Kezia Page trata do trabalho de gerações de escritores caribenhos cujas obras funcionam como “remessas culturais” que propõem retornos, de vários tipos, para migrantes originários do Caribe e de outras partes do mundo. Ela escreve: “De fato, nem o exílio nem a diáspora podem ser dissociados do retorno; apesar da diferença entre as posições do sujeito que levam ao retorno em cada caso, ele funciona como um antídoto para o deslocamento” (9:2010). Apesar de se concentrar na ficção e na escrita da vida, Page não deixa de articular como os textos funcionam dentro da perspectiva maior do cruzamento de fronteiras, viagens, perdas e reivindicações que caracterizam as narrativas transnacionais. Meu artigo analisa as memórias de três escritoras caribenhos para investigar como os textos funcionam como remessas culturais, que oferecem lugares de possibilidade para a leitura da intersecção entre classe e gênero. Os três textos são: ‘Brother, I am Dying’ [lançado no Brasil como ‘Adeus, Haiti’] (2007), de Edwidge Danticat; ‘Triangular Road’ [Estrada triangular] (2009), de Paule Marshall; e ‘Not for Everyday Use’ [Não usar no dia a dia] (2014), de Elizabeth Nunez. Quero entender como esses textos oferecem novos modos de leitura, investigando o emprego de conceitos fundamentais da escrita da vida – a saber, performatividade, posicionalidade e relacionalidade –, dentro da perspectiva do texto transnacional, e das variações, mudanças e repetições que podem predizer a natureza das remessas culturais de gerações futuras. Smith e Watson (2009) observam que a compreensão desses termos-chave “possibilita que as práticas de leitura sejam mais flexíveis, e as abordagens da área da escrita biográfica, mais inclusivas” (16:2009). Ao mapear o emprego desses conceitos nos textos, espero chamar atenção para as preocupações específicas das escritoras do Caribe, as mudanças nas estratégias de autorrepresentação e as leituras possíveis em ambos os lados do “retorno” cultural.

[Traduzido por Beatriz Vital - [vitalb@riseup.net](mailto:vitalb@riseup.net)]

Lisa R. Brown is a lecturer and MPhil candidate in the Department of Literatures in English at UWI, Mona Kingston, Jamaica. She was a recipient of the Inaugural Timothy Dow Adams award and is completing a chapter on autobiographical self-portraiture in the work of photographer R. Ray Chen. She teaches courses in modern drama, life writing and Shakespeare and was recently the Jamaica co-ordinator for the Play Your Part Project put on by the British Council Caribbean to celebrate the 400-year anniversary of Shakespeare’s death.

3. Shamika Shabnam, McMaster U [[shabnams@mcmaster.ca](mailto:shabnams@mcmaster.ca)]

Mapping the Ineffaceable: Flesh and Paper as Inscriptive Sites of Pain in Eisha Marjara’s *Faerie*

This abstract concentrates on the female body in extremis as an inscriptive surface, and its association with paper as a therapeutic paraphernalia in Eisha Marjara’s *Faerie* (2016). The novella focuses on a Punjabi-Canadian teenage girl named Lila, who narrates her prevailing struggles with her body within the monitored, restrictive space of a hospital room. Lila renders

her body a fleshy object of deception perpetually marked by the permeable inheritance of a “fat” structure significantly displaced from the trendy contours of a “slim” porcelain figure (25). It is within the peripheries of the hospital that Lila befriends a girl named Alyssa, who has the urge to wound her skin with sharp objects. In taking a literary and theoretical approach, I analyze the ways in which paper becomes the object onto which Alyssa strongly projects her frustrations, be it in the form of tearing, or leaving a forcible streak. My methodology includes discourse analysis of theoretical and historical texts pertinent to the interior/exterior mapping of skins (Ahmed & Stacey 2001; Takemoto 2001) and the (diasporic) female body as the material site of erasure and (re)inscription of social discourses (Canning 1999). I also discuss psychoanalytic readings deployed around the writing of skin, paper and materiality (Cavanagh, et al. 2013).

As I contend, the lingering injuries “mapped-out” on Alyssa’s arms and wrists are bodily inscriptions that narrate the scarring consequence of her giving into her urge (Kilby 127). The impediment to inscribe wounds on the skin, results in the projection of a “grotesque” distorted blotch on a blank paper as Alyssa presses down on the “soft” bristles of a blunt paintbrush (122). When there are no objects (sharp or blunt) at reach, the ripping of newspapers becomes a therapeutic outlet for Alyssa’s pain. I explore how her inability to re-write raw wounds on the body results in her destruction of newspapers, which in themselves are written works of print and inscribed reflections of what Lucy Norris calls the “second skin” (Norris 63). Therefore, paper functions as a transit surface (second skin) replaced by blotches for scars and bristles for sharp objects when the body in extremis fails to carry out self-inflicted pain. In engaging with Shadrack and Salecl’s discourse on the (un)changeability of the encoded skin, I examine the near perennial, generational imprint on the medicated female bodies in pain, pertinent to both Alyssa’s “open wounds” and Lila’s permeable body (Takemoto 104). I further discuss and the extent to which the characters succeed in rewriting and reclaiming their skins. My argument is significant for reading the larger field of twenty-first century diasporic women’s writing on migrated, displaced and dislocated bodies (Amrith 2011; Puwar & Raghuram 2003).

Ahmed, Sara, and Jackie Stacey. “Introduction: Dermographies.” *Thinking Through the Skin*. Ed. Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey. New York: Routledge, 2001. 1-18. Print.

Amrith, Sunil S. *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Print.

Canning, Kathleen. “The Body as Method?: Reflections on the Place of the Body in GenderHistory.” *Gender & History*. 11.3 (1999): 499-513. Print.

Cavanagh, Shelia L, et al. *Skin, Culture and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Print.

Kilby, Jane. “Carved in Skin: Bearing Witness to Self-Harm.” *Thinking Through the Skin*. Ed. Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey. New York: Routledge, 2001. 124-142. Print.

Marjara, Eisha. *Faerie*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2015. Print.

Norris, Lucy. “Shedding Skins: The Materiality of Divestment in India.” *Journal of Material Culture*. 9.1 (2004): 59-71. Print.

Puwar, Nirmal, and Parvati Raghuram. *South Asian Women in the Diaspora*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003. Print.

Salecl, Renata. "Cut in the Body: From Clitoridectomy to Body Art." *Thinking Through the Skin*. Ed. Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey. New York: Routledge, 2001. 21-35. Print.

Shadrack, Jasmine. "Resisting the Palimpsest: Reclamation of the Female Cultural Body." *Art and Design Review*. 1.2 (2013): 11-14. Print.

Takemoto, Tina. "Open Wounds." *Thinking Through the Skin*. Ed. Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey. London; New York: Routledge, 2001. 104-123. Print.

Mapeando o inapagável: carne e papel como locais inscritíveis de dor no 'Faerie' de Eisha Marjara

Este artigo se concentra no corpo feminino in extremis como uma superfície inscritível e sua associação com papel como um aparato terapêutico no 'Faerie' de Eisha Marjara (2016). A novela foca numa adolescente punjabi-canadense chamada Lila que narra sua luta constante com seu corpo dentro do espaço monitorado e restritivo de um quarto de hospital. Lila torna seu corpo um objeto carnal de subterfúgio perpetuamente marcado pela herança permeável de uma estrutura "gorda" significativamente fora da silhueta "magra" de porcelana padrão. É na periferia do hospital que Lila faz amizade com uma garota chamada Alyssa, que tem o impulso de machucar sua pele com objetos afiados. Ao usar uma abordagem literária e teórica, analiso as formas pelas quais papel se torna o objeto no qual Alyssa projeta fortemente suas frustrações, seja rasgando ou deixando um forte traço. Minha metodologia inclui análise do discurso de textos históricos e teóricos pertinentes ao mapeamento interior/exterior das peles (Ahmed & Stacey 2001; Takemoto 2001) e ao corpo feminino (em diáspora) como campo material de apagamento e (re)inscrição de discursos sociais (Canning 1999). Também discuto leituras psicanalíticas implementadas acerca da escrita de pele, papel e materialidade (Cavanagh, et al. 2013).

Como argumento, as lesões persistentes "mapeadas" nos braços e pulsos de Alyssa são inscrições corporais que narram as consequências desfigurantes de ceder ao seu impulso (Kilby 127). Impedir a inscrição de feridas na pele resulta na projeção de uma mancha "grotesca" distorcida num papel em branco enquanto Alyssa aperta as cerdas "macias" de um pincel cego (122). Quando não há objetos (afiados ou cegos) ao alcance, rasgar jornais se torna uma saída terapêutica para a dor de Alyssa. Exploro como sua inabilidade para reescrever feridas no corpo resulta na sua destruição de jornais, que em si mesmos são trabalhos escritos impressos e reflexos inscritos do que Lucy Norris chama de "a segunda pele" (Norris 63). Portanto, o papel funciona como uma superfície transitiva (segunda pele), na qual manchas substituem cicatrizes e cerdas substituem objetos afiados, quando o corpo in extremis falha em executar a dor autoinfligida. Ao contatar o discurso de Shadrack e Salecl sobre a (i)mutabilidade da pele codificada, examino a marca geracional, quase perene nos corpos femininos medicados em sofrimento, pertinente tanto para os "ferimentos abertos" de Alyssa quanto para o corpo permeável de Lila (Takemoto 104). Adiante, discuto a que extensão os personagens são bem sucedidos em reescrever e se reapropriar de suas peles. Meu argumento é significativo para a

IABAA 2017

leitura do amplo campo, no século XXI, da escrita de diáspora das mulheres sobre corpos migrantes, desalojados e deslocados (Amrith 2011; Puwar & Raghuram 2003).

[Traduzido por Lucas Victor de Oliveira - [oliveiralucasvictor@gmail.com](mailto:oliveiralucasvictor@gmail.com)]

Shamika Shabnam is currently doing her PhD in English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada. Her doctoral research includes the workings of female identities, affect theory and emotionality pertinent to South Asian and South Asian Diasporic Literature, Theory and (Popular) Culture. Her research interests include Partition Theory, Diasporic Studies Womanhood in Colonial India, Subcontinental Literature, Post-colonial Feminist Studies and more. She holds a Master of Postcolonial Literary and Cultural Theory from the University of Leeds, UK, and has presented in a number of conferences, including the 30th Air India Anniversary Conference (May 2016) and the Gender Issues in India Symposium (October 2016). Shamika is presently in her second year of PhD, and is preparing for her Comprehensive Examination.