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"Make It News": Racist (Micro)Aggressions, the Lyrical You, and Increased Legibility in Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric*

Abstract: Claudia Rankin's *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014) is a perplexing work both because of its unusual presentation of the issue of racism in America and the original formal ways through which its message is communicated. It is formally innovative and technically experimental in an 'average reader'-friendly manner, situating itself a world apart from the poetics of "deliberate illegibility" and "increased interruption." By communicating its message directly, it is almost a poem with a purpose, yet it makes categories travel. The subtitle emphasizes *Citizen*'s belonging in the generic tradition of the lyric despite the fact that the lyrical "I" remains almost non-existent here; instead, the poem draws on extensive implementation of apostrophe—related to Butler's concept of "addressability." Also the phrase "American lyric" situates Rankin's book outside of the well-established categories of black lyrical poetry whose essential feature is its connection with black musical form of the blues. *Citizen* can be classified as a prose-poem essay, yet its sociological orientation and emphasis on poetic form's and language's capacities to inform, instruct, emotionally move, and morally engage the reader go together with activating more 'conventionally experimental' strategies as it merges the verbal, visual, and performance arts, using photographs, TV programmes, film frames, "situation videos," installations, and conceptual art. The article explores those issues, demonstrating how formal innovation may serve the purpose of reaching a relatively wide audience and make poetry matter within the field of current public debate on important social and cultural problems.

Keywords: Claudia Rankine, addressability, blackness, discrimination, (il)legibility

Since Ezra Pound's "Make it new" demand, in America attempting innovation has become a must for experimental poetry, if not for poetry as such, as the preferences of academic criticism proved at the end of the 20th century. Perhaps innovation can be taken for the poetic ore itself. Surely it helps generate and sustain the experience of astonishment as contrasted with our everyday "knowing"—i.e. minds equipped with unquestioned and unquestionable theories and truths, not infrequently inherited from our Stone Age ancestors (as we are informed by evolutionary psychologists and their emissaries in the field of cognitive literary studies today). Seen from this perspective, innovation appears to be a means of phenomenological reduction, liberating the poet—and, by extension, the reader—from the burden of preconceptions and *a priori* convictions, and taking us back to the phenomena themselves, to the world as enigma, language as open possibility, artistic process as adventure and poetic form as a tool for discovery.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary online defines "innovation" simply as:

1/ the introduction of something new;

2/ a new idea, method, or device; novelty;

Oxforddictionaries.com gives a similar definition, but followed by an interesting example of usage:

Innovation:

1. The action or process of innovating;

1.1. A new method, idea, product, etc.

'*technological innovations designed to save energy*'

The example above suggests that innovation is not practiced merely for novelty's sake or as a strategy of discovering the world or experimenting with it. Rather, it has a practical purpose to accomplish. Obviously, the ever present buzzword "innovation" is not limited to poetry; it is also extensively used in business, an area which ascribes to it a much more precise and definitive meaning. According to *BusinessDictionary.com* innovation is a

> process of translating an idea or *invention* into a good or service *that creates value* or *for which customers will pay*. To be called an innovation, an idea must be replicable at an economical cost and *must satisfy a specific need*. Innovation involves deliberate application of information, imagination and initiative in deriving greater or different values from resources, and includes all processes by which new ideas are generated and converted into *useful products*. (emphasis added)

In business, innovation often "results when ideas are applied by the company in order to further *satisfy the needs and expectations* of the *customers*" (*BusinessDictionary.com*). I hasten to add: the needs and expectations of *the present customers*, which means that inventions-turned-innovations do not remain the latter forever. Innovation is by its nature temporary and, in the world today, when expectations of constant novelty are sky-high, novelty itself is short-lived.

I believe that such a "customer-oriented" approach to innovation should be kept in mind when Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric* is discussed, a profoundly-cum-surprisingly perplexing work of literature both because of its original presentation of the issue of racism in America today and the original formal ways through which its message is communicated. The questions to be addressed in this article read: What exactly is the purpose of formal invention in the volume? Does it result in innovation? If so, what specific needs and expectations of the readers/customers does it satisfy? In what sense is the final product useful?

Rankine's book, regarded by Evie Shockley, who characterized *Citizen* online as a successful "artistic representation of the American *zeitgeist*," has been the winner of a number of literary prizes, including the 2014 National Book Critics Circle Award (Poetry) and that same year's finalist of NBCC in the category of "Criticism," which suggests a recognizable degree of its "genre indeterminacy" (Shockley) of

Citizen tend to call its components (and quite rightly) "essays," "lyric essays," "prose narratives," "stories," and "prose representations" significantly more often than "poems"—even "prose poems"—even when the volume as a whole is referred to as "poetry" (Shockley). Evie Shockley points out that her Black Poetry course students spontaneously observed that "*It's not like poetry,*" which they meant as a compliment rather than criticism. What they specifically responded powerfully to was that *Citizen*, compared to the many other works they studied together as part of the course, gave the reader an "unmediated access to a recognizable truth" (Shockley).

I am far from saying that the students are right in their indirect rejection of most poetic production (especially written in the mode of the L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E school) as "inaccessible" and in consequence useless, yet I find it symptomatic that drawing attention to the book's "unconventionality as poetry" largely serves the purpose to "signal its accessibility as prose" (Shockley). In other words, "the qualities that mark *Citizen* as 'experimental' poetry are precisely the qualities that make it inviting, despite its disturbing subject matter, to a generally poetry-phobic public" (Shockley). It is as if we are back to the 1980s debate run under the banners of New Formalism and New Narrativism as to how poetry can regain the attention of the reading public and how to make it matter. As Shockley observes, "the book's reception seems fundamentally linked to its perceived transparency" which

> makes this poem's presentation of white supremacist ideology... so much clearer, more shocking, or more unavoidable, even in the eyes of poetry's devotees, than the legions of poems that black poets have composed in this vein during the century of the color line and in the decade and a half of this new century.

A similar view is expressed by Marjorie Perloff in the blurb:

> What does it mean to be a black citizen in the US of the early twenty-first century? Claudia Rankine's brilliant, terse, and parabolic prose poems have a shock value *rarely found in poetry*. These tales of everyday life—whether the narrator's or the lives of young black men like Trayvon Martin and James Craig Anderson—dwell on the most normal exteriors and the most ordinary of daily situations so as to expose what is really there: a racism so guarded and carefully masked as to make it all the more insidious. (emphasis added)

I would like to emphasize Perloff's phrase "rarely found in poetry," in spite of the fact that this quotation appears in the blurb on the back cover, where exaggerated praise is a norm. What the critic supposedly means by that is that Rankine seems to have found a formally effective way to capture and communicate the black experience of racism and altered manifestations—compared with the direct brutality and violence (e.g. lynching) and overt discriminatory practices in the past (e.g. Jim Crow

laws)—of racism in contemporary America by separating her prose poems from the present standard of sophisticated linguistic complexity. Yet, it is thematic and formal innovation of *Citizen*, which accounts for the book's power. *Citizen* challenges currently circulated critical categories in many respects. It is formally inventive and technically experimental in an unusual, "average reader"-friendly manner, situating itself a world apart from the poetics of "deliberate illegibility" and "increased interruption," by foregrounding its own communicative and affective functions. By communicating its message directly, it is almost a poem with a purpose, openly didactic in its intention—it is not a coincidence that its last sentence reads: "It was a lesson" (159).

Nevertheless, Rankine makes categories travel in *Citizen*. The subtitle emphasizes *Citizen*'s belonging in the generic tradition of the lyric despite the fact that the lyrical "I" remains almost non-existent here; instead, the poem draws on the extensive implementation of apostrophe. Also the phrase "American lyric" situates Rankine's book outside of the well-established categories of African American lyrical poetry whose essential feature is its close connection with black musical forms (especially the blues). It can be classified as a prose-poem essay or a narrative prose-poem, anchoring itself within the poetic "conservative" trend identified as "new narrativism." The book's sociological orientation and emphasis on poetic form's and language's capacities to inform, instruct, emotionally move, and morally engage the reader goes together with activating more "conventionally experimental" strategies as it merges the verbal, visual, and performance arts, using photographs, TV programs, film frames, "situation videos," installations, and conceptual art. Now I am going to take a selective look at the volume's formal inventiveness in these respects.

Apart from the national and international media-covered examples of large-scale, spectacular instances of racism in the United States included in part VI of the book as a series of scripts for situation videos (on Hurricane Katrina, Trayvon Martin, James Craig Anderson, Mark Duggan, Jena Six, Zinedine Zidane's headbutt among others), *Citizen* accumulates and describes with surgical precision cases of racist microaggressions (implied judgements, remarks, comments etc.) collected by the author from her friends and acquaintances (mostly in part one, but also, for instance, in part VI's scripts for situation videos: "Stop-and-Frisk" and "Making Room"). Here Rankine probes under the facade of middle-class and academic norms and standards, in the post-affirmative-action world of supposed political correctness. As Rob Bryan in his online article entitled "Against a Sharp White Background: Race and Decorum in Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*" puts it, "[h]er setting is not the blighted inner-city ghetto or the prison, but the manicured lawns of white suburbia and the genteel interactions of the academia." Among them, there are two accounts of situations involving credit cards:

> The man at the cash register wants to know if you think your card will work. If this is his routine, he didn't use it on the friend who went before you. As she picks up her bag, she looks to see what you will say. She says

> nothing. You want her to say something—both as witness and as a friend. She is not you; her silence says so. Because you are watching all this take place even as you participate in it, you say nothing as well. Come over here with me, your eyes say. Why on earth would she? The man behind the register returns your card and places the sandwich and Pellegrino in a bag, which you take from the counter. What is wrong with you? This question gets stuck in your dreams. (Rankine 54)

> When the waitress hands your friend the card she took from you, you laugh and ask what else her privilege gets her? Oh, my perfect life, she answers. Then you both are laughing so hard, everyone in the restaurant smiles. (Rankine 148)

These two situations point at the apparently unconscious, instinctual, and somehow "routine" exclusion of even upper middle-class black Americans from "consumer citizenship," a category which we would expect to designate one of the most color-blind "contemporary practices of social belonging"; they simultaneously serve as a means of "political pacification in the United States" (Berlant, "Citizenship" 38). Yet, in both cases the credit card becomes a sort of magical object that grants or denies access to the "white good life," called by Laurent Berlant in her *BOMB* conversation with Rankine the "snow-globe fantasy... which insists that black subjects have good manners and remain convenient" (online); the "perfect life" not only of consumerism, but of personhood, suddenly awaking political awareness of the submerged racial criteria of inclusion and exclusion.

The credit card anecdotes share this function with a visiting card incident described by W. E. B. Du Bois in *Souls of Black Folk*, who recalls an experience of being rejected on racial grounds in "the early days of [his] rollicking boyhood... away in the hills of New England," when "it dawned upon [him] with a certain suddenness that [he] was different from the others" (4). Du Bois relates how, together with other children at school, he participated in exchange of "gorgeous visiting cards," an exchange which was merry until "one girl, a tall newcomer, refused his card—refused it peremptorily, with a glance" (4). Jonathan Flatley acutely interprets the girl's private rejection/public exclusion on the racial grounds of the young Du Bois, the exclusion which cannot be erased or modified by the white hand on his card, as "a body blow that knocked [him] out of the light of personhood, back into a more uncertain, shadowy realm of bodily positivity in which neither citizenship nor self-(mis)recognition are available" (129). This uncertainty pertaining to one's social/ontological positioning, connected with the discovery that blackness in America is always bodily positive, manifests its presence in Rankine's *you's* expectation of their friend's reaction and disappointment that there is none, as well as in the "[w]hat is wrong with you?" question that permanently remains in the national unconscious ("This question gets stuck in your dreams"), the phenomenon so well described by Toni Morrison in her *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*.

Nonetheless, *Citizen*'s refined and discreet intertextuality is not limited to literary works, however dense that web of references and echoes is; for example, it connects with Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* in the above-mentioned card anecdote; the moral attention to cases of race crime bring to mind "Scotsboro", a poem by Langston Hughes; the train episode entitled "Making Room" in part VI has the aftertaste of Baraka's *Dutchman*; the implementation of the pronoun *you* evokes Auden's "Refugee Blues"; the motif of black (in)visibility, which recurs throughout Rankine's volume, attaches it to Ellison's *Invisible Man*. The collection of vignettes documenting cases of racist microaggressions in parts one and three of the volume also interacts with Adrian Piper's calling cards, a conceptual art project from mid-1980s. In her project the black bodily positivity turns into assertiveness. Piper, who was a very light-skinned black woman, whenever racially discriminatory comments were made in her presence, would distribute cards announcing "I am black" with a brief explanation of her reason for doing so. Like Piper's conceptual work, Rankine's *Citizen*, as Catherine Wagner puts it in her online article, "insistently returns to scenes in which a distressing racial imaginary erupts into polite ordinary life" and consistently "theatricalize[s] interaction, drawing attention to all participants' positions in the social field" ("Messing with the Beholder"), becoming interventions into the socio-political here and now. However, there are also two striking differences between them: first, the racial identity of the addressed *you* in *Citizen* is assumed rather than stated (with a very few exceptions), whereas Piper's cards' purpose was to reveal it from the very start; and second, Piper's work establishes an identification of the physical body of the person giving out the cards and the moral first-person assertive subject who demonstrates their will through and in the discourse ("I am black"), whereas Rankine implements the pronoun *you* which does not refer to any concrete person in her text and demonstrates how that *you* is constructed in those situations against their will.

This textual strategy is related to Judith Butler's concept of "addressability," directly mentioned in *Citizen*, and fully explored by Butler in the final chapter of her study of the relationship between violence and mourning entitled *Precarious Life*, where she states:

> The structure of address is important for understanding how moral authority is introduced and sustained if we accept that we address not only others when we speak, but that in some way we come to exist, as it were in the moment of being addressed, and something about our existence proves precarious when that address fails. More emphatically, however, what binds us morally has to do with how we are addressed by others in ways that we cannot avert or avoid; this impingement by the other's address constitutes us first and foremost against our will or, perhaps put more appropriately, prior to the formation of our will. So if we think that moral authority is about finding one's will and standing by it, stamping one's name upon one's will, it may be that we miss the very mode by which moral demands

> are relayed. That is, we miss the situation of being addressed, the demand that comes from elsewhere, sometimes a nameless elsewhere, by which our obligations are articulated and pressed upon us. (130)

It is essential to notice how addressability is related to one's moral authority which depends on our capability of demonstrating our will. Butler's attention, however, is directed here to the situations which we cannot "avert or avoid." In such situations, the "impingement by the other's address," in which one is always caught unawares, makes us suddenly vulnerable as in the act of impingement one is constituted "prior to the formation of," and in this sense *against*, one's will, thus putting one in danger of being hurt or even reduced to the Agambenian state of "bare life." In the context of public (and personal) relationships regulated by asymmetry of (inherent and inherited) racism, it may be that the moral authority of a person addressed is checked on the spot, which results in the paralysis of will, enforced passivity and loss of identity manifested as speechlessness. *Citizen* is full of situations in which the addressed (not only verbally) do not know what to say, find themselves mute. Rankine comments on the notion of addressability in the following way:

> [S]omeone asks the philosopher... what makes language hurtful. You can feel everyone lean in. Our very being exposes us to the address of another, she answers. We suffer from the condition of being addressable. Our emotional openness, she adds, is carried by our addressability. Language navigates this.
>
> For so long you thought the ambition of racist language was to denigrate and erase you as a person. After considering Butler's remarks, you begin to understand yourself as rendered hypervisible in the face of such language acts. Language that feels hurtful is intended to exploit all the ways that you are present. (49)

In *Citizen* Butler's notion of addressability is related to visibility, one of the key tropes of African American literature, as effectiveness of its mechanism depends on rendering the target "bodily positive," and in this sense "hypervisible."

There can be identified two levels of "addressability" in *Citizen*: *you* addressed as a target or, more often, an untargeted recipient of racist comments and remarks which are not necessarily directed at them in the situations presented in the form of vignettes; and *you* as an addressee within the text, addressed by the persona/narrator (Rankine supposedly includes herself in this category). Simply put: *you* is everybody who recognizes her/his own experience in situations involving racism on the receiving end, and the category does not apply only to African Americans, at least theoretically. The strategy of using the "lyric-*You*" allows Rankine to achieve a "full-throated polyvocality—in the sense that Mae Henderson theorizes the term—that thrusts every reader into the position of speaker and addressee simultaneously"

(Shockley). Moreover, even though in most vignettes the racial identities of the participants remain unspoken as, at the same time, they are absolutely clear. Obviously, a black reader will identify her/himself with the *You-as-the-addressee* of a racist remark or gesture (as in both credit card anecdotes, for instance); whereas the emotional situation of a white reader is more complex as they have to choose between two kinds of "discomfort": either they vicariously experience what it means to be a "black citizen in the US of the early 21st century" or "reject the invitation of the lyric-*You* and remain white-identified" and, by extension, guilty of committing microaggressions. In this way Rankine achieves the same goal as Piper did with her calling cards—she confronts the white reader with present-day American racial positioning and demonstrates how it affects individuals on the level of personhood and citizenship.

In *Citizen* the racial positioning takes the most open and drastic form in "Stop-and-Frisk," a situation video by John Lucas, which uses Rankine's script, whose subject is racial profiling by the traffic police. In the footage we can see some young black men in a clothes shop trying on various outfits, and flashing beacons reflected in the shop's windows, while an arrest on the road is narrated in voiceover. The result of this dialectic tension is that when watching the video we feel some kind of dread, expect something to happen—a crime committed or somebody arrested. But nothing dramatic happens, and we can hear a refrain-like phrase over and over again: "And you are not the guy and still you fit the description because there is only one guy who is always the guy fitting the description" (Rankine 105-109). The *you* is unavoidably a black man. It could be Henry Louis Gates Jr. unlocking the door to his own house after jogging in the evening or a friend who came to babysit and was making a phone call in front of the house—they were both taken for burglars, and alarmed neighbours called the police. As Martha Nussbaum states in a subchapter on hate crimes and anti-discrimination**:**

> The stigmatization of African American men as criminals is one of the ugliest and most invidious aspects of American racism.... Historically, this stigmatization was linked with gross harms: with lynching, unfair trials, discrimination in employment. If our society wants to pursue a course of racial reconciliation, as seems both just and prudent, racial profiling is a very stupid policy, even if it were efficient in terms of police resources, which has not been convincingly demonstrated by the evidence. (289)

Similarly to the situation video "Stop-and-Frisk," visual images which appear throughout *Citizen*, even though frequently only tangentially connected with the immediate text and without direct captioning, support and enhance the act of "speaking truth to power" and simultaneously reveal the limitations of the verbal communicability of this truth. In a conversation with Laurent Berlant, Rankine's intentions of using the images in and *together with* her text are clarified. The author explains:

> I was attracted to images engaged in conversation with an incoherence... in the world. They were placed in the text where I thought silence was needed, but I wasn't interested in making the silence feel empty or effortless the way a blank page would.... The tangential relation of the images with the text, in a sense, mimics a form of 'the public.' They are related and can be taken in, but, at times, are hardly touching, or they come up in a different context elsewhere in the text, before or after they appear. (*BOMB*)

Nevertheless, silence does not necessarily mean a gap in communication, as it does not stand for no message at all. Silence may, of course, speak volumes. It can be for instance a sound of accusation, a sign of resistance or a scream of helplessness. Berlant responds to Rankine's words with an observation which clarifies this point:

> I had wondered whether you thought something like that—that the images in *Citizen* could show what was exhausting/unbearable to witness once more in speech about the ordinary violence and world-shaping activity of American racism. A desperate desire is at work there for *something* to be self-evident, the force of which would change a situation. But *Citizen* lives meditatively enraged in a world where truth cannot be *spoken* to a structure. (*BOMB*)

Thus, in joining the persuasive and informative forces of a verbal poetic narrative with visuals, an overtly didactic purpose to educate, morally remind, as well as emotionally affect readers and "make something happen" is being activated here. Yet, Rankine operates in a world where, in terms of race, nothing seems to be self-evident, even the things which we see and hear, and not only those we are told about. The function of images is to increase legibility of her prose poems as they enable her to transcend the verbal and probe into the above-mentioned "incoherence... in the world" and introduce/reveal the surreal aspect of racial reality in the US, which destabilizes this reality in order to make us look at it in a fresh way.

To demonstrate how it works, a cursory look must be taken at two examples which involve Rankine's usage of photographs. The very first image which appears in *Citizen* is a photograph of a place called Jim Crow Road. The name of the deserted street, together with its "larger than life" appearance in terms of race symbolism: the spotless whiteness of the houses, a snow-white car parked in the driveway, the clear, blue sky and the shadow of a Stop sign, both evoke a frame from a David Lynch movie and make one wonder whether the picture has been photoshopped. But Jim Crow Road really exists—the picture was taken by Michael David Murphy, in 2007, in Flowery Branch, Georgia. In the conversation with Berlant, Rankine says that "according to local lore" the road is named "after a James Crow" (*BOMB*), which leaves the question open why "James Crow Road" was not good enough. Nonetheless, the surrounding Forsyth County was known for its infamous "sundown town" which, as Murphy informed her, "existed well until '80s" (*BOMB*).

Another of the images used by Rankine in a place in her narrative "where... silence [is] needed" is a photograph captioned in *Citizen* as "Public Lynching. Date: August 30, 1930" (better known as "Lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith, 1930"). The difference between this photo and the original is that the bodies of the two young blacks were removed from the picture by John Lucas. Here Rankine uses the altered photograph to foreground her strategy of "redirecting the gaze on the spectator" (Rankine in *The Believer*). As she explains in an interview with Ratik Asokan:

> [O]bserving the people who would normally not claim racism as their thing is of interest to me. The cameraperson was clearly thinking the same thing. These people, with the benefit of the doubt, are not supremacists and yet they will step into this moment, find it funny, and in doing so, they willingly disconnect themselves from the histories and realities of black people and the treatment of black and brown people in this country. (Rankine in *The Believer*)

With both photographs embedded in her text Rankine activates defamiliarization whose function is to enhance and problematize the viewer's/reader's perception of the familiar. In the former photograph, the well-known Jim Crow Road strikes us with its disquieting emptiness and suddenly sinister whiteness of the place, as if its message was: "no blacks, whites only." The latter disturbs the viewer with the inexplicable strangeness of the behaviour of the mob in the picture as the reason for their excitement is unclear; and since most viewers know the original photograph, we suddenly realize how familiarized we have become with racism in the forms of objectification and victimization of the black body and the white privilege of spectatorship.

Rankine's formal inventiveness in *Citizen* serves the purpose of stepping into the very moment in order to defamiliarize it, to ask such questions as: "Did they really say that?" "Did I just hear/see what I think I heard/saw?" Her experimentation with mixing different media and challenging the poetic convention of the lyric demonstrates that she is not a dedicated follower of the "make it new" (at all costs) doctrine of the (post)modernists, but instead she has launched the idea to "make it news," treating poetry now much more sociologically, as a means of direct communication, of ethical commentary on the material, social, and political here-and-now rather than as a discursively abstract or metaphysical phenomenon. *Citizen*'s consistent and inventive strategy of increased legibility serves the purpose of regaining/reaching a large audience of readers not so much for the sake of poetry itself as for the urgent task to confront yet again the problem of racism and discrimination.

Talking about it in a "straightforward" manner is essential now—also for poetry—in the face of the profound crisis in the world and its apparent impending ideological and political turning to the right, the right whose recast myths are seducing people who "are not supremacists" but once again are going to "willingly disconnect

themselves from the histories and realities" (Rankine in *BOMB*). As Zygmunt Bauman observes in a recent interview with Jakub Dymek, given on the fifteenth anniversary of the World Trade Center terrorist attack, Klee's/Benjamin's Angel of History is now taking a 180-degree turn. Still moving blindly forward, the Angel escapes not from the "cruelties of the past and atrocities of the present moment," but from the uncertainties of the future. Now, the "'forward' is the past, a dumping site of memories and myths prone to tooling and recasting, and resistant to rational thinking" (Bauman in *Krytyka Polityczna*).

By innovative strategies of implementation of the "lyric-*You*" on the large scale in her volume, and turning to visual works of art in order to increase its legibility, Claudia Rankine not only captured and revealed the mechanism of new manifestations of racism in post-racial America, but also managed to communicate her findings to an unexpectedly large audience, which includes people who rarely read poetry. She also extended the notion of African American lyricism and launched, through the concept of "addressability," reflection on the relationship between black invisibility and hypervisibility, making it necessary to rethink and reconceptualize them. In this way her formal and thematic innovations proved that contemporary poetry does not have to be hermetically sealed and cryptically coded to engage itself with the most crucial issues of the contemporary American society.

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