The Poetics of Vulnerability: Diaspora, Race, and Global Citizenship in A.M. Klein's *The Second Scroll* and Dionne Brand's *Thirsty*

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> His reflections were deflected — a chained goat with a hard penis rubbing against a stone wall, a beached whale with sea maggots crawling from its lacerations, a terrapin on its back with its neck arched in eloquent vulnerability … . He was beginning to indulge in melancholy. — Marwan Hassan, "Intelligence" (64)

The quotation from Marwan Hassan's story points towards the historical and narrative production of differential vulnerability and suggests that the latter functions as both a trope and critical category of narrative and belonging. Written in the poetic exuberance of metaphor, the subtle "eloquence" of vulnerability — in Hassan's, A.M. Klein's, and Dionne Brand's texts — engages in an intense contemplation of the mortal rather than ecstatic body and translates the relationship between violence and vulnerability into such particular psychological dispositions as alienation, melancholia, and prolonged mourning. By juxtaposing Brand's long poem *Thirsty* and Klein's novella *The Second Scroll*, this essay traces the affective conditions of global citizenship through what I call a diasporic poetics of vulnerability. Following Ranjana Khanna's postcolonial reading of melancholy as a tool for analyzing the effects of colonialism, I conceptualize vulnerability in historically and culturally specific terms as an affect of racialized colonial violence and modernity. In this sense, my readings seek to postcolonize affect and emphasize its historical rather than singular production.[1] As a trope, vulnerability facilitates particular narratives of melancholic belonging that hinge on the spectral presence of colonialism in the formation of both contingent diasporic subjectivities and a more equitable understanding of global citizenship.

My reflections will proceed by way of practising what Gayatri Spivak calls "responsible literality" (72). The latter designates an ethical imperative to read carefully the "undecidable figure" (72), which, frequently lodged in metaphor, generates and fissures narratives of diasporic proximity, tension, and vulnerability. Such a methodology guards against a homogenizing comparative reading[2] and is premised on what Khanna terms "colonial melancholy" (29). Operating through the "ghostly workings of unresolvable conflict within the colonial subject" (30), colonial melancholy, she argues, "is conceived as the colonialism affect" (29) and becomes legible through the materiality of language. As Khanna explains, an affect "refers to the emotion initiated by a traumatic event that subsequently gets detached from the event and attaches itself in another form in the psyche" (25). It is figured as "an inassimilable loss [that] has brought about a manifestation in language" (25). Analogically, I argue, reading vulnerability as an affect of racial and colonial violence helps decode the historical sedimentation of emotional responses to violent events through the figurative modalities of language. The first part of this essay, then, outlines the theoretical stakes of global citizenship and explores how Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's notion of the "multitude," as developed in *Empire*, projects a new global social contract based on a break with the narrative of colonial modernity and its critique of racial violence and corporeal vulnerability. Both of these aspects, as my readings of Klein's and Brand's texts show, remain central to an understanding of the uneven operations of globalization. From their different historical and cultural perspectives, both texts employ vulnerability as a poetic means of dramatizing the unequal employment and distribution of racialized violence and deprivation on a global and national scale. At the same time, vulnerability functions as an affect resulting from an experience of violent loss, which leads to a melancholic condition both characterized by the spectral presence of the inassimilable and grafted on, or narrated through, the body.

1. Theoretical Stakes of Global Citizenship

If citizenship generally negotiates the institutional and legal relationship between the individual and the nation-state, then literature has traditionally functioned as a legitimizing discourse of citizenship. More importantly, immersed in colonial and postcolonial projects of nation

narration, literature participates in defining and normalizing communities, as, for example, indicated by the quest of A.M. Klein's narrator for "the essence of contemporary Hebrew poetry" (73) in Israel. However, in our global present, as Frank Davey observes in his pioneering study *Post-National Arguments,* Canada's economic insertion into the global market changed the rapport between literature and citizenship. Without "state" and "polis" and reflecting "a world … in which social structures no longer link regions or communities" (266), Canadian postnational writing, Davey argues, projects, at best highly particularized and, at worst, dehistoricized concepts of citizenship. Since Davey's study it has become popular to argue that postnational citizenship — a contradiction in terms — transforms political conditions into cultural particularisms and regulates the relationship between global capital and the flow of immigrant populations. While this approach to postnational citizenship seeks to overcome notions of citizenship that include by way of exclusion (e.g., corporate forms of global citizenship), it also, Davey argues, obscures the dehumanizing effects of global capitalism and disables a critical understanding of the nation-state as a discursive formation "produced from political contestation" (24). Indeed, *Post-National Arguments* alerts the reader to the ways in which the global smoothes over the contradictions enshrined in national genealogies of citizenship.

For their part, Hardt and Negri consider global citizenship as a political practice immanent to the logic of empire and its new global subject, the multitude. The former consists of a biopolitical and "*deterritorializing* apparatus of rule" that works through the management and networking of differences and "hybrid identities" (xii). The latter comprises "the exploited and the subjugated" and "is directly opposed to Empire" (*Empire* 393), yet is produced by it. The multitude articulates global citizenship and "constitutes itself as a political subject" (397) through its claim to taking control over "its own movement" and social space (400). Produced by imperial sovereignty yet moving autonomously, then, the multitude articulates global citizenship not as a rights discourse but as a creative process of imagining a "new cartography" (400) of labour and global space from the bottom up. Here, global citizenship becomes a collective political activity rather than a corporate passport to the world. Yet, like corporate global citizenship, Hardt and Negri's notion of citizenship is predicated on the mobile global subject and the rapturous — rather than mortal and tortured — body, and has little to say about

the particular conditions of the immobile subject bound to the localized dynamics of transnational capital. Indeed, as Ernesto Laclau suggests, positing the multitude and global citizenship as political features immanent to Empire bypasses the question of who or what national or global institution grants citizenship and makes it difficult to conceive of forms of radical democracy that are not rooted in "an objective social order that is entirely the product of capitalism" (24).

Similarly, Hardt and Negri's absolute conceptualization of Empire constitutes global citizenship as a simultaneously racialized and deracializing political practice. For, if Empire functions by managing hybrid identities, it is necessarily constituted by and constitutive of race. In other words, race is a universal feature of Empire, and global citizenship is *a priori* racialized. This universal status of race equally negates how the racial rule of Empire manifests itself in specific experiences of exclusion and violence. Hardt and Negri's understanding of race and racism is modeled on Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "European racism" (in *Empire* 193), which operates through the degree to which difference conforms to or deviates from whiteness and can be engaged in a seemingly neutral competition of marketable cultural values. Racism, they argue, must be conceived as a "strategy of differential inclusion," in which "no identity is designated as Other" (194). Thus, race — like capitalism — presents an immanent feature of Empire rather than a critical category through which to analyze Empire's self-legitimizing narratives. Although this understanding of race acknowledges the "brutal" "racial hierarchies" generated by imperial sovereignty (194) and the instrumentalization of race as global capitalism's chief commodity, it also presupposes a questionable historical rupture between colonialism and Empire. As I will argue in the next two parts, from a diasporic perspective, positing such a rupture inhibits a socially just conceptualization of global citizenship.

Since Empire denotes a radical break with previous — specifically territorially defined — concepts of imperialism, the exclusionary logic of racism that provided the legitimizing narrative of imperialism and colonialism no longer applies to the ways in which racism works under conditions of imperial sovereignty. "Colonial racism," Hardt and Negri state, "first pushes difference to the extreme and then recuperates the Other as negative foundation of the Self." In contrast, "imperial racism, or differential racism, ... rests on the play of differences and the manage-

ment of micro-conflictualities within its continually expanding domain" (195). This division is problematic because it underestimates how the historical presence of colonial modernity conditions and haunts the psychology and cultural imagination of the various black diasporas. Claiming, as Hardt does, that colonial or "modern sovereignty has now come to an end" ("Interview" 167) suggests that one can deliberately exit or enter modernity. Such a claim bypasses, as David Scott convincingly argues, that "modernity was not a choice New World slaves could exercise but was itself one of the fundamental *conditions* of choice" (19). It is doubtful, then, how Hardt and Negri's presentist understanding of imperial sovereignty may conceive of global citizenship as a political practice based on the present effects of colonial modernity, namely its legacy of racial violence and melancholia, which often orchestrate diasporic narratives of belonging and citizenship.

In *Empire,* however, a structural conception of violence takes precedence over a historical understanding of the lived and continuing effects of colonial modernity and anti-colonial violence. Yet, it is precisely the latter that shapes and conditions, racializes and demarcates particular bodies and defines them as valuable or disposable in our global present. In Hardt and Negri's view, anti-colonial violence[3] performs a destructive gesture that seeks to erase the effects of colonialism and racism. As they suggest, counter-violence "merely poses a separation from colonialist domination and opens the field for politics. The real political process of constitution will have to take place in the open terrain of forces with a positive logic, separate from the dialectics of colonial sovereignty" (132). Thus, counter-violence is a temporary strategy to create an "open terrain of forces" through which to negotiate political and social relationships beyond colonial and racial rule. This "terrain," however, implies a historically empty and purged space through which to envision a collective global subject (i.e., the multitude), undivided by past and continuous traumas of colonial modernity and able to form a counter-Empire. This account of violence overwrites the absence of a unified or historically unconditioned global subject.[4] Moreover, Hardt and Negri underestimate to what extent a critique of the historical present of our colonial modernity helps comprehend the racialized practice of what Gargi Bhattacharyya, et al. consider the global appropriation of the materiality of bodies as "vehicles of value production" (39). For example, while such a practice comprises illegal organ trade, new slavery, prison

labour, and bio-piracy, it constitutes the racially marked and unequal ways in which predominantly non-white bodies are rendered vulnerable under conditions of globalization. If global citizenship is to be more than a utopian fantasy, it cannot be conceptualized as a disembodied narrative of a political demand waiting to be institutionally sanctified. Rather, as the title of Brand's collection of poetry indicates, it is the vulnerable "body convulsive with disguises / abandonments" (5), "raptures" (7), and scars of the "unproven" (40) and invisible through which global citizenship becomes an embodied practice and discursive narrative.

As I argued earlier, Hardt and Negri build their notion of imperial sovereignty around the concept of differential inclusion, thus emphasizing the deeply racialized character of Empire. However, they also engage in a process of deracializing or smoothing over the ways in which Empire remains structured by the competing histories of the globe's unequal racialization and what I like to call differential vulnerabilities. The latter denotes an effect and affect of the dehistoricized perspective yet racialized practice of global biopolitics. A striking example for the deracialization of the ways in which Hardt and Negri construct their understanding of immaterial labour as a symptom for the passage to postmodern production is their concept of affective labour. Acknowledging its close relationship with what Marxist feminists call female reproductive labour, affective labour, Hardt and Negri maintain, "is certainly entirely immersed in the corporeal, the somatic" and produces "social networks, forms of community, biopower." Thus if affective labour "requires … human contact, labour in the bodily mode" (293), how does race structure, fracture, and dominate this sector of immaterial labour. When does human contact become conquest and unfree labour? In the context of diasporic displacements or the deterritorializing power of Empire, women of colour traditionally provide affective labour under the worst of working conditions. This blindness towards the particularities of the unequal historical production of affect deracializes Hardt and Negri's project of Empire and counter-empire. Moreover, as Slavoj Zizek argues, affect plays a constitutive role in postmodern capitalism's cult of the individual and it is thus "at the level of the micropolitics of affects" (262) that resistance against Empire and late capitalism must begin. This, I suggest, requires an account of the racialized production — past and present — of differential vulnerability.

Race, then, marks a disjuncture in contemporary debates on global

citizenship. On the one hand, as Butler observes, "an amorphous racism abounds" (39) to safeguard US sovereignty under the sign of global security and citizenship. On the other, in Paul Gilroy's terms, there is a certain reluctance to think global citizenship historically through its complicity with the "raciological ordering of the world" (39). The next part of this paper probes how literary texts oppose and reimagine dehistoricized and deracialized accounts of citizenship. Imagining global citizenship presupposes tracing the violent contingencies between different processes of diasporic and racialized subject constitution and addressing the historical and narrative production of differential vulnerability.

2. *The Second Scroll*: Race and the Death of Diaspora

Conceptualized as a double quest and semi-autobiography, A.M. Klein's novella *The Second Scroll* situates itself within the multi-generic form of diaspora writing. As a semi-autobiographical text, *The Second Scroll* fictionalizes Klein's voyage across Europe and North Africa to Israel in 1949, a voyage Klein documented in his "Notebook of a Journey," previously published as a series of articles in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*. The fictional rendition of the journey, however, is marked by Klein's ambiguous feelings towards the ways in which Israel, in Usher Caplan and M.W. Steinberg's words, "disparaged the non-Israeli Jew and the culture of Diaspora Jewry" (xv). Told by a Jewish Montreal writer in search of modern Hebrew literature, *The Second Scroll* follows the narrator's elusive uncle Melech Davidson. Variously figured as a scholar, dissident, Zionist, Bolshevik, exile, survivor, saviour, poet, and martyr, uncle Melech represents a complex allegory of the Jewish diaspora and its dream of both national redemption and diasporic citizenship. Yet, the novella opens with the prohibition to speak the uncle's name, symbolizing an originary and violent erasure of the text's diasporic signature. This injunction initiates a narrative of incomplete mourning that seeks to cope with the ways in which the Israeli nation-state necessitates the death of the diaspora while remaining haunted by what it represses, its diaspora. If the narrator's account of the dispossessed Jewish diaspora helps bolster the narrator's melancholic disposition and Israel's national narrative of a community of oppression and redemption, it does so by inserting the African body into a discourse of racialized abjection.

In the chapter "Numbers," a retelling of the Fourth Book of Moses, the narrator tracks his uncle to Casablanca. Following his desire to "feel … the full weight of the yoke of exile [and]" and to unite "with his Sephardic brothers, the lost half of Jewry" (49), the uncle collects valuable empirical data concerning the squalid living conditions of the Sephardic Jews of North Africa, and, like Moses, leads them out of Moroccan bondage towards Israel. This messianic rescue mission, as it is retrospectively narrated through the orientalizing and normalizing gaze of the uncle's nephew (50), is enabled by a racialized and asymmetrical construction of the Jewish diaspora and a graphic representation of the black, decadent African body. The reader is first struck by the narrator's account of the *Tale of the Ethiopian Who Did Change His Skin*, an oral narrative initially told by a storyteller who "regaled his audience with tales of wonder and innuendo" (51). While the tale ironizes Eurocentric pseudo-scientific notions of climate as the chief determinant of skin colour and character, it firmly places the production of race in the realm of the fantastic, deceptive, and grotesque. Diminished to a rumour and chromosomatic anomaly, the figure of the Ethiopian foregrounds the disciplinary and metaphorical constitution of the black body and its vulnerability towards public exhibition and abjection. Moreover, the symbolic language of the *Tale* resonates with the narrator's description of Casablanca's market as a racial "cornucopia" (52). For example, he marvels over an exotic display of watermelons: "Dominating — whether in the cool smooth round or, sliced, as crimson little scimitars adorning the Negro smile — were watermelons, miniature Africas, jungle-green without, and within peopled by pygmy blacks set sweetly in their world of flesh" (52). The "crimson little scimitars" associate the African with dangerous slyness and spiteful mimicry, and thus follow and reinforce, as Homi Bhabha argues, the colonial practice of scripting the African as the racialized Other. As with the *Tale,* the watermelon metaphor infantilizes Africa, commodifies the black body, and banishes it into a state of dehumanized alienation.

Furthermore, discounting the racialized regime of French colonial power, the narrator remains dismissive of the African, for "these Moors," he observes, "lived … all too well. The thigh-filled pantaloons that waddled along the street; the Negress with scarves, striped as with the lines of latitude, knotted about her large hips, gripping a sausage in her inkish-pink palm" (53). The reduction of the African person to what

Frantz Fanon calls an "epidermal scheme" exposes the vulnerability of the body to public display, abjection, and violation, and to translate the black body into metaphor, as Klein does, is, in Brand's words, "voluptuous intrigue" (*Map* 18). For metaphor, she insists, transforms the body into a "physically and psychically open space" (38), which can be inhabited and appropriated from outside. While the hypersexualization of the black body, its apparent ecstasy and decadence, casts the body as "a place of captivity" (*Map* 35), in Klein's narrative the racialized body serves as an instance of comparative victimization to contrast the destitution and misery of the Jews living in Casablanca's *mellah,* the ghetto for Arab and Sephardic Jews.

In the *mellah*, human life is reduced to what Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer* calls "bare life," namely, human life without rights and defined by its "capacity to be killed" (114) with impunity. Indeed, the "skin" that shows through the tattered rags of clothing of the Arab Jews has become "a kind of human badge" (56). Moreover, to enter the *mellah* meant "sliding" through "offal and slime and the oozing of manifold sun-stirred putrescences" to "descent into the … eleventh century" (56) and into a place of archaic pre-modernity and disease. Instead of seeing individuals, the narrator describes the blind people numerically as "eighteen… heaps of helplessness" (57). Here, the mark of the plural signals racist dehumanization and corporeal reification. Indeed, the narrator's strategy of numerical description projects an image of suffering and deprivation that adumbrates a universal condition for the Jewish diaspora and modernity at large. For, as Agamben argues, the notion of bare life must be framed within an understanding of the Nazi concentration camps as the paradigmatic space of modernity in which the distinction between "outside and inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit" (170) dissolves and in which biopolitics take the place of politics and "*homo sacer*" replaces the "citizen" (171). As a universal condition of oppression, "bare life" circumvents the ways in which disposable bodies relate to each other on a hierarchical scale of racial differences[5] and marginalizes the fact that Agamben's paradigmatic moment of modernity, namely the Holocaust, was made possible, as Gilroy and Memmi suggest, by pseudo-scientific racism and centuries of slavery. The universalizing thrust of Agamben's and Klein's notion of biopolitics further "obscures," as Hardt states, "the daily violence of modern sovereignty in all its forms" (166). In contrast to Hardt,

however, Klein's conception of biopower *avant la lettre* is highly productive, though employed in the disciplinary practices of the modern nation-state. In the narrative of Israel's nation-formation, it is precisely the subjection of the Jewish people to the conditions of bare life that translates into Israeli citizenship, while the same narrative maintains the racialized practices of exclusion that are characteristic of modern sovereignty. The narrator's numerical description, then, contributes to Israel's self-legitimizing and exclusionary narrative of national redemption and uncannily foreshadows a hegemonic, if not colonial, brand of democracy.

Given the state of abjection suffered by the Arab Jews of the *mellah*, diaspora literally figures as a shameful sickness to be cured through Israel's nation-state. In addition to the novella's anticipation of the politics of bare life, its description of Arab Jews and their liberation through uncle Melech substantiate Ella Shohat's critique of the founding myths of Israel. She insists that "within [Israel's] Promethean rescue narrative, concepts of 'ingathering' and 'modernization" naturalized and glossed over the historical, psychic, and epistemological violence generated by the Zionist vision of the New Jew" (50), that is the Jew who had to abandon his or her diasporic culture as the price for national citizenship. But, and this seems more pertinent to Klein's narrative, by constructing its national sovereignty on an absolute claim to historical truth and salvation, Israel marginalized the productive experience of the Jewish diaspora. Moreover, as the narrator observes, Israel's rescue narrative claims national sovereignty through its professed protection of women from sexual and racial contamination (69). Indeed, entering the nation-state becomes an act of gender and racial purification that constitutes patriarchal rule. For, in Israel, the once wretched women of the *mellah* now walk with "dignity" and a "delicate gazelle-like" stride to the synagogue. "Changed they were," the narrator remarks, " transformed … princesses, … though now in Israel they were bearers of burdens … robed in *white*, white for the Sabbath of their week, and for the Sabbath of their lives — white!" (69). Although this passage acts as an account of paradise and innocence regained, its transformation of "white" from descriptive adjective to reiterated metaphor implies a symbolic process of whitening and purification. While this process echoes the tale of the Ethiopian, thus linking patriarchal and nationalist constructions

of race and gender, it also serves to contrast the abject state of the Arab and hypersexualized African body of the *mellah*.

The exclusionary construction of the Israeli nation-state, as the novella's dramatization of the abject African and Arab body proffers, necessarily remains blind towards possible links and "a community of condition" (Memmi 38) between the various Jewish and African diasporas. For what initiates the diasporic condition in both cases is the racist degradation of the human to *homo sacer,* who, as Agamben reminds us, "can save himself only in perpetual flight or a foreign land" (183). Klein's narrative, however, makes legible neither the proximity of different diasporas nor the vulnerability they suffer when forced to live under the rule of modern sovereignty. Rather, Klein's text demonstrates that the invention of one diasporic imaginary is predicated on the creation of another diaspora's symbolic and physical patterns of "captivity." Indeed, in Klein's narrative of diaspora the Arab and black African body sets the limit of national and global citizenship.

Before moving into Brand's text, I wish to emphasize that the novella's messianic and regulatory impulses are refracted in various ways by what Sherry Simon sees as the hybrid aesthetics of Klein's work and, more specifically, the death of uncle Melech. Although Simon rightly emphasizes the importance of translation and of linguistic and cultural hybridity in Klein's poetry and his anticipation of "la conscience postcoloniale" (100), in *The Second Scroll,* this hybridity may be usefully read as a sign of cultural crisis and, perhaps, Klein's own diasporic melancholia vis-à-vis the diminishing cultural and political status of the Jewish diaspora following the founding of Israel. Indeed, the novel's final scene of mourning suggests that the controlling rituals of national mourning, namely the national management of cultural and individual loss, produce a melancholia that signals an unassimilable loss of communal recognition and becomes legible through the metaphorical embodiment — the becoming flesh rather than personification — of loss. Put differently, the metaphorical embodiment of exile and diaspora implied in the figure of uncle Melech emphasizes physical displacement and corporeal suffering as the universal markers of the diaspora and, as suggested by the uncle's elusiveness, remains reluctant to attend to the divisions among the Jewish diaspora. In this context, loss can be read through a figurative construction of diasporic identity based on meta-

phors of filiation and blood relations and through the generic convention of semi-autobiographical writing.

As a popular genre of anti-colonial writing, semi-autobiography foregrounds the contradictions of oppression and liberation the writer experiences and, as Klein's narrator remarks, poses the poet as a self-reflexive "theorist of writing" whose "function is but to point direction" (76). Its advantage, as Khanna states, is that "contradictions of belonging, alienation, and disappointment, indeed melancholia, [can] be thematized without being resolved and … seeming to present political betrayals" (196). The semi-autobiographical signature of *The Second Scroll* primarily consists in the novel's rapport with Klein's undelivered memorial address "In Praise of the Diaspora," written in 1953, two years after the publication of his novel and shortly before his own tragic descent into silence. The novel and the memorial address employ the death of a male blood relative to represent what Klein perceived as the death of diaspora, of a particular life-form and cultural epistemology. To different degrees, both texts contemplate the consequences of an absent process of proper mourning, through which the attachment to the lost object or ideal would be gradually dissolved and integrated into the ego or national consciousness, so as to make room for new attachments.[6] While the novel's narrative hopes to perform a mourning ritual through which to forge a "new alphabet" of belonging and in which "death [is] invested with life" (87), the memorial address no longer harbours "the expectation of a fruitful interplay of Israeli culture and Jewish Diaspora culture" (Caplan and Steinberg xv).

In the novella, uncle Melech is assassinated during an ambush "of many against one" (85) and his body burned beyond recognition. Melech's death is instantly mythologized as a martyr's death for the new nation, and the collective "convocation of mourning" quickly turned into a "national demonstration" (85). The nation's symbolic and political appropriation of Melech's death causes the narrator a sudden sense of alienation. For he realizes that among those mourners who had opportunely turned the memory of his uncle into a patriotic "dedication service," he was "the only one within the degree of mourning. As at the centre of a whirlwind, amidst a great silence, [he] intoned the *kaddish* for [his] uncle … uttering with pride this wonderful mourner's Magnificat which does not mention death" (86). Symbolically, the nephew refuses to transform the necessary mourning of the death of diaspora into an

act of national assimilation. By reading the *kaddish* for his uncle, the nephew refrains from articulating the uncle's death and thereby initiates what will become an unfinished process of mourning through which the Jewish diaspora remains haunted by the Israeli nation-state and vice versa.

In "In Praise of the Diaspora," Klein's "favourite uncle" (469), uncle Galuth, named after the Hebrew word for exile, metaphorically embodies the Jewish diaspora. Rather than being nostalgic, the tone of the address is melancholic and anticipates the cultural discourses of diaspora that have preoccupied Canadian studies for the last fifteen years. The address denies Israel's demand to acknowledge the death of diaspora and, instead, celebrates the diaspora's capacity of survival and self-recreation on a global level. For Klein, it is the cosmopolitan splendour of diasporic life that makes it difficult to envision a life "at ease in Zion" (470). In contrast to the time and place of the diaspora, the time and place of the nation remain static, mere "variations that always return identical" (470). Klein's address, therefore, is not a self-indulgent praise of diaspora but bemoans the lack of recognition that characterizes Israel's treatment and repression of the diaspora. With the birth of the nation-state, diaspora, "far from mourning, … [was] razed from recollection, kept secret from our children, buried in the desert places of the mind, there where no thought ever passes" (465). Diaspora thus becomes a psychological rupture and condition of loss that causes ambivalent national identifications (Khanna 178). What saves the diaspora from continual abjection is its metaphorical transformation into "bone" and "flesh" and a public burial that acknowledges its achievements (467). Interestingly, Klein reimagines the burial of uncle Melech/Galuth, who had "embraced" and "wrestled the world," "as in a dream" (467), so that the act of mourning is realized as a wish-fulfillment and in a state of perpetual postponement.

"In Praise of Diaspora," then, documents Klein's inclination towards diasporic melancholia. Its absent addressee or audience suggests the community's inability or refusal to assimilate the loss of the diaspora, albeit as idea, identity, or communal organization. Such a refusal may lead to a strong reassertion of what is abandoned and disparaged in the name of a greater good, or it may lead, as with Klein, to a "great silence" (*Scroll* 86) and dissociation from the world. Diasporic melancholia does not abandon the idea of diaspora but designates an affect of the trau-

matic ways in which the nation-state seeks to regulate and instrumentalize diasporic life. Reading Klein's two texts together makes visible the contradictions that govern his narrative constructions of diaspora. On the one hand, his diasporic narratives emerge out of an intensely but unacknowledged racialized discourse of belonging. On the other, they trace the constitution of diasporic melancholia in ways that lay bare the psychological vulnerability of those subjected to the disciplinary technologies of the modern nation-state. We need to ask, then, how the racialized and gendered practices of global citizenship and diasporic melancholia help us comprehend the operations of differential vulnerability. Similarly, I wish to ask to what extent the postponement of mourning can be appropriated for a critical and productive understanding of vulnerability.

3. *Thirsty* and the Poetics of Vulnerability

Told from two narrative perspectives, Brand's *Thirsty* traces the making of diasporic subjectivity through the representation of racialized violence. First, the poem's first-person narrative depathologizes diasporic subjectivity and history, while configuring Toronto as a space of global encounters and communities. Second, organized around the repercussions of the murder of a young black man by a police officer in Toronto, the poem's third-person narrative follows the unfinished process of mourning of the man's surviving female family members and mediates what constitutes, in Butler's words, a "grievable" lost life (32). Among the black community, the murder instigates an endless process of grieving, as it is ritually and annually recalled for political purposes and locks the man's family in a state of perpetual racial melancholia.[7] The assassin, however, is acquitted of his crime, suggesting a killing with impunity that renders the victim's life ungrievable and inconsequential in the legal and social frame of the Canadian nation-state. The poem's portrayal of the policeman as a "gunslinger … law and outlaw, SWAT and midnight rider" (48) associates the murderous event with Canadian settler history and reformulates the settler's originary violence in terms of white omnipotence and hyper-masculine "virility" (48). The "killing" with impunity then becomes a settler's "victory" (48) because it operates through a form of racism that generates and capitalizes on the vulnerability of those who appear as the settler's cultural and racial other

and, in the eyes of the nation-state, are already subject to various forms of disenfranchisement and discrimination. Thus, Memmi writes, "the vulnerability of the foreigner arouses racism, just as infirmity arouses sarcasm and scorn" (200). Within the perverse logic of racism, then, vulnerability is created through racist discrimination and violence and subsequently perceived as a weakness innate to the victim of racism. As an act of vulgar violence, the settler's construction of vulnerability enacts white racial rule and transforms non-white persons into dependent subjects either to be saved from themselves or killed with impunity. Thus, vulnerability emerges in tandem with the vulgarity of racist violence at a moment when "history and modernity" embrace in a "kiss" (*Thirsty* 48).

Thirsty examines the notion of vulnerability through the body's exposure to racially configured violence at the present spatio-historical juncture of global modernity. In contrast to Hardt and Negri's stipulated break with modernity, in the poem, this juncture designates what Doreen Massey calls the "re-narrativisation" (28) of modernity by "exposing modernity's preconditions in and effects of violence, racism and oppression" (30). As a trope and analytical concept, vulnerability becomes partially legible through metaphors that trace the physical imprints of violent displacements on the bodies and psychic lives of those diasporic subjects the poem's narrator calls "transient selves" and "impossible citizens" (40). *Thirsty*'s metaphorical orchestration both manifests colonial melancholia through language and constructs differential vulnerability as the condition of possibility of global citizenship.

Beginning in mid-sentence with a relative clause, "which is to say, human" (40), section XXII of Brand's poem elaborates this notion of citizenship and begins its difficult task of charting what it means to be human in a local space marked by an array of scattered global belongings. The task is risky because it must navigate the dangers of an undifferentiated and universalizing humanism, on the one hand, and the reconstruction of the human in the name of the new global subject, the multitude, on the other. Instead, the poet/narrator figure of Brand's poem finds the human in the "biographies of streets," in "veiled Somali women hyphenating Scarlett Road," in "Portuguese men" who "have learned another language," and in the voice of an "old Jamaican woman" (40), all of whom spatialize the global city to make visible the "inconsequential" lives which usually "do not enter" history (7). Rather

than celebrating a multicultural cornucopia, the "hyphenating" activity of the Somali women orders and reappropriates social and urban space. In this way, the Somali women take up the claim of the multitude, as Hardt and Negri have it, to control their movement and environment, but their presence equally draws attention to the racialized and gendered formation of the multitude. For the "biographies of streets" engages in a new human geography attentive to global politics and migration; it stresses the development of a "racialized globalization" interlinked, as Barnor Hesse avers, with the "distinctive political forms, transportation routes and transnational lines of communication" (128) of the black diaspora. Thus, the women's presence — whether legal or illegal — defiantly asserts a global subject-position, which remains grounded in colonial modernity and which reflects the multitude's capacity for "biopolitical self-organization" (Hardt and Negri 411). This subjectivity does not need to be sanctioned by the nation-state but serves as a point of departure for thinking about citizenship and the human from a position that is at once within and outside the purview of the global. For these men and women are part, in Gilroy's words, of "a majority of people on this planet" who are habitually "overlooked" and whose "experience is not accepted as part of our world's portrait of itself as a world" (60). These "impossible citizens" (40) provide a clue as to how the poem reimagines the meaning of the human: "there are those / here too worn as if by brutal winds, a pocked / whale-boned, autumnal arctic stone of a face, / not wind at all but some unproven element works / there, Spadina and Bloor to the Mission / and the Silver Dollar south, unproven, not unseen" (40). The impossible citizen, then, is the one who lacks official proof of existence yet abounds everywhere.

But more importantly, the impossible citizen emerges out of a "complex relationality" (Mohanty 13) that takes as its common human ground the vulnerability of the human body. Brand's poem brilliantly contemplates this vulnerability through the first-person narrator's "intimate" (1) relationship with history and her sensuous configuration of loss. In the opening section of the poem, the narrator describes the "city" as a place "pressed with fierce departures / submerged landings," where she sees herself standing in "doorways." Her presence seems fleeting, haunted as much by "untrue recollections" as by the fragility of the human body and spirit. It is thus that she "anticipates nothing as intimate as history." Brand's work, I suggest, has perfected the transla-

tion of history from an ineluctably regulatory mode of existence into a psychological and physical affect. More specifically, in her memoir *A Map to the Door of No Return,* she rereads the historical door of former East African slave castles, through which Africans were pushed and then remade into "New World" slaves, as "a spiritual location" and "psychic destination" (2) of the black diaspora. As a "metaphor for place" (18), the door negotiates "belonging or unbelonging" (6) and "casts a haunting spell on personal and collective consciousness in the Diaspora" (25). Configured as the hovering presence of colonial modernity, this haunting implies that, for the black diaspora, "history is already seated in the chair in the empty room when one arrives" (25). Here, history itself is configured as loss, tangible, as Derrida writes of the spectre, only in the "frequency of a certain visibility … of the invisible" (100). The dialectic of visibility and invisibility, however, equally racializes the black body, and it is thus that history becomes intimacy, a physical and psychical affect legible, as *Thirsty*'s first-person narrator intimates, in her "embrace with broken things," in the violence of "iridescent veins, ecstatic bullets, small cracks / in the brain," in the ways in which "a phrase scars a cheek" (1). The affective workings of diasporic history, then, manifest themselves in and produce corporeal vulnerability, specifically within but not restricted to the black diaspora.

While this configuration of vulnerability decentralizes the question of race, it does not erase it from the narrative of diasporic belonging. In fact, the affective operations of history problematize race indirectly through corporeal and spatial metaphors. Both kinds of metaphor conceptualize diasporic subjectivities through a complex narrative of loss. The poem tells two parallel narratives of loss and mourning: one in which Julia, the wife of the murdered victim, must liberate herself from the ways in which her community instrumentalizes her loss to stage a prolonged public spectacle of grief and that effectively imprisons her in melancholic disparagement; and one which rethinks mourning as a form of labour for justice and global citizenship. Here I am interested in the second narrative, which emerges from the narrator's description of a multicultural group of Toronto's subway passengers as people "enclosed in the silk of their origins" (36). What does it mean to speak of origins in terms of silk? Let me suggest two readings. First, the metaphorical construction implies a contradiction between the materiality and lightness of movement characteristic of silk and the demands of fixity,

authenticity, and identity associated with conventional notions of cultural origins. This tension returns frequently in the tension between the people's loss of an original "etymology" of belonging, the impossibility of making "new memory" (36) from such Canadian national narratives as those projected by the Group of Seven, and the fierce "romance" the people entertain "with the past tense as with what is to come" (37). Origins are the site of both loss and desire.

My second reading of the relationship between origins and silk understands the latter as a metaphor of productive mourning, that is, of mourning as a form of "affective labour" (Hardt and Negri 293). To liken mourning to "the material of clothing that is suddenly, even unexpectedly, felt against the flesh," as Butler argues, is to stage mourning as " an encounter between a commodified material and the limb that knows it only on occasion" ("Afterword" 470). This "proximity," she continues, is both "counter to the effect of appearance [and] part of the realm of appearance itself." In this context, "mourning is, ineluctably, an encounter with sensuousness, but not a 'natural' one, one that is conditioned by the proximity of the artifact to flesh. That mourning is subjected to a metaphorical identification with the artifice that brings the body into view suggests the very process by which mourning works. It displays … the body in a certain sensuousness" (470). The metaphorical phrase "in the silk of their origins," then, evokes the loss of origins as an encounter between the affective configurations of the history of origins — that is, for instance, the casting of the black body into "voluptuous" metaphor (Brand, *Door* 18) — and their material and cultural conditions. The coincidence between artifact and body also implies a commodification and figurative or literal reification of the body itself. What cannot be assimilated through mourning and becomes a site of haunting is the affect of violence that derives from such a coincidence. Thus, as a sensuous but violent display of the body that mediates "belonging or unbelonging" (*Door* 6), mourning becomes an interminable and affective, rather than assimilatory, work process, through which to question the nature and constitution of social justice in a world of racialized globalization.

If the poem's narrative of loss bemoans the loss of cultural origins, it also mourns the loss of race itself. In particular, dramatized through Chloe, the murder victim's mother, whose dependency on victimhood and blind romanticization of her dead son eventually lead to her own

death, the poem relinquishes race as the single descriptor and defining element of individual and communal identity. Rather, while the affect of racial violence deeply influences how the characters of the poem experience and claim their environment, the heteronomous and self-regulating forces of race are resignified by a sense of survival and the "anticipation" of holding and being "held" (*Thirsty* 58) — the far and ineluctable side of falling, that is, the need to dive into someone else's body, "to smell" the "skin of someone else … without a killing" (60). Indeed, "mourning," as Julia discovers, is "lustrous as fury" and stages the display of the body in all its sensuousness and historical affects. This emphasis on the sensuous and corporeal functions of mourning productively reworks diasporic melancholia, as I discussed it earlier via Khanna and Klein. By translating racial trauma into a register of mourning that remains sensitive to differential corporeal vulnerability and the affective operations of black diasporic history, *Thirsty* dramatizes loss as a possibility of social change. In this way, the poem helps us reread Hardt and Negri's deracialized notion of affective labour through Derrida's understanding of mourning as a "kind of work" that "responds to the injunction of a justice which, beyond right or law, rises up in the very respect owed to whoever is not, no longer or not yet, living, presently living" (97). Mourning becomes a productive social relationship through which to make visible the invisibility of the affective workings of black diasporic history. It also generates vulnerability as an opening towards social transformations and unpredictable encounters that leave the mourner "breathless as a coming hour, and undone" (63).

The figurative construction of corporeal vulnerability and affect recurs in the poem's metaphors of falling, thirstiness, doorways, and windows. The sense of falling and thirst experienced by different characters at their moment of death reinforces the notion of mourning as a transformative process. For, as Butler writes, "mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo transformation" and is a process in which "one finds oneself fallen" (21). Thus, the poem's narrator, upon hearing of Alan's killing by the police, repeats the word "falling" three times, for in the face of historically inherited death, "falling is all you can do, as hereditary as thirst" (22). In the deadly "kiss" of "modernity and history" (48), what is being mourned is the dehumanized and racialized body of *homo sacer* or, in a rather Fanonian sense, the historical denial of a black

and white humanity through the racialized regimes of slavery, imperialism, globalization, and police surveillance and brutality. The poem's metaphorical orchestration is integral to Brand's unique poetic cosmology and performs, as I have argued, the cultural work of a transformative process of mourning, an ethical undertaking that makes grievable formerly unrecognized lives. Moreover, what the text suggests through its formal staging of the body's inscriptions is its openness and promiscuity, its social and political construction, its vulnerability towards abuse and dehumanization, as, for instance, in Klein's translation of the black body into the exuberance of metaphor. The notion of vulnerability, as Butler insists, does not refer to the construction of an undifferentiated new humanism that overlooks the uneven geopolitical distribution of vulnerability. Rather, she suggests that the "source" of the body's vulnerability to violent subjection can never be fully recovered and presents what "precedes the formation of 'I'" (*Precarious* 31). Simultaneously, "it would be difficult, if not impossible," she argues, "to understand how humans suffer from oppression without seeing how this primary condition [of vulnerability] is exploited and exploitable, thwarted and denied" (31).

Rather, the concept of vulnerability, as I discussed it, enables a discourse of the human akin to Fanon's new humanism, which seeks the "unmaking of racialized bodies and their restoration to properly human modes of being in the world" (Gilroy 42). Global citizenship, then, cannot be articulated merely on grounds of either global capitalism's changed relationship to labour or the vanishing of the nation-state (though this has become a dangerous argument, at least since 9/11). Rather, we need to anchor the notion of global citizenship in narrative and a diasporic poetics of vulnerability that links disparate texts of national and cultural mourning and remains attentive to the cultural work performed by and on the body. In this way global citizenship can be imagined via its complicity with the racialized histories of the present and become a transformative, sensuous practice committed to reshaping communal relationships. Such a utopian notion of global citizenship must think diaspora relationally in terms of asymmetries and proximities, and keep visible, at its horizon, what Brand's poem so elegantly dramatizes as the "impossibility" of citizenship.

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Notes

[1]For a feminist critique of contemporary theories of affect, see Clare Hemmings's "Invoking Affect."

[2]This essay avoids reading Klein and Brand comparatively. After all, the religious framework of Klein's narrative legitimizes the founding of Israel's nation-state as a matter of historical redemption and invents myths of national origins. In Klein's novella, the patriarchal process of nation formation — a purpose of diaspora that Brand's work resolutely opposes — is haunted by the nation-state's disavowal of diaspora. To read both texts in tandem requires positioning *The Second Scroll* as a multiply fractured text in which the narrative of the nation comes up sharply against the text's diasporic longings for global rather than national citizenship.

[3]Hardt and Negri use the Hegelian term "reciprocal counterviolence" (131) to describe an anti-colonial transformative force based on the reversal of colonial power relationships without the relief of a dialectical resolution. For a critical reading of this concept, see Jacques Lezra's "Sade on Pontecorvo."

[4]For a critique of Hardt and Negri's conception of the global subject, see Giovanni Arrighi's "Lineages of Empire."

[5]For another reading that anticipates Agamben's notion of bare life and of the universality of the suffering Jewish body as a condition of the history of Western modernity and civilization, see the narrator's account of his visit of the Sistine Chapel in "Gloss Gimel." For another reading that confirms Klein's construction of Jewish suffering as "the prototype of the history of mankind" (186), see G.K. Fisher's *In Search of Jerusalem*.

[6]My understanding of melancholia follows Freud's reading of it as an ambivalent struggle that "loosen(s) the fixation of the libido to the object by disparaging it" (257). Thus, theorists like Khanna and Derrida argue, the "critical agency" of melancholia circulates as a form of productive spectral return of what cannot be assimilated and is taken into the service of political and social critique, while the melancholic's torn relationship to the lost ideal/person may also lead to self-punishment and disavowal, culminating in suicide. In this way, the interventive potential of melancholia, as theorized by Eng and Khanna, must also be thought as melancholia's pathological limit.

[7]My reading follows Eng's and Han's notion of "racial melancholia," which refers to "an unresolved process that might usefully describe the unstable immigration and suspended assimilation of Asian Americans into the national fabric" (345). In contrast, in Hassan's, Klein's, and Brand's texts, racial melancholia tends towards the pathological as it mediates historical and systemic experiences of loss caused by racial and colonial violence.

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