

Hijacking the Type: Cathy Park Hong's Poetry against Conceptual Whiteness

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Since the beginning of her career, Cathy Park Hong has published poems with women speakers, characters, and personae that resist sexist constructions. Her inclusion in *Gurlesque: The New Grrly, Grotesque, Burlesque Poetics*, the notorious 2010 anthology edited by Lara Glenum and Arielle Greenberg, solidifies her position in the poetry of third-wave feminism, a "version of feminism" that, among other things, claims to be "more inclusive and diverse than the second wave," "to have a broader vision of politics," and "to focus on more than just women's issues" (Snyder 180, 181). The work in that anthology "assaults the norms of acceptable female behavior by irreverently deploying gender stereotypes to subversive ends" (Glenum 11). Subversion is at the core of four recent poems in which Hong continues in her

feminist poetic while engaging in the racial politics of the avant-garde.

In an essay published in *New Republic* online in October 2015, Hong identifies what she calls “a new movement in American poetry.” According to Hong, this movement has been “galvanized by the activism of Black Lives Matter” and “spearheaded by writers of color who are at home in social media activism and print magazines.” While these poets write from various aesthetic perspectives, “they share a common belief that as poets, they must engage in social practice” (“There’s a New Movement”). The four poems I consider below engage in that practice, but, before I turn to them, I will contextualize Hong’s recent statement as part of a much larger ongoing discussion. That larger discussion is part of what Ramón Saldívar has argued is a “post-race aesthetic,” a “new aesthetic” that “is creating” ways “to deal with the meaning of race in a time when race supposedly no longer matters” (“Historical Fantasy” 575). This aesthetic builds on traditional identity politics but “will be racially undetermined in its reflection of American identities, requiring a blend of [ethnic] identities, necessitating a move beyond the American racial binary of black and white” (“Imagining Cultures” 16).

I. Context: Challenging the Avant-Garde Establishment

In the *New Republic* essay, Hong identifies the conceptual poet Kenneth Goldsmith as an example of the old against which the new poetics of social practice is moving. “Conceptual Poetry,”