"WHAT ACTIVISM CAN LEARN FROM POETRY": LYRIC OPACITY AND DRONE WARFARE IN SOLMAZ SHARIF'S *LOOK*

INTRODUCTION

In her 2016 poetry collection *LOOK,* Solmaz Sharif redefines the military term "Battlefield Illumination," which usually indicates merely the lighting of a battle field (Department of Defense 2007: 54), as "on fire/ a body running" (9). On the next page "Pinpoint Target," the military term meaning a target less than 50 meters in diameter (Department of Defense 2007: 416), is rendered instead as "one lit desk lamp/ and a nightgown walking past the window" (10). Both of Sharif's lyric redefinitions deny the scientific language of war, but while the first one cuts through vague euphemism to expose a body, the second eerily keeps a body in shadows, attending primarily to a feminized domestic scene.

Together, these two opening poems illustrate the central tension that animates Sharif's collection and that serves as the impetus of this essay: whether concealing humanness or emphasizing humanness is a more effective strategy for anti-drone activism that seeks to disrupt the conventional epistemologies of militarized surveillance. Most anti-drone activism attempts to expose the humanness of drone targets, presupposing that drone vision's inability to portray targets as human is the central problem of drone warfare. However, the strategy of becoming less visibly human— cloaking, camouflaging, masking, hiding, becoming covert, even becoming animal—might be, if not more effective, at least more

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attuned to the dehumanization of those who drones surveille and target. As Rebecca Adelman recently put it succinctly, "a turn toward unrecognizability is predicated on a skepticism about the ethical potentialities of drones, their operators, and the states that send them to war. Such skepticism is both warranted and necessary, and may indeed provide the foundation for a new form of resistance to this type of militarization" (2020: 107). Adelman is critical of humanitarian art projects like *#NotaBugSplat*, a giant portrait of a child casualty installed in the landscape in Pakistan by a collective of French, American, and Pakistani artists, human rights nonprofits, and an advertising agency. The idea is that the portrait of the child's face is visible to satellites and drone cameras, and therefore humanizes the targets of drone warfare (JR 2014). The project implies that if the operators of drones could see their targets as human, not merely as small dots on a screen—bugs about to become "bug splats"—as they appear in the dehumanizing scale of drone vision, they might hesitate to act. There are a few problems with this implication, which epitomizes the logic of a type of anti-drone activism. First, it ignores the fact that drone operators do testify to the humanness of their targets and they often use highly sophisticated technology to see them clearly (Bryant 2017). Second, this logic ("if only the drone operators could see") centers individual drone pilots and drone technology, ignoring structural forces of imperial violence; and third, it simultaneously appeals to humanness, a category sedimented with race and gender hierarchies.

This suspicion of "recognition"—a term derived from a Hegelian context—as a remedy to violence is not Adelman's alone. Critiques of recognition in this sense have been suggested by critics and philosophers including Simone Browne, Judith Butler, and Jennifer Rhee.[1] As Rhee puts it, "the purported recognizability of the human

1. Judith Butler explores revisions and criticisms of Hegelian "recognition" and offers a strategy outside existing norms of recognition and within a reciprocal exchange of vulnerability and life (*Frames of War* 2016: 4–5; *Precarious Life* 2006: 43–5). Simone Browne's term "dark sousveillance," meaning "the tactics employed to render one's self out of sight, and strategies used in the flight to freedom from slavery as necessarily ones of undersight [...] an imaginative place from which to mobilize a critique of racializing surveillance, a critique that takes form in antisurveillance, countersurveil-

(recognizable to whom? whose humanity is taken as a given, without requiring proof?), is one of the dehumanizing logics that undergirds overseas drone strikes conducted by the US military and the CIA" (2018: 5). In turning away from the dehumanizing logics of recognition and toward the ethical potential of concealment, this essay builds on Édouard Glissant's decolonizing philosophy of relation and more recent theories of gender and surveillance, such as Rachel Hall and Jasbir Puar's notion of "animal opacity," to argue that poetry is one place in which we might find an answer to what seems like a binary problem of seeing versus unseeing humanity in technologically mediated aerial warfare.

In *LOOK*, Solmaz Sharif invokes lyric history and feminist theory to engage in the critique of recognition and potentials of concealment through a series of experiments about what activism can learn from experimental form. Because poetry's critical history is shaped by theories of overhearing and imprisonment, contemporary poets working in both lyric and experimental traditions have a wealth of tactics at their disposal to critique and resist current damaging surveillance regimes.[2] Sharif, an Iranian-American poet who cites June Jordan's Poetry for the People, an arts and activism program that worked to bridge the gap between UC Berkeley and the surrounding community, as central to her education, sees her work as directly engaged in political action. In an essay about her techniques of borrowing military language, redaction, and erasure, Sharif writes:

I am interested in what activism can learn from poetry….I believe failure in activism is often a deficiency of lyricism—an inability to collapse time and distance, a refusal to surprise or "make it new," a willingness to cal-

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lance, and other freedom practices," offers a specific form of resistance (2015: 21). For Jennifer Rhee, the history of the category of the human is one of "exclusion and oppression" and thus any recognition of humanness based on relation or similarity to the Western subject is in fact dehumanizing (2018: 3, 164, 173).

2.   See *Poetry and Bondage*, which charts how lyric has been theorized as chained, fettered, and bound and see *Lyric Eye* for the ways in which poetry might be a particularly important site for studying surveillance (Brady, *Poetry and Bondage* 2021; Sumner 2022). More broadly, David Rosen and Aaron Santesso see writers of literature as working out and generating surveillance theory (2014: 10).

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cify into rigid and limiting expectations, a closure to self-transformation, an unconsidered *we* or *you*, to name just a few. I believe social quests for freedom have much to learn from freedom enacted on the page. And that this conversation should happen on the level of reading and not, as it often is, solely on the level of intention. (2013, italics in original)

Taking Sharif at her word here, I explore how the poems in *LOOK* can teach us how to be better freedom fighters, in particular how to resist military surveillance technologies and the philosophies that sanction them. I find that in *LOOK,* Sharif develops a feminist form of opaque resistance-looking. This resistance-looking shares features with Simone Browne's "dark sousveillance," a term she uses to account for, among other things, "a reading praxis for examining surveillance that allows for a questioning of how certain surveillance technologies installed during slavery to monitor and track blackness as property [...] anticipate the contemporary surveillance of racialized subjects, and it also provides a way to frame how the contemporary surveillance of the racial body might be contended with" (2015: 22–4). At the same time, Sharif's resistance-looking is distinct from dark sousveillance in its commitment to historical lyric form and relationality. Resistance-looking offers the shadowy recesses of poetic form as a device for seeing and resisting the dehumanizing violence of drone warfare. By tracking resistance-looking, my essay will explore poetic opacity as a response to the humanitarian turn to recognition in anti-drone art and activism. First, I will briefly sketch what a consideration of surveillance practices can bring to lyric theory and what the history and theory of the lyric brings to our understanding of drone vision in particular. I then explore the poetic techniques of Sharif's collection to argue that, when set within the history of lyric theory, *LOOK* offers a path of resistance to militarized power.

OPACITY AND THE LEXICON

As poetics scholars have previously suggested and recently detailed, the form of lyric poetry relies on surveillance, or at least voyeurism. In particular, the definition of twentieth-century lyric depends on a construction of expressive privacy that assumes a lone speaker who is somehow also available for reading audiences to overhear or see; the metaphors for readers as lurkers abound

in theories of the lyric.[3] Critics have created numerous surveillance metaphors that would enable the mind to speak to itself, and for the reader to hear the mind's innerworkings. Perhaps most influentially, John Stuart Mill, who originated the saying that lyric is not heard but "overheard," created a carceral model for the lyric scene to make sense. In 1833, he wrote that the lyric is "the lament of a prisoner in a solitary cell, ourselves listening, unseen, in the next" (1981: 350). As Jackson and Prins argue, this odd but convenient model stuck, and the prison metaphor became an idealized lyric form, further codified into twentieth-century lyric form. The model becomes less odd when, in the twenty-first century, there are increasingly more public forms that take us for mere spectators. With the rise of both sanctioned and clandestine surveillance at home and abroad, a large part of public discourse is now defined by being witness to "solitary" or "unseen" acts. We do often hear the private lament of the prisoner. Between drone images, YouTube videos, captured footage of police brutality, even surveillance footage from prisons made public, we are constantly experiencing mediation that immobilizes us, and often individuates us, but makes us participate in (or at least privy to) civic events.

Sharif's techniques of borrowed text, fractured voices, constraint-based systems of creation, and ekphrastic catalogue place her collection within a tradition that critiques notions of a coherent lyric subject privately lamenting. The documents that *LOOK* catalogs, erases, interprets, borrows, and reuses include American media and popular culture about war in the Middle East such as Wikipedia articles and YouTube videos of soldiers coming home, but also documents produced or altered by the US state: military transcripts, letters under erasure, and lists of operations. This experimental structure has led some critics to call *LOOK* an example of "Documentary Poetics" (Leong 2020: 55–56; Dowdy 2020). However, unlike most

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3.   See Jackson 2005 (7–9), Warner 2002, and White 2014 (31–37) for the powerful history of the lyric speaker overheard and how it has shaped both poetry and criticism. Focusing on the 1920–60s, Tyne Sumner takes up these theories to argue that "it is the very intimacy of the lyric gesture that best positions it to critique surveillance" because it is situated between autobiography and politics (2022: 7).

examples of the genre, the book also traffics in lyric forms of expression, offering up a feeling hroughout. Sharif's collection is sensitive to lyric method as a writerly and readerly practice—and *LOOK* exploits the tension between see-er and seen inherent in lyric form to work through philosophies of this relation that are important to surveillance, and to drone technologies in particular. As Andrea Brady writes, "*Look* makes use of military diction in order to challenge the technologies of perception and tyranny which are epitomised by drones. It carves out spaces for poetic reflection and memory in both the position of the object and subject of the militarised gaze, making trauma visible without turning it into spectacle" (2017: 125). Beyond making trauma visible, Sharif offers a path of resistance to drone technology, and her first step in performing this feat is illuminating the multiple valences of opacity.

Although the collection plays with many constraints and forms throughout, the central procedure is the use of the United States Department of Defense's *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (2007). As illustrated in the examples that started my essay, terms from this dictionary are redefined throughout, and they are printed in all capital letters to set them apart from the rest of the text. Sharif includes a note explaining that "despite her best efforts," only a fraction of the terms from the dictionary are employed in the collection, and that she used a specific edition of the Department of Defense (DOD) dictionary from 2007. The edition is important because as terms are removed, the dictionary indexes how military language becomes less obscure over time. As Sharif explains about the removal of the term "drone" after 2015: "It is likely 'drone' was removed from the dictionary since understanding of the term has fully entered English vernacular; in other words, the military definition is no longer a supplement to the English language, but the English language itself" (2016: 95).

This means that the dictionary terms that Sharif includes in *LOOK* may a) be unfamiliar to non-military readers, b) have a separate military definition, which once known, estranges otherwise common words or situations for non-military readers, or c) have come into standard usage since 2007 and are now clearly understood by the general public. These three options are

important to dwell on for a moment, and I will discuss 'b' first, as it is the most common.

Using dictionaries to create poetry is not an unusual avant-garde technique. As Craig Dworkin suggests about works that use dictionaries for formal experimentation, "such literature isolates or foregrounds aspects of a reference work in order to lay bare ideologies inherent in even the most ostensibly objective and documentary collections" (2020: 10). However, in choosing words that are not in common usage and using them commonly, Sharif's poems use the lexicon as a technology for obscurity, rather than illumination. Even the title poem, "LOOK," would seem relatively straightforward if you did not know the DOD definition of 'look' refers to an active mine. In other words, Sharif asks us to read with the DOD dictionary, not as a device for clarity but as a source of murkiness. A poem like "LAY," which consists of a list of common prepositions for the term, is straightforward, if ominous, before you know that the DOD defines 'lay' as to "direct or adjust the aim of a weapon" (2007: 309). Using the dictionary in this case does not expose the ideologies in the dictionary, but rather it displays the obfuscation of everyday language. It shows how militarized logic infuses the lexicon of everyday life, and it asserts that the way to contend with its structural violence might not be through increased transparency but through extra layers of opacity.

There are many moments in the collection where non-military readers encounter the opacity of military logic as shocking and out of place ('a' in the list above). For example, in the line that combines predatory sexuality and violence, "Ladies, bring your KILL BOX," opacity is weaponized slightly differently (Sharif 2016: 17). In an interview, Sharif has explained that her work is in part an attempt to "infiltrate and disrupt territories and languages and narratives that think themselves outside of this violence" (Akbar 2016). By sexualizing the language of war or turning it into innuendo–the line cited in the interview is "Guaranteed to make your SPREADER BAR SWELL"–Sharif ensures that we are not dulled to the effects of euphemistic language. This illustration of violence in unexpected places, even infused with libido, is particularly poignant for a war that has been deemed abstract, both by the fact that it is waged on 'terror,' rather than specific countries, and that it is fought with

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'indifference,' the same bureaucratized tactics that Randy Martin argues the US used to fight the war on crime, drugs and "various 'at risk' populations" (9). It is also particularly notable that Sharif takes this intimate tactic with the lexicon of drone technology, which has been a vehicle to further abstract, or even authorize killing as scientific, clean, and removed from the everyday of lives that are valued by the state. As Lisa Parks explains, "overvaluation or fetishization of the drone as 'unmanned' or 'autonomous' has the effect of sanctioning statecraft that takes the form of unilateralism or authorizing wars that are waged extrajudicially" (2017: 135).

Indeed, emphasizing the inhumanness of the technology seems to be what elicits the response of anti-drone activists to dwell on the humanness of the targets. The result is that operators are figured as unaware play-station players, technology as clean and inhuman, and recognition becomes a messiah for a state violence that is enmeshed in democracy, capital, and notions of humanity itself. The examples above put the wars on human genitals, refusing the fetishization of "unmanned" violence, yet also obscure recognition in the process. When, in the opening poem of the collection, Sharif writes, "Let me LOOK at you. / Let me LOOK at you in a light that takes years to get here" (2016: 5). 'Look' is capitalized here, indicating its military definition, which is also printed at the start of the collection: "in mine warfare, a period during which a mine circuit is receptive of an influence" (2016: 1). The poem implies that readers are implicated, seen rather than 'unseen' as in the lyric model, yet also that there is no such thing as direct transparency—sleek, technological methods of war are themselves punishing, making us receptive only for destruction.

"LOOK" focuses on drone technology and the recent war on terrorism with knowledge of the full scope of racial and imperial violence. Through braiding together different stories—insults from a jingoistic Republican protester, a courtroom scene, love-making in a domestic bedroom, the saga of an exiled family—the poem tells a longer history of civilian killing and destruction by the US in response to Middle Eastern conflict:

Whereas years after they LOOK down from their jets
        and declare my mother's Abadan block PROBABLY
        DESTROYED, we walked by the villas, the faces

> of buildings torn off into dioramas, and recoded it
> on a handheld camcorder;
>
> Whereas it could take as long as 16 seconds between
>   trigger pulled in Las Vegas and the Hellfire missile
>   landing in Mazar-e-Sharif, after which they will ask
>   *Did we hit a child? No. A dog.* they will answer themselves;
>
>   (Sharif 2016: 3)

The first stanza above refers to the siege of the Iranian city of Abadan by Iraq, an early event of the Iran-Iraq war (1980). At this time, the US was supportive of Iraq, then Ba'athist Iraq, led by Saddam Hussein. The jets of 1980 then become the hellfire missile launched from a Predator unmanned aircraft in an early battle in the War on Terror in 2001. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld would call this 2001 battle in Mazar Sharif Afghanistan "transforming" due to the technological innovation used in warfare. A few stanzas later, drones use contemporary infrared sensors to find targets:

> Whereas the lover made my heat rise, rise so that if heat
>   sensors were trained on me, they
>   could read my THERMAL SHADOW through the roof and through
>   the wardrobe;
>
>   (Sharif 2016: 3)

The technologies of jet, drone, and thermal imaging mark generations through a longer story of racialized violence. The militarized mediation may change, but the logic of war operates in each scene: as Judith Butler puts it, "dividing populations into those who are grievable and those who are not" (2016). In the poem, Iranians and Afghani lives are akin to the loss of buildings and dogs, US immigrants from Iran–the speaker's home in California sets the contemporary scene for later poems–are always targeted and surveilled, deemed in need of illumination. As a later poem laments, "I say Hello NSA when I place a call/ somewhere a file details my sexual habits" (Sharif 2016: 93).

    "LOOK"'s inclusion of the history of targeting and killing indicates that it is not drone technology that creates anonymity, or video-gamification that kills by dehumanizing its subjects. Rather, the poem attends to this racial violence as structural and therefore

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precedes any particular technology. Further, the poem proclaims that illuminating individual humanness cannot provide relief from violence; as the speaker muses on a judge pronouncing a sentence, "Whereas I thought if he would LOOK at my *exquisite* face or my father's, he would reconsider" (Sharif 2016: 4, italics in original). In what seems almost a parody of an art project like *#NotaBugSplat*, no matter how exquisite the face, the poem reveals that it will only exist for 16 seconds in this paradigm. The recognition of the face, of the precarity of the life, will not save it. Like Butler, Sharif shows us that instead, "grievability precedes and makes possible the apprehension of the living being as living." Later in the collection, Sharif's uncle is memorialized, grieved, despite the interdiction; in *LOOK*, Sharif writes, "let it matter what we call a thing":

Whereas *ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is
        your life*? It is even a THERMAL SHADOW, it appears
        so little, and then vanishes from the screen;

                                        (2016: 4, italics in original)

Whether the life in question is a dog or a child, both are merely thermal shadow, "it appears so little, and then vanishes from the screen." This conflation suggests a momentary democratizing possibility as all mammalian bodies are similarly perceived. But as J.D. Schnepf reminds us, and the poem makes clear, the "vision of species fluidity" provided by drone technology "is a product of militarized surveillance" and follows its logic (2016: 299). Although infrared technology renders all bodies similarly, without regard to race, gender, or even species, the technology operates along familiar hierarchies of power, targeting only particular racial and ethnic groups (Parks 2017: 145). The dog here is an example of another form of ungrievable life.

Here it is legal language that deems these lives ungrievable; the anaphora of "whereas" in the poem recalls a formal document like a bill. Paired with a verse in the King James Bible in the stanza above, Sharif illustrates the depth of the structure of violence in Western democratic notions of subjecthood. Likewise, readers will notice that this poem employs specialized terms of war that are in standard usage today (option 'c' in my list above). "Thermal shadow" was in the 2007 DOD dictionary when Sharif was writing,

but it is not in the 2021 DOD dictionary. Non-military readers know this term now and its capitalization is a historical artifact like the "ye" in King James: legible, even foundational to American structures. This section illustrated how the reading and writing techniques of *LOOK* favor many valences of opacity. The next section explores how this social quest for freedom on the page is a suggestion for activism on the streets.

OPACITY AND THE "WE"

Solmaz Sharif's poem "FORCE VISIBILITY" exposes the drama of what is available to see and what is unseen, yet it does not reduce the relation of the two to a dichotomy. The title of the poem is a term from the DOD dictionary meaning the "current and accurate status" of "forces; their current mission; future missions; location; mission priority; and readiness status." Here 'force' and 'forces' refer to military personnel and their weapons. In other words, according to the DOD, a current and accurate status, the "readiness status," is tied to what is visible. The definition of 'force visibility' continues: "Force visibility provides information on the location, operational tempo, assets, and sustainment requirements of a force as part of an overall capability for a combatant commander" (2007: 213). 'Force visibility' means seeing if people and technology are ready to perform killing.

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The poem takes place in a car on the way to see a French New Wave film and the speaker is arguing with her beloved. She is trying to resolve the quarrel and she is wearing pigtails that "no one could see," presumably because they are under a hijab or another hair covering (Sharif 2016: 21–23). The scene is a militarized city with police on horses that also bleeds into a classroom and a dinner party. The formal method is "CONTINUOUS STRIP IMAGERY," a term from the DOD meaning that a camera is capturing an unbroken image, even as it is flying along over the terrain (2007: 119). Everywhere is seen, the car is an amphitheater, the traffic is between theaters, in both the common and military meanings of 'theater.' Like "FORCE VISIBILITY," the assumption is that the visual capacity is itself an agent of war. Indeed, the poem defines fascism as the regime of the visible:

[...]
What is fascism?
A student asked me

and can you believe
I couldn't remember
the definition?

The sonnet,
I said.
I could've said this:

our sanctioned twoness.
My COVERT pigtails
[...]

This is fascism.
Dinner party
by dinner party,

waltz by waltz
weddings ringed
by admirers, by old

couples who will rise
to touch each other
publicly.

This is a world of accepted—even welcomed—public intimacy. Familiar form is fascism; both the formalism of the sonnet and of the parties, the familiar signification of the waltz or the wedding ring. True to Sharif's conviction about politics of form recounted at the beginning of my essay, political failure, or even fascism is the unquestioned replication of familiar forms. But the poem points to several areas that remain unseen: the inside of the "sheriff's retrofitted bus," which we are told "Full or empty/ was impossible to see," and also the speaker's pigtails. The power here is in the hidden. Whether the bus is full or empty tells us the level of threat it proposes. Without knowing, we have to assume that the bus could take more prisoners. The speaker's pigtails exhibit unexposed girlishness, their first mention includes that "no one could see," then later they are "COVERT pigtails," a symbol for "our sanctioned twoness." Fascism is twoness, the visibility of otherness as power, and here that "sanctioned twoness" also recalls the standard lyric model.

The notion that a central modality of power is seeing but remaining unseen has been well-theorized, especially in relation to biopolitics.[4] Feminist theorists in particular have suggested that the gendered gaze of the state is selectively cast, and that places rendered externally invisible can be powerful sites of knowledge-making. Examples of this are as far flung as theories of the "hidden abode" as a possible place of defiance, to Puar and Hall's observation that constructions of terrorists at this historical juncture are coded feminine (Fraser 2014; Puar 2007: xxiii; Hall 2015: 129–39). In "FORCE VISIBILITY," both fascism and femininity are symbolized by the hidden pigtails. But "COVERT" is not in the 2007 DOD Dictionary, despite its capitalization that leads readers to think it might be; an altered obfuscation happens within the poem. "FORCE VISIBILITY" illustrates that matters of femininity and the domestic sphere are hidden, but it also points out that, like the panopticon-esque sheriff's bus, these shadowy areas are imbued with power. On this point, Sharif has cited Audre Lorde's theory of "dark feminine power" as an important influence on her poetry. She comments on what Lorde explains in "Poetry is not a Luxury" as "the woman's place of power within each of us is neither white nor surface; it is dark, it is ancient, and it is deep" (2007: 37):

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I think all of these questions—what is femininity, what is darkness—and I'm so up in the air about them myself that I don't really know what to say, other than that I feel, as a person and especially as a woman, that I am under constant threat and attack, and it's not just me that's happening to. Somehow, I want the work to show that every time you're washing the dishes, every shower, every grocery trip—that's all informed by this violence, whether we're seeing it or not. (Clemmons 2016)

In "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" and "Poetry is not a Luxury," Lorde creates a poetics of light and dark as a source of knowledge and power. What Lorde refers to as "the quality of light" is what allows the creation of poetry, but darkness is where women's knowledge and feelings are held. For Lorde, a false dichotomy between the spiritual and the political in the West banishes this type of dark knowledge, which Lorde refers to as "erotic" (Lorde, "Poetry Is Not a Luxury" 2007: 36, 37; Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic"

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4.   I am thinking of Foucault's work on the subject and the many revisions and expansions in its wake.

2007: 56–57). In Sharif's quotation above she makes sure to mark unseen violence in the same breath as darkness and femininity. The poetry can 'show' what cannot otherwise be seen, and it does so through an exploration of femininity and darkness.

This feminine darkness is akin to Hall's 'animal opacity' that refuses visibility by the state. For Hall, who is inspired by Jasbir Puar's theorization of performance and biopolitics, "animal opacity" is linked to the form of an "undisciplined woman" which challenges the voluntary transparency within the domestic security cultures of terrorism prevention (Hall 2015: 129–39). Yet Sharif's technology with a capacity to reveal without illuminating also situates it within a paradigm of what Édouard Glissant refers to simply as "opacity," a model of relation that is separate from what might be a colonizing gaze of recognition. Glissant claims a "right for opacity" as that which exceeds categories of identifiable difference: "I thus am able to conceive of the opacity of the other for me, without reproach for my opacity for him. To feel in solidarity with him, or to build with him or to like what he does, it is not necessary for me to grasp him. It is not necessary to try to become the other (to become other) nor to 'make' him in my image" (1997: 193). For Glissant, we can be in community without entirely understanding each other, since to do so would require a single rubric of understanding. Further, he argues that the projects of becoming and making entirely visible are Western abstractions that result in colonial violence. One might argue that these abstractions and predilections toward transmutation are intensified by anti-drone rhetoric that depends on illumination and recognition, for example simplifying global systems of violence to the sentimentality of images of innocent child drone victims.

"FORCE VISIBILITY" is a poem with an unidentified lyric subject—an "I"—who hopes nevertheless to be a more public "we." Furthermore, the lyric subject notices her audience (traffic, police on horses, the sheriff's bus) beside her. It is a poem about two-ness, that stalwart of the lyric "I" and "you," that is written in tercets, insisting on a third party exceeding what is sanctioned and visible. Sharif's poetry reaches for a "we" and an "us" that is concealed beyond familiar form, the "sanctioned twoness" of the poetry that contains it. It shows us what does not work about lyric

and recognition logics, what will exceed twoness, namely that opacity can use and also disrupt these models of recognition.

CONCLUSION

In pointing out what does not work about usual surveillance technologies and lyric technologies, "FORCE VISIBILITY" offers something else. The poem names the method of state surveillance, but it also acknowledges that covert counter-surveillance uses similar forms. Throughout "FORCE VISIBILITY"—and this is a major technique of *LOOK*—fascism is impossible to separate entirely from its resistance. Sharif's misuse of military terms resists by exposing what surfaces are visible and what is unavailable to us. *LOOK* conjectures that "resistance looking"—the technology itself is a tool of both exposure and opacity—sparks possibilities, suggesting a path to avoid a "sanctioned twoness" of lyric form that has previously been cordoned off from public forms.

To return to the portion of Sharif's essay that I quoted toward the beginning of this essay, Sharif stated she is "interested in what activism can learn from poetry" and one of the biggest failures in activism, also a "deficiency of lyricism" is "an unconsidered *we* or *you*." In "FORCE VISIBILITY," the "we" is the lovers, and elsewhere in *LOOK* the "we" is generations of targets or "ungrievable lives" ("we have learned to sing a child calm in a bomb shelter" is the penultimate line of the poem "Drone," which ends the collection). Who is this "we" that escapes the "I" and the "you" of lyric? How to consider it sufficiently but allow it the right to opacity?

It is worth pointing out that both poems that I have discussed in depth in this essay—"LOOK" and "FORCE VISIBILITY"— contain the poet's signature: "Mazar-e-Sharif" of the city in Afghanistan and the "sheriff's retrofitted bus," respectively. Indeed, beyond the oblique figure of the poetic "I" is the hidden sanction of lyric techniques by the poet herself. Here lies a trope so central to poetry that it is part of the Bard's boast that "every word doth almost tell my name."[5] This logic is a continuation of *LOOK*'s punning methods throughout. The words 'Sharif' (Arabic for an honorific meaning

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5   I am inspired by Craig Dworkin's work here; he writes about a signature in Harryette Mullen's *Muse & Drudge*, which she describes as "I borrowed Shakespeare's device of writing his name into his sonnets" (2020: 174).

noble) and 'sheriff' (English from old English meaning a high officer) seem to have no etymological connection but they both manifest clearly in the poet's family name. The poet plays noble police as she is hidden from view, possessing the power to obscure without being seen herself. And in these two poems, the poet is destroyed by bombs and also thrives at the behest of the state. In our readerly quest for her, our consideration of the "we" or the "you," we must respect her opacity. Indeed, in Sharif's concealment, we are concealed, not by the penetrating technologies of war that render us mammalian blobs of heat on a screen, nor the scanners trained on us, but rather by the knowledge that violence and death occur in the realm of the unseen as well as the seen. We must turn our attention to the intricate violent systems of the state, the reasoning of their deployment, the leveling of their horrors, the depth of their structural disenfranchisement of total popula-tions, because recognition of the humanity of its targets—though part of the process—is not enough.

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