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**How to Cite:** Ramayya, N. 2019. Curve Warp Corpse: D. S. Marriott, E. A. Markham, John La Rose, Maud Sulter, and Bhanu Kapil. *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, 11(1): 8, pp. 1–31. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/bip.764>

**Published:** 03 April 2020

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## ARTICLE

# Curve Warp Corpse: D. S. Marriott, E. A. Markham, John La Rose, Maud Sulter, and Bhanu Kapil

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In this article, I read selected texts by D. S. Marriott, E. A. Markham, John La Rose, Maud Sulter, and Bhanu Kapil, reading the racial formation, poetic form, and performance of identity in these texts in terms of 'curve', 'warp', and 'corpse'. I define and redefine these terms as movements, directions, and forms of reading, structuring my discussions accordingly, with regards to the subjects of migration, social relations, racialisation, and representation.

I offer my selection and my readings of the writers and texts according to the following areas of research: representations of social relations and racial formation in poetry; dissimulation and obscurity as methods and forms that enable the resistance and refusal of visibility; performance of identity as representational strategy that also reveals the possibilities and impossibilities of representing subjectivity, existence, and life.

My methodology combines historical and biographical contextualisation of the writers and texts, theorisation of race and representation, and close reading. My objectives are to promote the selected writers and texts, to offer a contribution to existing literary criticism and the ongoing study of race and poetry, to share my readings and to invite further reading and sharing. The texts include poetry, fiction, personal narrative, and visual art, as well as literary and art criticism and critical theory, primarily: Marriott's essay 'Corpsing; or, The Matter of Black Life' (2016) and the poem 'Pot Kettle Black' (2011); Markham's lecture 'West Indian Writing in Britain: Is It True to Type?' (1998) and the poem 'Lambchops Has a Problem' (1976); La Rose's poems 'Not From Here' and 'Me As Well – The Blackman' (1966); Sulter's poem 'Historical Objects' (1989), the text and visual artwork *Zabat* (1989), and the anthology *Passion: Discourses on Blackwomen's Creativity* (1990); Kapil's book *Ban En Banlieue* (2015).

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**Keywords:** Race; Blackness; Representation; Performance; Death; D. S. Marriott; E. A. Markham; John La Rose; Maud Sulter; Bhanu Kapil

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## Introduction

In this article, I read selected texts by D. S. Marriott, E. A. Markham, John La Rose, Maud Sulter, and Bhanu Kapil, reading the racial formation, poetic form, and performance of identity in these texts in terms of 'curve', 'warp', and 'corpse'. In the first section, 'Curve, Curving', I introduce a range of issues, questions, and ideas about race and poetry in the UK, including migration, social relations, racialisation, and representation. In the second section, 'Warp, Warping', I expand on representation, discussing forms and methods in relation to visibility, space, and obscurity. In the third section, 'Corpse, Corpsing', I provide a theoretical context for my discussions, suggesting arguments about representation and performance, unreality and reality, spectacle and death. Finally, I offer my readings of selected texts. I introduce the terms 'curve', 'warp', and 'corpse' gradually, providing abstract and dictionary definitions, resisting the possibility of any singular definition or application. Rather, the terms are repeated, refigured, and multiplied. This polymorphous approach to theorising corresponds with my approach to reading the texts, and to my arguments overall.

I follow the texts into areas of research, I mark points of intersection and interest, I draw attention to spaces for study. My methodology combines historical and biographical contextualisation of the writers and texts, theorisation of race and representation, and close reading. My objectives are to promote the selected writers and texts, to offer a contribution to existing literary criticism and the ongoing study of race and poetry, to share my readings and to invite further reading and sharing. The texts include poetry, fiction, personal narrative, and visual art, as well as literary and art criticism and critical theory, primarily: Marriott's essay 'Corpsing; or, The Matter of Black Life' (2016) and the poem 'Pot Kettle Black' (2011); Markham's lecture 'West Indian Writing in Britain: Is It True to Type?' (1998) and the poem 'Lambchops Has a Problem' (1976); La Rose's poems 'Not From Here' and 'Me As Well – The Blackman' (1966); Sulter's poem 'Historical Objects' (1989), the text and visual artwork *Zabat* (1989), and the anthology *Passion: Discourses on Blackwomen's Creativity* (1990); Kapil's book *Ban En Banlieue* (2015).<sup>1</sup>

The writers and texts are not listed in alphabetical or chronological order. Rather, I follow geographical and historical curves: from Caribbean islands, from Ghana, from India to the UK and back to Caribbean islands, to Ghana, to India; from the present day to the past to the present day. The points on these curves are specific places and dates that are significant to the histories and biographies of the writers and to the writing and publishing of their texts. There are intersections between writers and texts: for example, Marriott's 'Pot Kettle Black' references Markham's Lambchops poems; Markham and La Rose were friends and associates in a West Indian literary community in London in the 1980s–2000s; Markham edited *Artrage: Inter-Cultural Arts Magazine* in the 1980s, during which time Sulter contributed to the publication. All the writers reference the specific event of Enoch Powell's anti-immigration 'Rivers of Blood' speech, delivered at a Conservative party meeting in England in 1968, as well as their individual and collective experiences and analyses of fascism, racism, and anti-blackness more generally, as extending across geography and history. In accordance with these curves and intersections, my discussions move around areas of research and between points of interest, by means of which I hope that readers may identify their own spaces for study.

### **Curve, Curving**

The curve signifies bend, tension, and movement: the feeling of being pulled towards, the feeling of being pushed away. The attraction and attachment to a new or old place; the revulsion and detachment from a new or old place. In the poem 'Not From Here', in *Foundations* (1966), John La Rose expresses the contradictory experiences of migration (La Rose moved from Trinidad to England with his family in 1961):

Yet what we leave  
    we carry.  
It is not mud  
    we dry  
on our boots.

The saliva we swallow  
must ever dwell  
down there.<sup>2</sup>

'Here' is the new place, the predominantly white place. The collective 'we' is defined by negation: 'we' are defined as not being from 'here', 'we' are defined as being from elsewhere. What we leave behind – objects, people, places – is what we carry with us, if not physically, then emotionally and spiritually. Or, the fact of what has been left behind, the fact of leaving itself, is what we carry with us – dispossession, isolation, alienation.

La Rose suggests that people who move are marked by their losses – their boots carry the traces of the old places. In naming mud in order to negate it – these are 'not' traces of mud on our boots – La Rose makes it difficult to imagine the traces otherwise, to substitute mud with another substance. Thus, the traces simulate mud, boots marked by the old places, and, stretching the image, bodies marked by the old places. Boots and bodies marked by the mud of the old places, carrying mud between old and new places. La Rose names saliva as a possible substitute for mud, but the sense is difficult to follow: we dry saliva on our boots? Whose saliva? How did it get there, by kissing, licking, chewing, or spitting? The external traces marking boots and bodies are contrasted with the internalised traces of the substance that is swallowed, that dwells within. Saliva is produced in the body and consumed; that which is already internalised simulates the entrance, break down, and absorption of that which is external to the body. If mud comes from without and saliva comes from within, La Rose complicates the origins and substantiations of these substances. Perhaps mud signifies questions of race in terms of essentialism or racialisation: does race come from within or without? Perhaps saliva signifies questions of social relations in terms of integration or segregation: do social relations come from within or without? La Rose complicates the differentiations between the insides and outsides of places and bodies, revealing the contradictions in demarcating what and who is 'not from here' and 'from here'. Marked by its movements between old and new places, the migrating body of colour is formed

by these contradictions, individually and collectively. Moving to a predominantly white place, the body of colour bends and is bent by the tensions of racialised social relations.

The curve signifies drive and direction, without implications of arrival or success. The curve may be deep – almost returning to its point of origin, reaching its breaking point, but never arriving. The British Indian figure of Ban in Bhanu Kapil's book *Ban En Banlieue* (2015) lies outside space and time:

Precisely because – as a black person or child born to immigrants in the U.K. of 1971 – her birth broke something. It inserted something, like when you start to hate yourself or when you lose something. 'What is born in England but is never English?'<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note that Kapil clarifies Ban's colour in terms of the category of political blackness: 'A black girl in an era when, in solidarity, Caribbean and Asian Brits self-defined as black. A black (brown) girl encountered in the earliest hour of a race riot, or what will become one by nightfall'.<sup>4</sup> The race riot to which Kapil refers took place in Southall, West London in 1979. In an essay on a race riot that took place in Tottenham, North London in 1985, La Rose explains how blackness relates to social relations and political formation:

This black solidarity comes from the reactions to racism on the job, in the street, in the school, with its horrors and hassles of exclusions and expulsions, from the racist abuse and criminalisation by the police, later validated with conviction and sentencing by magistrates and judges. This is a common thread running through the black communities of Afro-Caribbean, of African and Asian origin.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, murders by the police were central to both riots. Thus, black solidarity is structured by a common thread of blackness in terms of social relations, racialisation, and experiences of racism and violence – everyday, in public, supported by institutions, and enforced by the state. Despite the specificities of individual subject

positions, and the multiplicity and diversity of black communities, they are bound together by the commonality of not-whiteness.

Returning to Ban – she experiences herself as the insertion of a black (brown) body in a predominantly white place, an unwelcome arrival, an insertion that breaks. She is marked as being from elsewhere, as not belonging to here. However, the fact of being marked does not enable a straightforward return to the elsewhere marking her body, possibly her parents' place of birth, or her ancestors' place of birth. Kapil suggests that the person of colour in a predominantly white place is neither here nor there, neither now nor then; her body projects and is projected upon. She defines herself by negation – like being 'not from here', Ban is 'never English' – as well as by the contradictions of her existence – from here and not from here, English and never English. She recognises the possibility that she may never love, find, and return to herself; she recognises herself, a British citizen born to Indian immigrants, as being somewhat impossible, according to the racist implications of the riddling question: 'What is born in England but is never English?'

The curve may be slight – almost departing from its expected trajectory, altering expectations, but never progressing. In the lecture 'West Indian Writing in Britain: Is It True to Type?' (1998), E. A. Markham discusses the consequences of the Caribbean Artists Movement, which was founded by La Rose, Kamau Brathwaite, and Andrew Salkey in London in 1966:

You solve one problem largely to encounter another. Visibility was gained, yes, but at the cost of type-casting. We found ourselves being repackaged – from the complexity of Caribbeanness to the simplicity of being black. (When later in the mid-1980s I edited *Artrage*, I tried to define black as a political colour.)<sup>6</sup>

The first problem is that writers of colour in a predominantly white place are not seen – neither published, nor read. If that problem is solved, the second problem is that writers of colour in a predominantly white place are simplified, seen only in terms of some generalisable blackness – published and read for what their writing reveals about race, culture, and experience, the specificities of their various Caribbean experiences obscured by the 'simply black' repackaging.

To typecast may be defined as:

To cast (an actor) in a role or roles for which he appears to be physically or temperamentally suited or of a kind in which he has been successful; to allocate continually to the same type of part [...] to represent or regard as a stereotype.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, Markham suggests, in apparently progressing from invisibility to visibility, writers of colour find themselves to be hypervisible. They are publishable insofar as they can be packaged for a predominantly white literary market; they are readable insofar as they can be read by a predominantly white readership; they are successful insofar as they are determined by their publishers and readers to be 'physically or temperamentally suited', insofar as they may be simplified to fit the stereotype. To continue being successful, they must continue to fit.

Following the trajectory of Markham's argument: if writers of colour deviate from type, if they try to return to complexity, they move out of the light, they become difficult to see. Their writing becomes difficult to read, to publish. They cease to be cast. In their deviation, perhaps they expand the role or create new roles, new trajectories, new expectations; in their obscurity, perhaps their successors find themselves in the old role, being fitted into the old stereotype, being forced to repeat the deviation from the same starting point. Markham discusses relationships between specific West Indian writers in terms of predecessors and successors:

[Kamau] Brathwaite is a resource as well as a poet. Some have benefited directly (Linton Kwesi Johnson), the rest of us, by being made more literate about our history, indirectly. We don't start, when we talk about Black British Writing, with a clean slate. There is no need for us, each generation, each decade, to re-invent the wheel.<sup>8</sup>

To 'reinvent the wheel' may be defined as 'to recreate something that already exists, especially at the expense of unnecessary time and effort; to repeat effort needlessly'.<sup>9</sup> Later in the lecture, Markham repeats the phrase in reverse: he states that there is a need for West Indian and Black British writers to re-invent the wheel with



regards to literary criticism, as not enough critics 'take our work seriously enough to criticise it'.<sup>10</sup>

Issues repeat and multiply across history. Some problems are 'common threads', as La Rose phrases it, running through diverse communities, encountered again and again in different contexts. In the preface to the anthology *Passion: Discourses on Blackwomen's Creativity* (1990), published a few years earlier than Markham's lecture, in an interdisciplinary and internationalist feminist context, Maud Sulter writes:

The endeavours and successes of Blackwomen's creativity are often criticised but seldom critiqued in a constructive upwards and outwards way. [...] Discourse is a primary tool against the weapons used to marginalise and write out of history our contribution *she who writes herstory rewrites history*.

We must break the cycle of reinventing the wheel. [...] It is painful to see the ignorance of which exhibitions, publications, meetings etc. have happened. Painful to recognise the fact that so much remains unread and unlooked at. More painful the seemingly perverse pleasure taken in the suicidal belief that one is the *only* one, the *first* one, *the* one.<sup>11</sup>

Focussing on the implications of Sulter's argument for writers: black women writers must not simply be published and read, their work must be subjected to criticism, to study and scholarship; their work must be visible on reading lists and curricula, in library collections and archives. Their histories must not simply be a record of their apparent progression from invisibility to visibility, of their statistical advancement in terms of book deals, prizes, grants, and institutional recognition. Their histories must be recorded and rerecorded, and these records, too, must be visible to readers, students, and scholars. Black women writers should not be forced to repeat themselves. As Sulter argues, this enforced repetition is painful and perverse. It is painful and perverse to see writers struggle to become visible, then struggle to deviate, then struggle to become complex; to see these writers become obscure, unrecorded; to see successive writers overlook their predecessors, lose their predecessors, or compete with their predecessors in order to claim the starting point.

Sulter describes these successors as suicidal. She implies that in not recognising the work of preceding black women writers, successive black women writers deny the existence of their predecessors. Further, black women writers who do not recognise themselves to be successors deny their own existence. Ignorance of history is suicidal: in destroying their predecessors, they destroy themselves. Sulter suggests an existential equivalence between predecessors and successors, and a spatial and temporal looping of historical and contemporary creative and cultural production. The cycle must be broken, the wheel must not be reinvented; we must value our own and each other's time and effort, we must repeat our own and each other's efforts knowingly and needfully; we must study our histories, we must stop destroying ourselves and each other.

### **Warp, Warring**

The series of curves, deviations, repetitions, and loops establishes a warp. The warp signifies the stretching, spreading, and expanding involved in creative and cultural production. The establishment of multiple and diverse contexts enables the resistance and refusal of singular and static reproduction, such as the reproduction of types, and, correspondingly, enables the multiplicity and diversity of creative and cultural productions. The warp signifies the bending, deviating, and distorting involved in resisting and refusing the forces of reproduction; in creating possibilities to lie outside space and time, geography and history, here and now, to go beyond place and body, starting point and stereotype. Markham argues:

It's valuable for our writing to create space for itself, [...] certain techniques, certain ways of apprehending reality militate against our creating that space. [...] It is a challenge to art, almost a responsibility of the artist to refuse to accept, as a starting-point, a space that is less than an adequate living space; a space that is too small to live in. [...] By refusing to accept what is arrogantly given, by adopting writing techniques that do not validate those spaces, the artist, the writer can at least help others to see that we are, in a real sense, in a state of transition.

What methods and forms of writing create space for themselves? What is a methodology that reveals 'a state of transition' without revealing too much – without risking its processes, suspending itself for the sake of inspection, or giving itself away?

To warp is to weave, to create space by distorting pre-existing space. To warp is to stretch and spread the weave itself, to spin the web, to cast the net – to distort space by resisting and refusing reality as it is given. To resist and refuse the types, methods, and forms that are given to writers of colour to determine their reality and their means of representing that reality. Markham continues: 'If home doesn't afford you hiding-place, it doesn't fulfil the minimum requirements of "home"'.<sup>12</sup> There is safety and security in obscurity, there is a sense of belonging and comfort in the ability to determine one's visibility, to spread the weave over one's body. Indeed, to assert one's existence is to assert the ability to conceal oneself and the will to be invisible.

Sulter discusses space and context in terms of weaving:

There are many books which need to be written, *Passion: Discourses on Blackwomen's Creativity* should be read as a signpost to further research. It does not endeavour to document or index any more than those places where The Blackwomen's Creativity Project has touched fragments of the enormous web of activity.

To be a success this book should encourage all Blackspinsters out there not only to promote this publication but also to research, reclaim and make public our herstory for ourselves.<sup>13</sup>

She affirms the existence of multiple and diverse contexts of creative and cultural production. Although all areas of the 'enormous web of activity' have not been seen, recognised, or recorded, the web exists and activity continues in private spaces. Sulter stresses that her study, as documented in the anthology, does not negate the need for further study. Addressing black women specifically and directly, Sulter refigures Blackwomen as Blackspinsters – spinning, weaving, warping – and describes their collective success in terms of making public 'our herstory for ourselves'. Rather than making their selves and stories visible and intelligible for white audiences,

Sulter invites black women to make their selves and stories visible and intelligible for themselves. The visibility of black women in a predominantly white place must be refigured as visibility for black women in their own spaces, which may be invisible and unintelligible for white audiences. This form and method of visibility may be understood as obscurity.

In the personal narrative 'Taking the Drawing-Room through Customs', in *A Rough Climate* (2002), Markham recalls:

Once, when asked why he wrote, John La Rose said: 'Because they lie about you. They pretend to speak for you and they lie about you'. I was encouraged by this, for I thought if anyone should lie about me, I should be accorded that privilege.<sup>14</sup>

This anecdote expresses the social and political objectives of a methodology that integrates creativity, resistance and refusal, and obscurity. As Markham states, it is a privilege to be able to lie about oneself, to be able to obscure and hide oneself, especially when one is seen in terms of colour, in terms of hypervisible blackness. Obscurity may be defined as:

The quality or condition of not being clearly known or understood. Lack of spiritual understanding or enlightenment. Lack of clarity in expression; uncertainty of meaning; unintelligibility. The quality or condition of being unknown, inconspicuous, or unimportant. Absence of light (total or partial); darkness; dimness; indistinctness.<sup>15</sup>

To warp is to establish oneself in obscurity, to refigure the already existing obscurity of one's body, one's existence, one's writing as strategically unintelligible. In another narrative, Markham notes the emphasis placed by readers on his 'masks, disguises, personae', explaining that as long as he lives 'far from home – I will continue working on my disguises'.<sup>16</sup> He affirms a methodology of dissimulation, of casting himself in obscure roles of his own creation (he describes some poems as 'speeches lifted from dud plays'),<sup>17</sup> in response to a lack of safety, belonging, and comfort.

However, the ability to conceal oneself in writing does not necessarily explain the will to write. Markham offers his response to the question 'why write?':

When, later, towards the end of the Nigerian Civil War, Nnamdi Azikwe, the renowned ex-president of the republic, switched from supporting the losing Biafran side, he gave a curious reason: he deplored, finally, the aesthetic spectacle of filling the world's television screens with Africans humiliated, Black women humiliated, Black children brutalized, dying of kwashiaku. He appealed for an end to the war on aesthetic grounds. I felt both vindicated and appalled. I have tried ever since, through writing, to penetrate my own layers of protective skin. I write, quite simply – and it's not simple – to make myself more human.<sup>18</sup>

The movement from the atrocities of the Nigerian Civil War, a historically significant, internationally mediated, collectively experienced event, to the feelings and motivations of Markham, an individual writer, is unsettling in its apparently downwards motion. The appeal to end the 'aesthetic spectacle' may be contrasted with Sulter's appeal to 'make public our herstory for ourselves' – during the war, black bodies are made public in their violation and destruction, revealed and made visible for mass audiences. They are denied the right to represent their selves and their stories. Markham implicitly links the right to represent oneself using own's chosen methods and forms – the right to determine how one writes – with the right to see oneself and to be seen as human. What does it mean to suggest that violation and destruction is necessary for the black body to become human, and that the hypervisibility of violation and destruction is necessary before it can be stopped?

### **Corpse, Corpsing**

In the essay 'Corpsing; or, The Matter of Black Life' (2016), David Marriott discusses black life and black death in relation to acting and corpsing. To corpse, as actor's slang, may be defined as:

To confuse or 'put out' (an actor) in the performance of his part; to spoil (a scene or piece of acting) by some blunder. Of an actor: to forget one's lines;

to spoil one's performance by being confused or made to laugh by one's colleagues.<sup>19</sup>

The corpsed actor spoils the performance unintentionally – whether he makes the mistake himself or his castmates cause him to blunder, he is passive, not willing the failure of his performance. This failure is figured as a death; once the performance is spoiled, the character dies, and with the character, the success of the actor playing the role. Indeed, the actor becomes a dead body on stage. Further, the corpse is contagious, spoiling the play by his unwelcome, possibly destructive remains, his presence of failure. Marriott explains that while the 'loss of character' spoils the play, it is also 'spectacle' for the audience – the spectacle of 'what happens when the most self-present mastery (of representation) comes across that which is both unmasterable and unrepresentable'.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the actor's performance of his role, his masterful representation of himself according to a type, reveals itself to be performance when the actor re-encounters his role as a type that he can neither master nor represent. In moving from a regulated performance, obscuring the unreality (or 'theatrical artifice'<sup>21</sup>) of its reality, to an unregulated performance, revealing the reality of its unreality, the corpsed actor goes beyond his role and reveals too much. In remaining on stage, the corpsed actor allows the audience to continue watching the spectacle of his failure.

Marriott extends the figure of the corpse beyond the theatrical context:

We see it when people fail to live up to or grasp their social roles. Hence the derisive laughter attached to those who forget themselves, or have their pretenses exposed, or fail to convince us of their authority. [...] This is why the essence of corpsing is the violation of rules of prescribed performance under the command of social laws, and consequently those who obey the rules are said to be at one with their roles and not regarded as subjects of them.<sup>22</sup>

There is a difference between those who are at one with their roles and those who are subjects of their roles. Perhaps the former choose their roles, they feel their selves and their bodies to converge with their roles. They belong, they fit comfortably, they

fully integrate. They are not forced to act outside themselves. Perhaps the latter are denied the option of choosing their roles, they feel their selves and their bodies to diverge from their roles. They do not belong, they do not fit comfortably, they do not fully integrate. They are forced to bend themselves, to distort, to break in order to fit. Further, Marriott implies a difference between those who are able to represent themselves, to determine the visibility of their bodies and the manner in which they are seen, and those who are subjected to types, to forms and methods of representation, whose visibility is predetermined by the whiteness of the places in which they are seen and not seen.

Marriott continues:

This, then, is what corpsing is: the knowledge and loss of the rules determining the subject. But what of those subjects whose rule of life is to endure life under the ownership of another and consequently are said to live as objects and are regarded as subjects dead to law and who live in a state of permanent threat of injury? I think this condition of the slave is what the theory of social death is meant to explain and therefore deservedly calls attention to as a black state of exception. Therefore, race is the means by which corpsing comes to be a metaphor for social life.<sup>23</sup>

He defines black social death as 'the constant and perilous exposure of life to injury',<sup>24</sup> understanding injury in terms of political, legal, and social exclusion, disempowerment, and dispossession, as well as physical violation. The slave – the socially dead subject – is denied the right to be a self-determined and self-represented subject in social, legal, and political life, hence, is denied the right to self-protection and self-preservation. The life of the slave demonstrates the impossibility of certain forms of life. In this way, the life of the slave demonstrates 'corpsing' as a metaphor for social life: the moment that the slave violates 'the rules of prescribed performance under the command of social laws', for example, by indicating self-determination or resisting physical violation or demanding legal representation or recognising social death, the slave, like the corpsed actor, reveals the reality of unreality. In other words, the moment that the slave claims the right to life, the slave reveals the real-

ity that the slave's life is not defined in the same terms as the subject's life, indeed, that the slave's life is defined by negation: not subject, not human, not from here, not like us.

Marriott moves from the specificity of the condition of the slave to the present day murders of black people by the police, and the subsequent matter of blackness: 'the idea that black life can be rendered as a livable life that "matters" rather than a life lived in a state of injury or permanent nonexistence is to effectively transform it by corpsing the failed performance that blackness is'.<sup>25</sup> Blackness is the performance of loss and dispossession, the mark of having moved – or been moved – from elsewhere. The claim that black life matters is corpsing, it reveals the reality that black life does not matter. Further, as Marriott argues: 'those who know that they possess nothing more than life's refusal will certainly judge that being and right are the most unreal realities'.<sup>26</sup> The corpse is contagious: in revealing the unreality or 'theatrical artifice' of black life – the reality of black social death – the claim that black life matters reveals the possibility that all life does not matter, all life is unreal, all social laws are warped, all subjects are actors, all actors are corpses. The corpse signifies the already deadness of us all, although the marks of death are more visible on some bodies than they are on others.

## Readings

Marriott's poem 'Pot Kettle Black', in *The Bloods* (2011), is framed as a play. A brief prologue announces three characters, whose names title three sections or 'scenes': Breadfruit, Saltfish, and Cricket Pitch. They sit on chairs on a stage 'littered with lambchops and knives'. The denotations and connotations of these names and objects cumulatively signal different aspects of West Indian and Black British culture and identity: food from the old place,<sup>27</sup> commonwealth games, and racialised stereotypes of the unemployed, disorderly, and criminal.<sup>28</sup> The poem is allusive, evoking many other writers and texts, but Marriott provides only one citation in the endnotes: an essay by J. H. Prynne entitled 'Reader's Lockjaw' (1978).<sup>29</sup> In this essay, Prynne discusses a series of poems by Paul St. Vincent featuring the character Lambchops. Unbeknownst to Prynne at the time of writing, Paul St. Vincent was a pseudonym for E. A. Markham, and Lambchops one of Markham's personae.<sup>30</sup>



Focussing on Marriott's references to Markham, the phrase to which the title alludes – 'the pot calling the kettle black' – appears in the first line of one of Markham's Lambchops poems, 'Not the Heyoka Ceremony'.<sup>31</sup> The phrase refers to an event in which one person accuses another of doing something that he may be accused of doing himself. Or, to emphasise the racialised terms of the accusation, a black person accuses another black person of being black; or, a black object accuses another black object of being black; or, one who is a subject of blackness accuses another who is a subject of blackness of being a subject of blackness. By eliminating the verb 'to call', Marriot displaces the act of speaking and accusing, syntactically reducing the phrase to three words, which could be analysed as noun-noun-noun (the pot, the kettle, the black) or as subject-verb-object (the pot kettles the black – 'to kettle' is to contain a group of people, and is a method used by the police to detain protestors and other 'disorderly' groups). Drawing attention to relationships between language, poetry, speaker, position, representation, and race, Marriot's rephrasing of a commonplace English phrase suggests non-standard English speech patterns, such as Caribbean English creoles.

A line in the second section – 'The only words that matter are words|left elsewhere'<sup>32</sup> – suggests lost language, a loss of language bound to a loss of place, and the feeling that what has been left behind is what matters. This feeling of being left only with the fact of having left recalls an earlier line – '(the only thing he owns|is the past)'<sup>33</sup> – which itself recalls La Rose's line 'what we leave|we carry'. The suggestion of lost language, or of a language bound to loss, is reinforced in the third section:

Wi nah sayit  
 the black suspiration of each breath  
 shimmering in a forsaken yard (a crib,  
 a dark nest for each shadow), then zeros  
 black drops of blood. Islands.<sup>34</sup>

The first line in this excerpt is written in a Caribbean English creole or patois – it contrasts with the vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation, and register of the rest

of the poem (other instances of patois are single words: 'wutless' and 'disya'; there are also instances of racist English slang: 'darkie' and 'wog'). 'Yard' is Jamaican patois for 'home', which locates and relocates the text, from a home to a forsaken home, a home left behind. 'Wi nah sayit' implies that Jamaican people in England speak and refuse to speak, or, Jamaican people speak and refuse to speak English. 'Suspuration' is deep breathing or sighing; 'black suspuration' suggests the traces of exhaustion, pain, and suffering expressed by black bodies. There is further syntactical reduction in the juxtaposition of 'zeroes', 'black drops of blood', 'islands'. As a noun, 'zero' is nothing and starting point, absence and origin, absolute worthlessness and absolute beginning. As a verb, 'zero' is to focus attention on and to target a weapon, to move towards and to move in. Zero loops, triggering a series of loops around blackness, drops of blood, and the movement between islands – to start with nothing, to leave an absence in the place of origin, to leave behind what matters, to feel the absence of what matters, to experience loss and dispossession, to be marked by loss and dispossession, to be seen and targeted because of these marks, to be exposed to injury and social death, to be violated and contagious, to be detached from the old place and isolated and alienated in the new place.<sup>35</sup>

The poem concludes:

If there is a choice,  
 let's say it's not *what to imitate*,  
 but how to speak the undamaged word. How?  
 When the housemaid draws the curtain  
 and she knows we know she has life beyond the window,  
 the sudden darkness is still shocking  
 as the image and its wreckage  
 disappears from view. Losing  
 remains a black verb.<sup>36</sup>

The italicised 'what to imitate' is a quotation from Prynne's essay on Markham. Does the subject – Markham, the West Indian writer, the one who is subjected to black-

ness – have a choice with regards to forms and methods of representation? Marriott's ironic emphasis on the conditional 'if' suggests otherwise. Nevertheless, if there is a choice, it is 'how to speak the undamaged word. How?' What is the 'undamaged word'? Perhaps it is standard English, uncorrupted by other languages and dialects, singular, static, contained by the borders of the British Isles, imperial in its continuity. Undamaged English as separate from the damage that has been done to it by non-standard Englishes, as heard in the Caribbean islands and in certain places in the UK with predominantly black communities. How does a West Indian or Black British subject speak this form of English? Or, perhaps it is English that does the damage – the English, their language, their standard forms. Perhaps the 'damaged word' signifies the languages that have been damaged by English, that are the products – the damaged goods – of the violation and destruction caused by English imperialism. Caribbean English creoles are the products of imperialism and slavery – the sound of Jamaican patois, for example, resounds with these histories, this dialect is partly constituted by the violation and destruction that brought it into existence. As histories and realities of racism and anti-blackness are partly constituted by the English language, the English language is partly constituted by histories and realities of racism and anti-blackness. Thus, how does a West Indian or Black British subject speak any form of English without repeating these histories and realities, without admitting damage to their selves and their stories? The question of representation is warped by the reality that choosing forms and methods of representation in English is an unreal choice. That the choice to determine one's self in English is predetermined by failure. Marriott's 'how?' – the repeated question – is a corpsed actor, corpsing the impossible singularity of the English language, corpsing the idea that self-determined representation is possible in language at all. This is not to deny the possibility of utilising language, of creating spaces in the already existing multiplicity and diversity of language – in the brokenness of Englishes – to obscure one's representation, to hide one's self, and to preserve what remains of one's existence.<sup>37</sup>

The final line in Marriott's poem – 'losing remains a black verb' – leads to the final line in Markham's poem 'Lambchops Has a Problem' (1976). The character of

Lambchops is a black man who moves from the West Indies to England as a child. Markham explains: he is a character I'd created in the 1970s attempting, with humour, to dramatise aspects of racial politics in Britain, the footnotes of our social history'.<sup>38</sup> Lambchops is educated, employed, and he enjoys romantic relationships with white women. But he has a problem: he is 'culturally deprived'. The poem explains:

it has to do with  
the parents: they (simple folk, bless them)  
  
have always been married to each other  
and never divorced. Wilfully,  
  
they have refused to break up his home  
and give him a loser's chance.<sup>39</sup>

Because his parents never divorced, Lambchops is 'culturally deprived'. He is not a criminal and has never been arrested by the police; worse, he refers to the police as 'policemen' instead of 'pigs'. His cultural deprivation is identified with his lack of criminality: he is 'deprived of the right to mug'. Thus, his deprivation is his lack of deprivation. Markham's depiction of Lambchops's individual deprivation reveals the collective identification of Black British culture with certain forms of criminality (mugging, public disorder, antisocial behaviour, clashes with the police). Criminality itself is racialised and identified with originary loss and dispossession – the broken home, the forsaken home, social death. Instead, Lambchops is part of a 'disqualified minority'. In not experiencing his minority status as 'strife', he is twice removed from social relations – he does not fit into the white place because of his (external) blackness; he does not fit into black communities because of his (internalised) unbrokenness. His primary struggle as a black man is that he is not a loser, that he is not fully determined by loss.

What is a 'loser's chance'? In what ways would Lambchops benefit from loss and dispossession, in what ways would fitting into racist stereotypes provide him with new possibilities? What does it mean that Markham repeats these stereotypes in his

writing, that these stereotypes are the 'masks, disguises, personae' behind which he hides? In the personal narrative 'The Mosley Connection' (2005), Markham reflects on moving to England and into a house next door to Geoffrey Hamm, a member of the nationalist fascist Union Movement. In 1959, Hamm held a rally outside Markham's family home in Ladbroke Grove, West London. Oswald Mosley, leader of the party, made eye contact with Markham's mother as she sat in her front room, declaring that immigrants living in England should repatriate themselves – go back to where they come from, return to their 'real' homes, elsewhere.<sup>40</sup> According to his assertion that 'If home doesn't afford you hiding-place, it doesn't fulfil the minimum requirements of "home"', Markham's first home in England was no home. It did not provide cover or concealment, it did not obscure the view of racist audiences or deny them the spectacle of black bodies. The rally signifies the reality that black bodies in a predominantly white place are always subject to being seen, to being watched by white audiences – the reality of the unreality of the private, safe, and protected space for black communities in the UK.

Markham reflects: 'You had a feeling of ease only when you weren't being looked at. [...] But everywhere, you were defined by that most distinctive feature, your colour'.<sup>41</sup> Thus, to resist and refuse the impossibility of feeling at ease is to ensure that you are not being looked at, that the 'you' being seen is not 'you'. Hence, a pseudonym like Paul St Vincent (St Vincent is a Caribbean island), and a character like Lambchops – Markham twice removes himself from himself. He chooses to 'dramatise aspects of racial politics in Britain' in poetry, to stage social relations, to make a spectacle of racism and anti-blackness, because he has no other choice. If he must be seen as a loser, as a criminal, as an unwelcome presence in his own home, then he must utilise the forms and methods of representation that are available and assert the stereotype himself. In the ironic characterisation of Lambchops, Markham draws attention to the representation of black men by means of racist stereotypes; in the light-hearted exhibition and violation of his characters and methodologies in his poetry and personal narratives, Markham reveals the ease and everydayness with which racism and anti-blackness are represented and repeated in language.

Markham locates the 'aspects of racial politics' that he dramatises in the 'footnotes of our social history'. Below the main body of the text, which is the predominant whiteness of the speakers, subjects, and stories of British history, exist the suppressed histories of black social death. To recall Marriott's line: 'the sudden darkness is still shocking'. John La Rose considers the darkness of these histories in the poem 'Me as Well – The Blackman' (1966):

Child of the self-conscious

I remake the mind

In my own image;

    This is my time.

I am the black child of history

Migratory through centuries.

[...]

For all I was the thing

    in history –

the barbaric; the semi-barbaric; the savage

    that was me.

Or so they said of me

Till I plunged into my past

    and theirs

The skeletons were sad to see.<sup>42</sup>

The speaker of the poem asserts himself as a black man. However, the first person pronoun – 'me' – is, grammatically and syntactically, the object rather than the subject of the title. The speaker does not simply assert himself – he inserts himself into an already existing assertion. Following a parenthetical mark, a syntactical break, a deep breath – 'me too' – 'the black man'. His subject position is deferred as if unnecessary, despite the apparent necessity of its self-conscious insertion. Indeed,

the speaker describes himself as 'child of the self-conscious' – what is the self-consciousness from which the child is brought into existence? It is the speaker's sense of self – his image as it appears in his mind – his starting point, his self-determined origins, the present moment of his speech.

Further, he is the 'black child of history' – what is the relationship between originary self-consciousness and originary history? What does it mean to originate in the present moment as well as in the past? The subject position of the speaker seems to exist in different temporalities. The demonstrative pronoun 'this' indicates that 'my time' is present and near, fixed in time and space, whereas the notion of being 'migratory through centuries' suggests continuing movements between origins and destinations. He is caught in a temporal warp, an unreality that warps his reality, which is the image of reality as it appears in his mind, the reality that he would choose. No matter how the black man sees himself, he is destined to be seen in terms of past images of black men – 'the barbaric; the semi-barbaric; the savage'. Simultaneously differentiating between 'my past' and 'their past' as well as asserting that 'my past' is 'their past', the black man submerges himself in history, moves downwards until he is fully concealed by its depths. Down there, all he sees are the remains of dead bodies. Whose remains? Do these skeletons beneath the surface signify all that remains of suppressed histories? The reality of the violations, destructions, and deaths that constitute history, that enable and continue to enable the possibility of the present? Should the skeletons be excavated, made public, possibly broken in the process? Should they be preserved, kept hidden, allowed to remain and to disintegrate in their private space?

In the text and visual artwork collectively titled *Zabat* (1989), Maud Sulter suggests other choices. The work includes the poetry collection *Zabat: Poetics of a Family Tree*, the photographic exhibition *Zabat*, and 'Zabat Narratives', the prose narratives accompanying the exhibition. Sulter defines 'zabat' as: '1. Sacred dance performed by groups of thirteen. 2. 'An occasion of power' – possible origin of witches sabbat. 3. Blackwomen's rite of passage [Egyptian 18th dynasty]'.<sup>43</sup> In the poem 'Historical Objects', Sulter writes:

Cave drawings 1715k years old  
humanities oldest representation  
of our form Blackwoman her soul  
sits uneasy in a Viennese prison.  
Egyptian mummified bodies stolen  
rot uneasily in European hells  
of culture. So sets the scene  
of us Blackwomen in Europe.

[...]

They cannot  
be allowed any longer to rewrite  
our experience; call it marxist  
or feminist, history or herstory  
no-longer no more. Ka is rising.  
Ka is rising. Listen. Listen  
you can hear her call.

[...]

Mud huts  
they show as proof of their *civilisation*. Over  
our infinite cultures. Civilisation can never  
be written in the blood and bones of slavery.<sup>44</sup>

Raising issues of representation and record, possession and analysis, Sulter makes comparisons between 'our history' and 'their history', 'our cultures' and 'their civilisation', 'our forms' and 'their exhibitions', 'our experiences' and 'their rewritings'. She suggests that the collection and conservation of objects created by black artisans and artists and of objects depicting and representing black subjects in museums and art galleries in Europe is comparable with the violation and destruction of black bodies. The 'historical objects' include prehistoric artefacts, ritual objects, and visual art-



works, as well as the black bodies themselves – the ones who are subjects of history – decontextualized from ‘our’ histories and cultures and recontextualised in relation to ‘their’ civilisation. Sulter implies that museums and art galleries, institutions of European history and culture, are constituted by ‘the blood and bones of slavery’ – they exhibit skeletons and mummies in vitrines while obscuring the reality of how they acquired the wealth necessary to collect and conserve these objects. ‘They’ – the historical subjects – must not be allowed to suppress ‘our’ histories any longer. ‘Their’ political and theoretical analyses must not be allowed to break up ‘our’ experiences for the progression of their knowledge, their areas of research, their objectives. Rather, they must listen. Whether or not they are able to hear or judge or respond to the calls – Sulter does not define ‘Ka’, which may refer to the soul in ancient Egyptian mythology or resound with the sound of ‘Africa’, which repeats throughout the collection – they must listen.

The poem continues:

take up the pen, the brush,  
 explosive, gun  
 and name  
 yes name  
 yourself  
 black  
 woman  
 zami  
 proud  
 name yourself  
 never forget  
 our herstory.<sup>45,46</sup>

In the photographic exhibition *Zabat*, Sulter names herself Calliope, muse of epic poetry. Sulter invited black women friends, writers, and artists (including the novelist Alice Walker, the poet Dorothea Smartt, and the visual artist Lubaina Himid, Sulter’s

partner at the time, to whom the poetry collection is dedicated) to pose, alongside Sulter herself, as the nine muses. The muses are not represented in terms of ancient Greek mythology and Classical European art and culture. Instead, Sulter takes 'an African-centric position – Africa being the cradle of civilisation and high cultural production. Each woman represents the muse of her own creativity'.<sup>47</sup> In naming herself Calliope, Sulter positions a black woman at the centre or source of literary tradition, promoting herself as a poet as she decentres Classical European ideas about poets, muses, and forms and methods of representation.

Depicting Calliope, Sulter wears a heavy black velvet gown. Her thick hair falls behind her bare shoulders; a daguerreotype is placed by her side. Sulter plays the role of Jeanne Duval, a black woman who lived in Paris in the nineteenth century, and who is remembered for being the muse of Charles Baudelaire, his 'black Venus'. Sulter explains:

My ongoing visual fascination with Jeanne Duval began in 1988 with a visceral response to a Nadar photograph captioned *Unknown Woman*. There she stared at me willing me to give her a name, an identity, a voice. So for over a decade I have been image making with her in mind.<sup>48</sup>

In 'Zabat Narratives', Duval speaks:

See me, I'm a heroic poet and I don't care who knows it. And I chose my own kind and in doing so apparently consigned myself to a footnote in history. And so you know, if that is the choice I would do it again. Frankly, I couldn't give a damn.<sup>49</sup>

The 'image making' recalls La Rose; the 'footnote' recalls Markham; the ironic emphasis on the conditional 'if' recalls Marriott. Is there a choice? What are the choices? In naming, identifying, and envoicing Duval, Sulter makes images of herself in the role of Duval (Duval as photographer, rather than model), of Duval in the role of Calliope (Calliope as black woman poet and photographer, rather than Classical European muse). She chooses past images of black women to represent, repeat, refigure, and

distort, self-consciously collecting and conserving realities and unrealities of histories. She relates images, roles, and selves in her methodology of dissimulation by means of multiple and diverse simulations.

In the book *Ban En Banlieue* (2015), Bhanu Kapil depicts, performs, and relates fictional and historically specific women – the British Indian figure of Ban and Jyoti Singh, an Indian woman who was sexually assaulted and murdered in Delhi in 2012. Singh's death was widely reported and she was renamed 'Nirbhaya' (fearless one) in international media. Kapil describes her writing in the book as 'auto-sacrifice', suggesting the methodological necessity of subjectivity, representation, and death, and their interdependence. The pain, trauma, and exhaustion of writing about the experience of being a citizen born to immigrants, the return to India (as close as possible to the border with Pakistan), and the reality of 'the violence received by the bodies of women in the place that I am [was] from' is an act of auto-sacrifice, or self-destruction.<sup>50</sup> However, the destructiveness of sacrifice includes the possibilities of something happening next – sacrifice entails consequence, shift, transformation. Something is offered, or lost, or forsaken, so that something else may be received, or found, or returned. Perhaps it is the thing itself, but differently. Thus, the subject of auto-sacrifice destroys herself with the intention of re-creating herself, of coming back in a new form or under new conditions. Her intention, her ability to act, to perform the sacrifice, and to enact the event are critical – it is impossible for the subject without subjectivity, the subject without a sense of herself, to auto-sacrifice, even to simulate auto-sacrifice. Thus, the fact of sacrificing herself reveals the fact of herself, her existence. Further, it reveals herself as one who hopes and believes in futurity – she self-destructs in order to enable, determine, and create future possibilities.

In the section '*What is Ban?*', Kapil writes:

It is, in this sense, a real day: though Ban is unreal. She's both dead and never living: the part, that is, of life that is never given: an existence. What, for example, is born in England, but is never, not even on a cloudy day, English?

[...]

Pausing at the corner of Uxbridge Road, she hears something: the far-off sound of breaking glass. Is it coming from her home or is it coming from the street's distant clamor? Faced with these two sources of a sound she instinctively links to violence, the potential of violent acts, Ban lies down. She folds to the ground. This is syntax.<sup>51</sup>

The 'real day' is 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1979, when Anti-Nazi League protestor Blair Peach was killed by the police during a protest against the fascist National Front in Southall, West London. The unreal Ban is English (born in England) and not English (she is not from England, her parents are not from England; she is not white, her parents are not white). She is 'never living' because it is impossible to live as a subject and as the negation of that subject. She is dead because that is the only form of life that she is able to assert.

Walking home from school, Ban hears the sound of breaking glass, but she cannot identify the source – does it come from outside, on the street, or from inside, in her family home? Unable to differentiate between the possible sources of violence – held between these sources, recognising violent realities at either end of her trajectory – she lies down on the ground. Kapil expresses the downwards motion as linguistic structuring – Ban refuses or fails to choose or to move, in language; Ban embodies and exhibits passivity in response to violence, in language. Ban is unsure of the reality of violence, she recognises 'the potential of violent acts', and her memories of past violence – real and unreal repetitions of violence – force her to act, or, not to act. She sacrifices herself in the moment of lying down, breaking her trajectory. Bending and breaking herself, she enables new trajectories in which she remains lying, or not lying, or unfolding, or standing up. What happens next? Can she die, if she is already dead? Would it matter? Kapil's line 'This is syntax' recalls Marriott's line 'losing|remains a black verb'. Marriott expresses the act of losing in terms of blackness (the suggestions of 'losing remains' recall La Rose: losing the remains of dead bodies, losing the remains of black histories). Marriott asserts the centrality of blackness to the act of losing. Any act of losing emerges from this centre, thus, losing cannot be understood without recognising its relation to blackness.

Kapil thinks about the fearful body of Ban lying down on the ground, faced with potential violence, in relation to the 'fearless' body of Singh lying down on the ground, following her assault. In the book, Kapil records a performance in Delhi in 2014, in which she lay down on the ground in the place where Singh was left for dead. Apparently, this place was still marked with the traces of Singh's body, outlined in candles and flowers. When Kapil lay down, her body was surrounded, as if outlined, by anti-rape protesters. She writes: 'What do they receive? An image. But what happens next? How does the energy of a performance mix with the energy of the memorial? How does the image support the work that is being doing in other areas?'<sup>52</sup> Centring her own body, Kapil makes an image of a past Indian woman, representing Singh's body by means of the embodiment and exhibition of Kapil's body, which draws attention to itself as not violated and not destroyed in the place of violation and destruction. In other words, Kapil represents the absence of Singh's body by means of the presence of her own body, negation by means of assertion.

However, the ongoing existence of Kapil's body does not negate the past existence of Singh's body – Kapil does not offer herself as a substitute or simulation for Singh. Rather, Kapil draws attentions to comparisons between the bodies, to the revulsion of comparing Kapil's and Singh's realities, to the spectacle of revulsion that determined and distorted the mediation of gender-based violence in India and, subsequently, the organising of protests and other social and political activities in response. Curving around the outlines of Singh's body, centring Ban, looping remains, Kapil enacts and distorts repetition: 'the double is grotesque: an empty or void outline that drains the life of a dormant or helpless figure, in order to sustain that outline'.<sup>53</sup> The outline finds life in its central figure; the central figure loses life to its outline. Does the central figure precede or succeed the outline? Kapil suggests an interdependence between outline and central figure that obscures the original subject. Is Singh the double, or Ban, or Kapil herself? Does the subject precede or succeed its representation? Like the 'curved, passing sound that has no fixed source', the obscuring of subjects and the warping of temporality and spatiality reveals a self-conscious resistance and refusal of origins.<sup>54</sup> The violated and destroyed body is

the everyday starting point and the inevitability of spectacle, the marker of history and the repetition of what happens next, of what will continue to happen next. To recall Sulter, it is painful and perverse for Kapil to see herself, to write, to represent by means of the violated and destroyed body, to repeat the violation and destruction, to represent the repetition by means of the simulation of auto-sacrifice. What is destroyed? What is made possible? What happens next? The subject of sacrifice lies between past and future unrealities, she breaks in the process of determining herself in terms of brokenness. Submerging her brokenness in between brokenness, to recall Marriott, 'the image and its wreckage|disappears from view'.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> David (D. S.) Marriott, 'Corpsing; or, The Matter of Black Life', *Cultural Critique*, No. 94 (Fall 2016), 32–64. Marriott, *The Bloods* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2011). E. A. Markham, 'West Indian Writing in Britain: Is It True to Type?' (London: Gresham College, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1998). Markham, *Lambchops with Sally Goodman: The Selected Poems of Paul St. Vincent and Sally Goodman* (Cambridge: Salt, 2004). Antony (John) La Rose, *Foundations* (London: New Beacon Publications, 1966). Maud Sulter, *Zabat: Poetics of a Family Tree: Poems 1986–1989* (Hebden Bridge: Urban Fox Press, 1989). *Maud Sulter: Passion*, edited by Deborah Cherry ([n.p.]: Altitude Editions, 2015). Sulter, *Passion: Discourses on Blackwomen's Creativity* (Hebden Bridge: Urban Fox Press, 1990). Bhanu Kapil, *Ban En Banlieue* (New York: Nightboat Books, 2015).
- <sup>2</sup> La Rose, 'Not From Here', *Foundations*, p. 33.
- <sup>3</sup> Kapil, *Ban En Banlieue*, p. 21.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- <sup>5</sup> La Rose, 'The Tottenham Insurrection 1985 and the Struggle for Change in Britain', *Unending Journey: Selected Writings* (London: New Beacon Books, 2014), pp. 37–38.
- <sup>6</sup> Markham, 'West Indian Writing in Britain'.
- <sup>7</sup> *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2017) <www.oed.com> [accessed 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017].
- <sup>8</sup> Markham, 'West Indian Writing in Britain'.
- <sup>9</sup> *OED Online* [accessed 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017].
- <sup>10</sup> Markham, 'West Indian Writing in Britain'.
- <sup>11</sup> Sulter, *Passion: Discourses on Blackwomen's Creativity*, p. 10.
- <sup>12</sup> Markham, 'West Indian Writing in Britain'.
- <sup>13</sup> Sulter, *Passion*, p. 14.
- <sup>14</sup> Markham, 'Taking the Drawing-Room through Customs', *A Rough Climate* (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2002), p. 94.
- <sup>15</sup> *OED Online* [accessed 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017].
- <sup>16</sup> Markham, 'In Other Words', *A Rough Climate*, p. 116.
- <sup>17</sup> Markham, 'Taking the Drawing-Room through Customs', p. 92.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- <sup>19</sup> *OED Online* [accessed 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017].
- <sup>20</sup> Marriott, 'Corpsing; or, The Matter of Black Life', 32–33.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 33–34.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>27</sup> Édouard Glissant describes an attachment to food from the old place that is specific to the immigrant: 'There are plenty of native Martinicans who will confess that when they were children they used to hate breadfruit (a staple vegetable and, therefore, intimately associated with the idea of poverty and the reality of destitution). Then the reverse has become true of age, especially for those who have lived for a long time away from the island – they have acquired a lasting taste for it.' *Poetics of Relation*, translated by Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 148.

<sup>28</sup> For analysis of such racialised stereotypes, see Paul Gilroy, 'Lesser Breeds Without the Law', *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987; repr. London: Routledge Classic, 2002), pp. 84–145.

<sup>29</sup> J. H. Prynne, 'Reader's Lockjaw', *Perfect Bound*, No. 5 (1978), 73–77.

<sup>30</sup> Without discussing the literary intersections between Prynne and Markham further in this article, let alone between Prynne and Marriott, I suggest interested readers see Markham, 'Prynne is not Thynne', *The North*, No. 29 (November 2001), 32–35.

<sup>31</sup> Markham, *Lambchops with Sally Goodman*, pp. 75–76.

<sup>32</sup> Marriott, *The Bloods*, p. 56.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>35</sup> I discuss 'black blood' in relation to Marriott and Frantz Fanon in the article 'Secreting Blackness in the Poetry of D. S. Marriott', *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, No. 10 (1) (2018).

<sup>36</sup> Marriott, *The Bloods*, p. 57.

<sup>37</sup> See Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*; Kamau Brathwaite, 'History of the Voice', *Roots* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 259–304; Mervyn Morris, '*Is English We Speaking*': *And Other Essays* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1999).

<sup>38</sup> Markham, *A Papua New Guinea Sojourn: More Pleasures of Exile* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1998), p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> Markham, *Lambchops with Sally Goodman*, p. 6–7.

<sup>40</sup> Markham, 'The Mosley Connection', *Meet Me in Mozambique* (Birmingham: Tindal Street Press, 2005), p. 95.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>42</sup> La Rose, *Foundations*, p. 36–37.

<sup>43</sup> Cited in *Maud Sulter: Passion*, p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> Sulter, *Zabat: Poetics of a Family Tree*, pp. 68–69.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>46</sup> 'Zami' is a reference to Audre Lorde's autobiography *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982), in which Lorde defines 'zami' as: 'A Carriacou name for women who work together as friends and lovers.' (Carriacou is one of the Grenadine islands in the Caribbean.) *Zami; Sister Outsider; Undersong* (New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1993), p. 255.

<sup>47</sup> Cited in *Maud Sulter: Passion*, p. 11.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>49</sup> 'Zabat Narratives', *Maud Sulter: Passion*, p. 39a.

<sup>50</sup> Kapil, *Ban En Banlieue*, p. 90.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30–32.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

**How to cite this article:** Ramayya, N. 2019. Curve Warp Corpse: D. S. Marriott, E. A. Markham, John La Rose, Maud Sulter, and Bhanu Kapil. *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, 11(1):8, pp.1–31. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/bip.764>

**Published:** 03 April 2020

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