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I, Michael S Rerick, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

Doctor of Philosophy

in English & Comparative Literature

It is entitled:

OdeIS/HeIs and “Homeward, Postmodern Epic Conventions in Eleni Sikelianos’ The California Poem”

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This work and its defense approved by:

Committee Chair: Donald Bogen, PhD

Donald Bogen, PhD
OdeIS/HeIs
and
“Homeward, Postmodern Epic Conventions in Eleni Sikelianos’ The California Poem”

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English and Comparative Literature of the College of Arts and Sciences by

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Abstract:

_OdeIS/HeIs_, a play on the name Odysseus, is an epic interspersed with traditional (e.g., Greek) and contemporary (e.g., urban) myths. The lyric narrative follows a genderless “hero” through surreal desserts and forests, battlegrounds, and the underground realm of death. The text is fragmented and includes poetic and critical essays on epic and poetic personal essays—forms which intermingle epic tropes of home, travel, and battle with issues of class, globalization, and gender.

In “Homeward, Postmodern Epic Conventions in Eleni Sikelianos’ _The California Poem_,” I read _The California Poem_ as postmodern epic and against _The Odyssey_ to illustrate how traditional epic tropes of invocation, heroic journey, and homecoming are used in _The California Poem_ to comment on postmodern concerns of globalism, feminism, and subject positionality.
Acknowledgements

Sections of *OdeIS/HeIs* appear or are forthcoming at *horse less review* and *Slope*. 
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OdeIS/HeIs

Book I
Constellatory Chart

- port
- spangles
- key and tangles
- across open
- terrafirma aquain
- quiry incolor
- hinges [aknife]

- spar plastic
- spare
- sundis cord and sweet
Peak!—hero sower—Mt. ___ snow to the tip (top blower, ash thrower) once drowned now risen wails rush and halo and snow to breathe wool hearing wholesale caps knit berry red. Peak (air), blast

        Abject mountain witches
        Dance the dialectic
        And giggle devils blue

(yakuza!) stars grinning down.

        In Johans’ model, gods reflect the natural world, and to some degree the uncontrollable emotive force that leads people into various situations (love, anger, etc.). Klausnic takes a somewhat ritualistic approach and proposes god-worship puts the worshiper in a position of power, making the natural world more anthropomorphic and malleable.

Mt., conceive—groan-push!—
in use-value a hero’s swirling back lined mirrors to write the borders—journey, marriage, war—of safety and knowledge in snow. A face climbs your crumbly skin, clambers down your overhangs and protrusions, drinks at your pools, measures the erased.

\footnote{Fish, dragon, and samurai along the gun arm.}
Alone/heard
Spirit-wracked

:

The poet sees:

A sea foam.
A tree shake.

Once stone, the hero vehicle—a steel, minivan future—now, from stone the (minivan from steel) vehicle delivers the hero. The hero of stone, to come forth, shatters stone—to settle in steel, in a minivan future.

A sand dust.
Avalanches crack revealing
Spring’s ugly shoot
The sun does its damage

Shedding green shedding coats
The hero balances the stream
Balances the soil balances the sun
For measured seed exchange
For special seed measures

The Mt. provides the desert
   hero scrub
The Mt. provides the shelter
   hero tarp

The hero is left in a lava field/
Exposed on a mountainside/
Floats down stream in a basket/
Is shot into blank space/
Emerges full grown from a flower/
Cannot use one or several limbs/
Has the strength of a local animal/
Is tattooed with a map/
Ransomed for gold liquid equity/
Is born of prostitute and sailor/
Marks the border of two eras/
Comes to a ruler in need of ___
Recovered

Atlantis… shimmers a black hole/other galaxy/beneath the ocean light… a [fuse] for the rhetorical hero.

A coded tower a ring of transport a disembodied body machine… metaphysical manipulation a concentric democracy of moats… civilization seed… global capitalism and then

Motes waft in broad nothing
A whisperer
X and so a light incision
into the eyes

… a genetic marker in the cartography… [of a lost lo]op/hole in stars swirling towards not
Roots, then limbs grow considerably tall
for reaching. A hero’s blend of mighty resistance and sloth,
a distinguished perch for carnivores masticating thin ham and gamey cheese. Bent
hawthorn or ash. Elemental, so a new start for genuine concern. Peak, do not emerge; do
not distinguish yourself from clouds; dissipate, gently, into an image of blithe synecdoche
flittering into consciousness.

Satan! Poor blue devil
    Cleaving to the gilt above
    Embrace the brimstone mug!

Mt, (hallowed) hollowed and pierced with roller coasters, screams, they scream the wind
through you. Rise again in counter-measure. Earth, shake.

    Markers declaring Zeus’ mandate of hospitality indicate situational applications of theory
where the traveler had power over the homeowner… Unknown, though, is which preceded which.
The royal colored hero wakes in an initiation of youth. Perils and transformations go unrecorded—nothing said of the hero’s youth blossom in adventures of forest and animal. Like a drunkard, who further and further into shedding a bottle grows bolder and bolder with words, just so the hero’s youth puzzles pubescence away.

Kemper’s example of theoretical friction points out that folklore (pattern) is resistant to psychoanalysis (aberration). Since each discipline recognizes Oedipus as a patterned “type,” it can be argued that each discipline struggles to own the power rights to the Oedipal pattern, and hence the patriarchal normativity of male-female marriage rites.

in a secret society. With secret signs.

Acorn
Thumb
Conch
Pith

The Alchemist’s stones
Golden shiny stones
Ore tender to gold stones
Hung heavy to make
Must gold the stones
The Alchemist’s gold
A sweat study in man
To gold the stone in gold
After the hero a stoic gaze convincingly plunders the windy still life.
The bright grass angel lay on departure identical to the cloud-hang torn by the peak.
Footfalls sound an aslant strike.
Full-grown at birth

   … the replacement of a linear with a spiral model demonstrates resistance to synchronic
   and chaotic notions of time and history.²

in the avalanche (winter’s returning snowperson, cyclic initiation in snow) the hero
emerges to a twang of tambourines bursting to coins.
An open account of a lifetime, a limitless line of disasters.

        The sop-eyed prophet
        (Holding a child)
        Warns the wrinkled king:
        (Hearing a charm)
        Beware your children!

To the swan sky a kiss and such tender lips through the cracks and crags of the ice field
with an (twitch, drag, tick) ah.

² There is no need for a return to myth when myth and myth theory imply an underlying
mythology of mythological patterns, as myth shows.
Capitalism’s absolute and all pervasive penetration ___ all aspects of life is an everything-commodity. That is, the ___ industry makes our sense of reality ___ a mimic of Adorno’s movie (1226). Art’s authenticity actually equates to a ___ of domination, which leads to the ___ of art and hence deflates the notion that art can be ___ form of resistance to power and oppressive norms (1227-1228). (Note: attempt to ___ this model in art, or make ___ as art’s master.) Capitalism’s pervasiveness creates an environment where one cannot ___ think outside the parameters of capitalism (1232). ___, all things are copies of copies, a fetish, cannot interact with ___ individual. 

In Benjamin, artifice creates an ___ that has a positive potential in that the viewer participates in ___ viewing of art (film) in an ___ way.

(Note: art manufactures art, so who cannot be born into ___?)

Welcomes applause the hero in. The ruler, heir of M, linked to S, married into R, showers the hero with flourishes of praise. “Hero, heir of K, linked to A, married into M, welcome.” Wine and food are brought and oaths made over feasting.

The hero fights the monster three months before slaying it.

Garlands and dancing accompany the wedding.

The hero faces many trials on the return, one of which destroys the vehicle. Washed up on a foreign land, the hero is fooled into fighting a campaign against a benevolent kingdom. To atone, the hero journeys into the hidden chamber of a mountain.

Once home, the hero is recognized.

Peace rules the hero’s land and uneventful life. The hero’s death concludes the era of heroes.
The poet of legend clenches prerogatives over a well that gushes (sporadically) a fine mist of beauty and eloquence. Yet, must also sleep in a nightmare of ropes, poison, and wrist bound knives. From a dank hole the poet inspires mountains and cities to level each other.
The go-lucky hero’s hair braided back. 
Pine/sandstone after pine/sandstone. The soil/sand winks sprouts and delicious clover. 
The royal hunt goes sackless, scarless: the antelope/buffalo/bear slips by unnoticed. 
Philosophies flower with gathering gnats by the headfull. 
Peripherally, the hero senses a rite pass. 

Meanwhile, the hero’s double waits \(^3\) 

VanLorn’s seminal study of encroaching economies into non-capitalist communities 
finds little variance in the hero and villain construction in folktales. Key variables include pre-
and post-contact, dislocation, and poverty. The hero and villain, though slightly transformed with 
technological imagery, remain rooted in traditional cultural norms of local populations. 

in the domestic hall. A shared garden sense and cows. 
In a trough’s rusty reflection the double sees another, a sublime other and other. A 
declaration of non-decisiveness, in song, an aside, a monologue of lovely doubt. 

Home ravaged by tongues. 

---

\(^3\) (Alas, an investor)  
Margins! Margins!  
Must (BANG!) growww  
(Sigh) must grow.
Book II
Constellatory Chart

openbrain
casecaseopen
thebraincase
openbrainsale
theliquidbrain
saleopenthebraincase
liquidbrainraised

windbull
marketrate

mast-
er-
ful
As a serpent/spell, as the earth grumbles and spits its red liquid concern from the bowl of its bowels, just so the hero is bit/cursed by curmudgeons after hunting/hiking.

In the hero’s convalescent haze, the double binds leather sandals to feet, tunic to breast, and forests to gather panacea fruits in a fine weave basket of animal pelt and bird feather:

- scandal nut
- yo-yo leaf
- bliss berry
- lie detector
- invisible fern
- borrowing root
- whiplash stalk

Peak! Tremble!

A foot marks moss in a waft of mint

One notable aspect of Cold War fears, Taxwell states, is the popularity of comic books. Americans identified with the radioactive hero/monster Hulk and the poverty stricken radioactive spider bitten hero/loser Spiderman. In addition, Taxwell shows us that beyond the branding of certain characters, narrative and hero characteristics have changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War. The Hulk, for example, has been split in two, become two autonomous identities, or two forms of otherness. Taxwell further argues this point with the study of the graphic novel, the neo-noir genre that blurs the line between hero and villain, inner struggle and outward action, which reflects a repressed reaction to late capitalism where one is supposed to be outwardly satisfied with the comforts of life while abandoning notions of inward identity.

the pines keep in. The double’s hand reaches

    Pluck
    Pluck

in mist that rises gray from woody mulch in a breeze that smells leaves alive. Silently

    Pluck

a scream, an animal.

---

4 On this subject, see *Tickertape: Comic Cold War Heroes and the Bomb.*
5 The current domination of a handful of comic houses as well as movies spinoffs points to a loyalty to comics that continues to this day.
6 For more on the cultural and institutional impact of the comic industry, see De Find.
From convalescent dreams the hero and double sip their way into the world through berry/root/herb pots.

Spring usurps their bones.

A boat race with bows, the bow-sturdy hero gulps spume and spray. Dizzy gyroscopes huddle in droplets to bond the air a ladder, cloud spread carried to frozen and falling. The hero gulps. A microbe family dances up through the current. Taboos/totems froth in the not yet named. The double mirrors.

   Clash! red faced antecedent
   Bearer of arms
   Terror at arms!
   Wine-positioned in lion-heart
   Buckle your leather buckler!

As fish uncoil and break from winter’s freeze, pursue instinct through currents and eddies, scoot liminal between water-skippers and algae, leave tall spread ash and oak to their shade and cool on the pebbly bank, so

Loss of distinct meaning is expected in poetic language. Yet, it seems most postmodern writers, being acculturated in said literary atmosphere, are unaware of their distrust of metaphor.

the double bends to the bow. Shots fire. The hero’s youthful heart

---

7 Schultz notes that when a list of items found on the street (comb, gum wrapper, plastic bag, shoe) is followed by a metaphor without a clear image (sprigs of timelessness), we are left in a field of ambiguity.
Arguing against the idea of unfinished _____ purported by Halbermas, Lyotard argues there has been a shift in _____ cultural landscape that, though perhaps incubated _____ modernism, deserves new critical eyes. Where modernism relied on narratives (or, _____ cultural values), postmodernism reveals that these “_____ Narratives” are simply constructions. These constructions, furthermore, are disseminated top down, _____ within structures of power to subjugate; ____, grand Narratives maintain power relations.

Unwittingly, Lyotard argues, narrative structures have _____ been, until postmodernism, fully questioned or ____. For instance, science (or education or art, etc.) has made its _____ rules via its own standards, and _____ rules have not been interrogated. But, with chaos or catastrophe theory, _____ see theoretical investigations based on entropy _____ than cohesion. In many ways, the old, modernist model is similar _____ Halbermas’ notion of communication: that the _____ can still operate teleologically and achieve some complete circuit between the _____ of speaker, addressee and referent: or, ____. This, though, does not allow for the multiplicity of reference (connotation, ____, etc.) through exchange, or what Lyotard _____ to as the ongoing linguistic play of language games.

A landlocked river escapes with mercury booty, as written long ago. An arm extends across the memory of a box of dead bees in a dark, forbidden basement and all the dusty light caught a moment before the blackout, not written presently. Not an aside, not a journey, not the legacy of a people, not the controlling factors of norms, not the totem of warding off the Other.

A mild overlooked evolution casts doubt on the sea, and the journey to the sea, the far off, never reached sea, this wandering through urban deserts hitchhiking. “We cast this / our / safe ocean cast off / hi, hop in / never hope washed back / to the beginning.” The suburb begins at home.

An arm reaches and loosens a thread and follows it like a kitten. The hero’s tale is cut. The television law is followed closely. Plot structures…the hand extends… prone to interruptions seaward.
For the bobbling ahead, all embryos come immaculate, perfect heroes in their bursting forth. In their jaws inertia aligns with sight in four dimensions of slaughter for distant reconciliation.

Under the mystic slate sheer—an utterance of earth and a spray of ascension to skyward—the hero initiates a benevolent staple of group continuity.
A pause and wild chirp. As bursting forth confirms, limbs do the climbing work.

Duty, performed,
Royalty, performed,

Rites, performed,
Feasts, performed,

The hunt, performed,
Conquering, performed.

A neoAristotelian, Jevad strips travel of its symbolic meaning and prefers to “induce the excitement of action by reading through the action” rather than “above” it.
Recovered

… total furlongs below the surface accounts… [for] features, spied belowward, glass turned in, in turned magnificent… [lost] city

The papal account, secreted and hidden in the Vatican library, smuggled by archbishop V., uncovered by Marble (pseudonym), indicates early forms of highly specialized commerce before Atlantis’ quake.

… The years away, only to return to nothing. But a haunting over the spot, a tinge to the air, the smell of fresh earth from the waves. And on, wondering of At[lantins/lanthenian]…
The hero bends the bow of seasons and the wild land is cleared, plowed, sown and reaps muscle and youth turned dried root and age. From the blank sky a spearhead lunges a pride-swell shuddering the snowcap bearing its stony point. A generation sings in the bowstring the hard toil of labor. Backs bend with the moan of oak to heave minerals to smelt and pile a new Mt. erected to ancestors. The arrow whistles the quiet whine of its death-parade.

…fetish as need, for a sense of completion, to incorporate the Other by means of proximity…

8 What bull-head!
What sweat-shirt!
What death-mask!
What home-team!
Royal turrets shiver snow pockets in winter’s shadow.

The royal tree vibrates in court its needles to glow to transpire in snow at the hero’s approach. An ax. Courtesans bundle the tree-chopped fragments into a conical blaze, a pyre for the salutation of rain: “conifer, paint with your cones.” The light burns three months but rain demands a sacrifice of cells. One by one the hero plucks platelets and microscopia from the double. This ends in the time of rain.

As sea squall and gale make a gray and white fanged monster that subsides to a peaceful cool calm, so the sky begins to blue.

The hero slumps off screen. ⁹

Return! The hero descends from the peak! and emerges from the snow field furred in dandelion seed. Misrecognized as servant/herder/mad, the hero roams from harassment to harassment. The double sleeps in a covert cloud and dreams a tune the bowstring hums.

The fable of progress has not died with its partner history in the era of postmodernity. Take, for instance, psychoanalytic notions of trauma, loss, and survival. One may lose shelter, food, and a sense of purpose, but this does not mean the grand narrative of hope has perished. ¹⁰ The crucial flaw in postmodern thinking lies in overlooking the individual imaginative interpretation of experience. Yet, a collaboration between postmodernism and individual experience via psychoanalytic imagination would perhaps allow thinkers and artists to consider new modes of our interaction with, and interpretation of, mundane myths.

---

⁹ There is little rest in the epic. Yet, see Anne Carson’s *Glass Irony, and God.*

¹⁰ For instance, *The Little Engine that Could.*
Blear-eyed
Mead/wine
Trance-fatigued

:

The poet to poet:

The subject does not want to be approached. I crawl by verb, but a chain of adjectives rebuff me. The subject taunts with a string of songs called “experience.” But I do not fall for it. I verb and verb until the subject is naked, defeated in a pool of its own signifiers. As I reach for it, it springs and pins me with a hidden adverb. “My object,” it says.
Sweet courtly grapes, dense hot crusty bread, and fat cheese wheels make paunch the hero/double’s gut. But rumor of a scrub demon, starving the southern lands, arrives in their feast haze. Inspired, the hero/double gird to subdue the wilds.

A secret curmudgeon’s plan springs from the shadows. Deceitful chatter, scandals—rape of fields, impious sacrifice, inertia—spew from the craft-maker’s hand. Cups of gossip lift and the nation drinks hearty gulps of rumor’s poison.

The State Council meets.

The State Council adjourns.

The State Council announces the hero’s exile.

Tearfully/clenched, the double vows to accompany the hero “to the bottom” of “rivers,” over “peaks,” and through “mountains.”

They don the desert’s wool/bark ascetic’s cloth and roam southerly.
Book III
Constellatory Chart

tab-
  u-
  late

chuckpost
  hocmean
  ingfulpost
  erworthy
bodiesfan
chockedupmeaningsin
cerelyahandworthyofchopping
  fullydupedbo
diesinfan

papal
  bones
  hard
scatter
delivery
palpable
glassandawe

re-
sieve
re-
duct
Exile

Wails fill houses. Savory caldrons hot with fresh stew go tepid and bland. Mountain herders wander in dark groves and lose their way. Hearth flames die. Worn bodies rent and scatter their garments. Young lovers go mad to the pitch of an unheard squall. Cherry blossoms fall. All the ironsmiths’ raised arms strike weak silent anvils. The tiller’s plow hits stone and boulder in the hero and double’s country.

Tyrus argues that ritual cohesion makes possible trans-community communication, given pragmatic economic exchange. And just as Rorty claims of capitalism, it’s “the best so far.” Rituals reflect, then, a community’s sense of a united expansion. That is to say, ritualistic norms are fluid and prone to evolution when faced with obstacles.

The hero and double walk a smiling poverty.

Keep taut your bow
And out your bowl

Now memorize
A memorial

For future bards
To sing bright bars

… unconscious practice of pragmatic ideological superstructures support I S As.

By day, begging bowls. By night, pillows on leaf strewn moss.

---

11 Opposed to aura.
12 Science’s progress.
Morning tutors the hero/double.

“This is your portion.”

Across a field of wrinkles eyes catch saffron colored parcels.

“This is your portion.”

Eyes meet with parcels sufficient to call food the contour of a field.

Chorus: “Gift!”
The hero’s hand lifts in a gesture of lost greens.

Pecan rain shutters, turns, returns in a shower of pine needle soup.

Sight longs in the double’s missing canvas.

The Keynesian system of recurrent capitalism\textsuperscript{13} constitutes the beauty of ideological denial (i.e. identity via brand names), and matches this with a claim for recurrent “depressions” and “recessions” (i.e. cycles). Hence the dumbfoundedness of “consumers” when the ability to consume dwindles.

Warbler drift, downdraft of speckled pelts! Lips part. “Date, cartographer, this.”

The exile’s food is bitter
For nothing or a feast

Hungered with empty faces
The mind and stomach ache

The oak/desert has a particular shape when traced by their fingers. They turn water to ale and vouch homilies to grass tufts grown like hair.

\textsuperscript{13} Cash.
Day hoards through a flutter of cricket wings. The hero bathes and dresses, the double undresses and bathes.

A scattered wind blows down from a peak (Mt. Stranger) cool to straighten their feet.

Unforgiving spiral
Down, Virgil inspired
Across the galaxy
A homeward black hole trip
Through a bright bridging stream
To rise sunk Atlantis

A hermit’s song dusts twilight and a smear of trees. Morning resonates somewhere below their feet. They name Mt. Stranger and climb

The smallest crumble
In thick Antarctic
Microscopia
Falls to Mawson’s will

the song. They enter the hermit/animal’s cave.

“My name is Zarathustra.”
“I am the hero.”
“I am the double.”

...irony is that myth study has yet to conclude that myth study is a construction. A phoenix of myth, so to speak…

Unbound from fissures of moist accumulation,
water drops from stalactite to stalagmite in allegorical tune.
The hermit tells of two kangaroo mice scurrying their jaws with berries and nuts. Bears on lions’ backs speak fables of desert and mice in a nocturnal (soul) search.

“I am the…”

The hermit scatters berry-dyed knucklebones across a charcoal mandala.
“I am the hero.”

The hermit charts stars in spit across the cave’s ceiling. The entrance dims to night.

“This is the origin of energy and crisis.”

From earth arose Material for the Tower. And the Tower was shelter—section 1808, building code 698, under subsection 8205, commercial subsidies. From Material manifest middle management to emerge and rein over lesser material. From the Tower material tethered to material buzzed in a glorious hum.

The Tower spread itself so far in love it dwindled into iconic obscurity. And soon the planet despaired for itself, alive and hungry.

Lost naval missions searched for an end, and after, a middle.

The beast they found in themselves was convivial and well dressed. This was sent to the Tower, absorbed, and redispersed to lesser material in the form of benevolence.

Crowns fenced blocks of pasture or farm or parkland for the retelling of the Tower and its quixotic adventures.

“This is the allegory in its national form.”

“I am the double.”

“I am the hero.”

“This is the exit from whence you came.”
Story-rich
Telling/begging

To the poet’s apprentice:

With beginnings, a choice of place, an origin (ur you). Taste the Tantalus or not. The ur waits with stick to stir the puddled worms.

The space to become in already became. This is how we make it. As already ready for the impact of building, its shape dependent on “what is this?”
The hero lays to rest, the double lays to rest. Double boon of cicada voice and growl dreams them through canals and bridges towards the center of desire. Visions of the desert/bush resolution float ahead. Their desire, their exile.

For forty days of blisters, a gate. The insurmountable wall a forever wall. To trespass, hope in and terror of technology\textsuperscript{14} can be seen as early as the Trojan Horse.\textsuperscript{15} An equivalent might be the crippling effect of electronic viruses on organic matter. For, the virus is made by humans, spread by (human-made) machines, infects machines, and thus humans that interact with machines. Or, the cyber-terrorist verses the cyber-consumer.

impossible. No pass the hero or double can do.

The gate guard emerges from the wall as wall. The gate guard morphs. The test of the gate guard reaches horizon to horizon and spreads a blue grin menace. The gate guard an interchanging chimera. The body, the thing

gazelle hoofed
  on goat leg
ostrich clawed
  on giraffe leg
rattling snake tail
a bull’s trunk
entrails coiled and writhing
  bees, mantises, stingrays
a lion’s breast
human armed
  thick with boar fur
whale finned
  thick with barnacles
eagle wings
shaggy buffalo mange
  around horse’s neck
sphinx headed
  with elephant trunk
  with shark mouth
  with wolf ears
  with prophet eyes
nova haired
  unendingly burning


\textsuperscript{15} This technology not only enabled the Greeks to defeat the Trojans, but also caused Odysseus remorse when reflecting on the bloodshed enabled by this machine.
holding the moon

sharing pieces across itself.

They attempt to scale the wall. They attempt to trespass the test of the beast.

The hero/double racing to the east, and chimera caught. The hero/double racing to the west, and chimera caught. The hero/double racing to the north, and chimera caught. The hero/double racing to the south, and chimera caught. The hero/double racing up, and chimera caught. The hero/double racing down, and chimera caught.
The chimera articulates a sound sting: ^^^^^^^ (aaaeiiiiya). The double rotates the ^s (signs) until the peaks slide together, erupt, and collapse into “you must riddle around me.”

Hero: “A riddle.”

Chorus: “Ask!”

The shark mouth morphs constellation.

Chimera: “What is it binds vast numbers but never touches?”

Day 1

Double: “Numerous trees, numerous dust we see we bring together.”

Hero: “We touch bark, we touch sand and draw them… to us.”

D: “All the forest and all the desert, leaf to grain—spirals in air and dust—we draw but cannot bundle all to us.”

H: “But we see. And seeing, draw.”

D: “But seeing, drawing, narrowing grains to the point of pinpricks, they become infinite. See, so many to many to many.”

H: “The infinite and finite blown to scale all fall in sleep. In death. No seeing or drawing can bundle the unseen. Dust is not brown. Leaf is not green.”

D: “Not seeing.”

H: “Not seeing.”

Silence.

Chorus: “Twists!”

Day 2

Chimera: “What is it binds vast numbers but never touches?”

Double: “To bind, to make, to bring as stalks to the bundle.”

Hero: “To go, make as a bundle to a stack. To come and bind.”

D: “Come… bind… to combine.”
H: “Go and be and bind the coming, the coming together of action. To seek and find. Comb the sea foam.”

D: “To comb actions.”

H: “Comb actions in.”

D: “To draw infinite action (comb) that never touches.”

H: “To put a touch that never touches. To be the put. That never touch.”

Chorus: “They never touch!”


H: “To touch numbers to numbers to numbers. To touch. Come, put the numbers!”

D: “That do not touch.”

H: “But touch.”

D: “And put.”

H: “To put numbers to numbers to numbers. Come.”

D: “Comber, combiner, companion of numbers: numbers combed and bound.”

H: “Companion, combiner, put there!”

D: “A come-put-together.”

H: “A number of bindings. A puter. Come, put you, binder.”

D: “Come, put, er, puter, you compute, er.”

H: “Er, ur, put, comb.”

D: “Comeputer.”

H: “Put er.”

D: “Compotator.”

H: “Come put? er, puter.”

D: “Compute… ater, puter… computer.”
Chorus: “Computer!”

Day 3

Chimera: “010101.”

16 Note: Google results for “M. Moore” and “cyborg” result in “An octopus” of “pixels.”
Cyborgs are the site of new ___ and new myths. And, hierarchical forms of domination, Haraway states, have ___ into more fluid networks, which she ___ the “informatics of domination” (2281). That is, the old forms of domination ___ been transforming into more multifarious forms ___ social constructions as fluid and penetrating as the communication and biological ___ integrated into world wide networks. This ___ sees manifest as what Richard Gordon calls a “homework economy” (2286-2287). The ___ economy is a social structure that ___ boundaries of the mode of domination and the dominated. Or, rather ___ workers, one becomes a server.

Haraway ___ that what home and work imply is that no matter where ___ is, one is working, and hence ___ idea of personal and private has been obliterated. Again, because of ___ social construction of technology (informatics of ___ ), the cyborg emerges and can use these technologies to weave (rather ___ network) (2290) feminist and oppositional myths. This ___ be done with writing (2295). The cyborg, a technological child, writes with “___... a communal language, but... a powerful ___ heteroglossia” (2299).

The immigrant arrives. An edge of blanket and marriage tradition flutters behind. Renamed “diaspora.”
A scatter of families join a community. The community joins the workforce. The nation recognizes work in the media.
The immigrant is renamed “alien.”
The nation strengthens itself through solidarity. A continuous surface of “sameness.”
The immigrant vacations to “origin.”
Home is hung out of reach on language.
Bread is broke. Bread renamed “bread” soaking in broth.
The visitor tells the story of home.

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The hero and double pass the chimera’s gate and the wall falls behind.

Pass into rain—thrum—drop navigation through land symbols to read—plop—leaf dribble/sand sink. The hero sees south and they walk in fog. From a distance, gaunt shrouded in elements like wisdom.

A crown of cypress writhes and shheesshs, twists and shudders in the wind-calm sun. The hero and double attempt to name the beast/nature/hydra/death/dragon/leviathan/monster/devil with sharp consonants.

Applying the inert-entropy principle to the concept of the other, sociologist and physicist M. Rodrigeuz finds the perceiver of the other represents a refracted self to a degree that moves beyond a sense of self, and positively moves beyond the physicality of self-image. The other, then, moves past the unconscious to the unnamable framework of matter one encounters when trying to see the smallest particles in time.

The it-writher calls from a shower of leaves. Called domestic and penned. Bright as birth, emerges. Said, pest. Calls back its name. Says, is said, say, said…

Tear the monster’s nest!
Burn the tower down!
Drain the monster’s drool!
Brain its starry eyes!

The calm cypress shrinks to a horizontal point, south. A shock of compounds binds the logs of exile—wander—in bird-chirps that sing the blue field further open. The beast of the south calls. They leave the matter of travel level and level with it.

---

17 Not with motion.
The beast to the south dreams a palace and fields and plows and thickets all tamed for the hero and double into a terror of comfort with mild satisfactions. Territory, castle, stores, platters, peace. They resist to the limits of their comfort and smile at their bellies.

… whether the economic machine works within a system of hegemonic or discursive forces, the concrete result will always affect the philosophic subject…

The beast-terror crowns the hero and double divine.
Exile, home, beasts all melt.
They rule seven years with a tyranny of peace.

Praise the union!
Praise the union!

Mutual contentedness between countrymen give rise to finality disputes, infinite rest and lively movement debates in barrooms and living rooms. Attrition at war. Harmony disturbed, torn, gashed. Citizens and rulers act from their blubber and rush, pummel, and finally beat

Rebel!
Rebel!

the beast, burn the beast to ashes.

They leave in ruins.
They thirst heavy bones through a debris river. The hero catches in devil’s thorn—after huckleberry and liquorish fern—rescued by the double. Rain caught in their shirts filters an ominous fog. They suck rock condensation—gnarled by pine roots—in homage to green.

Grass wisps clear of forest/desert bush—rise, rise—frame the pole carved figure of a tree god. Made in ribbons, the head clatters, a maypole fluttering red/green/yellow painted in roses—coded sacrifice.

The hero turns suspect at the half-brush’s edge, mirrored. A flutter of daft yellow bows invites the double. To test the maypole’s foundation, stone toss. From stone the earth grumbles, a hiss, a crack of light, a mist that clears to shimmer. A seamless it-being mirrors like water—blob/head, blob/arms, blob stalks/legs—silvers and reflects. It speaks.

“Systems. Systems alert.”

The double, active; the hero, active.

“What…”


Satyr 2012X hums like a low forest trickle.

They each take a ribbon.

“This is a future of beginnings.”
Gods, new but powerful, have risen and rebelled against their progenitors, the Titans. The humans of earth are caught in the middle of the Titan and God battlefield, though favored kindly by the Gods.

The God of Air carries Drak Byron’s plasma powered aircar through what’s left of Grand City. Drak, scarred from combat, surveys the rubble and twisted metal scraps of Grand City and thinks, what a grand mess.

Green turns to yellow in the aircar’s one-person cockpit. “Shit,” Drak says aloud. A dot on the smooth instrument panel moves slowly towards the center of the radar readout, coming into Drak’s position. It must be the Titan of Strength, Drak smirks, and he’s probably pissed.

The Titan of Strength watches with intent through his one good eye the dot that is Drak’s airship as it toggles in the crosshairs of his targeting system. This could be any human airship. But it’s not. This is the ship that time and time again has mounted attack after attack on their headquarters. And left me with only one eye, the Titan of Strength muses. “But, still, only human.”

The Titan stifles a yawn as he watches the dot drop out of his crosshairs. The God of Air working for the humans again, the Titan thinks.

Drak, taking advantage of the unexpected downdraft, expertly guides the aircar into a canyon of bombed out and crumbling skyscrapers. Titan, eh, Drak thinks. “Eat plasma dust!”
Recovered

… through adaptation, influence, and ultimately a pragmatic appropriation [of local political and cultural resources]… unity of various states dr[ove the actio]n of alliance

It is no coincidence chora [was/is] appropriated from Plato’s description of Atlantis…
Though Drak was reluctant to join the anti-Titan Underground, he was starting to feel comfortable traveling the collapsed undercity and makeshift tunnels the Underground agents used for sneak attacks on the multitudinous Titan strongholds. The God of Wisdom persuaded him. The thrill of attack not only made this post-apocalyptic world bearable, it gave him purpose. And, Drak had got a chance to get especially comfortable with Mili Sampson.

… Drak should have known the attack was a trap. He sensed it from the start, but ignored the urgings of the God of Insight.

… He held her in his arms. “No, damn it!” he exclaimed. The laser blast that the now dead Titan fired had blackened the skin close to Mili’s heart. Her breath came shallow. “You’re shaping up to be one hell of a soldier. Too bad…” Her voice trailed off and her eyes dimmed. “Tarking Titans!” Drak yelled.

…

Satyr 2012X gleams with swaths of sun through the oak/pine/banyan forest.

The hero and double skip with ribbons glad around the maypole, wind, back, and wind around and unwound.
Drak had the slimy Titan in his weapon’s crosshairs. Suddenly, the aircar shuddered. Red flashed from the control panel and filled the cockpit. Even the dampeners couldn’t cushion the direct hit. “Thrusters at 10 percent,” the computer whined. The God of Wind blew. “Great,” Drak tried to control himself.

The Titan of Swiftness felt joy in advancing the Titan cause as fire flared then extinguished from the aircar in front of her. At first. Then, she felt a certain remorse for the human in the aircar that plunged towards the ground.

The Titan of Strength zipped from Drak’s crosshairs. Drak knew the hit he took must be from the Titan of Swiftness, Strength’s sister. The God of Fate guided Drak’s hand as he aimed the aircar at the muddy river that ran through the once great Grand City.

… This was it. Either now or the never of oblivion. Drak slowly, quietly, slipped the safety pin from the discharge grenade. The God of Morning muffled the sound of the pin hitting the metal grated floor. “Only one chance at this,” Drak muttered. Take out the Titan of Strength and the laser gate imprisoning the leaders of the Underground. From there, they could release the rest of the human prisoners.

Drak held his breath as he threw the grenade. Then he remembered what Mili had once said to him. “To live we must breathe.” He let out his breath and calmly breathed in, out, then in.

The grenade did its job. In moments the metal prison deck rang with the cries of the freed Underground. The Titan of Strength lay lifeless to the side of the gaping hole. What was once a prison was now a passageway to freedom. Their job wasn’t done, Drak knew, but the tide had turned.

…

“End of history.”

The it-being’s whir fades. It smoothes from chrome back into stone. Like eagle wings spread then tucked, the maypole ribbons slack.

They blink.
Book IV
Constellatory Chart

leatherbound [shoe]
cottonbound [shoe]
handsup
swing
handsup swing
notbroken

anoceanfield[shoed]withhands

housed rural[shoes]withrubber

afaroff
rig
As a smooth and knobbed living tree makes for easy sliding down an impossible precipice, the exile/beast-call makes easy the hero and double’s slip across the desert. Inspired by the hot and cold twin balls floating in the blue and black, they turn their four (total) orbs to each.

The ambling captain’s crew
Aim chests to north to south
Rowing bones without mast

And stroke the circular path!

Fundaments gleam in their four points of intersect.
Some stumble some thrust. The satyr’s song beats a score across their distance, strummed to the tune of division.

The sexual orientation of at least one Egyptian origin myth is the reverse of the Western male above female position. Contemporary re-readings of ancient origin myths produce a similar reversal of Western norms, which can be read as subversive or a simulacrum.

The pillar/canyon of the universe mirages in a technological calculation of drift at the hero and double’s approach. They climb/descend.

The over/under-land opens.
Up/in the hero/double go exerting mighty puffs.

The under/over-land burns/cools their blistered feet.

Their lively, dead steps echo. The dead echo.

The hero moves under earth, salt, tectonics, and magma—as through muddy air—and bears the blare of capital laments—rape, war, enslavement, culture.

Up in clouds the double enters capital’s church’s history of culture written on victorious palms.

Walking a smoke trail the hero buys into a baseball field of icons pitching never-endingly to themselves, striking out. Politically trained actors pound podiums, miss their cue, and lose their real, deeper, truer inner self. On screen and over the radio small black holes fill the minds and stomach of consumer chain CEOs who devour endlessly their products (TGIF! Gap!) lest they devour themselves. A lone, famous metaphysician weeps, and the hero weeps too.

The double wades a lake of blue, red, yellow, and orange plastic balls and emerges onto a tarred shore. A cross-work of signs point off to trails, all ending in “loop.” The cellophane forest rattles mother-of-pearl in a flurry of sale tags. The experience of ivy touching brick is saved to an external hard drive and emailed to an exclusive listserv with an address of “edu.” The double slides through skyscrapers in a free-hanging rollercoaster carriage with an exhilaration of wind.

Cedar fractals shade the hero’s/double’s cavern/embankment with bushels of phyllotaxis toss. The double down and the hero out, converge. The desert, primed with details of real, stretches a dull walk before them.

Agamemnon calls from the back,
Run from the line of lineage,
Run from the knife, the pot, the curse,
Sit in the atom’s pit content!
The hero and double pant through scrub crags, sandy folds and overhangs. A curious tribe bobs over boulders, alert in their periphery. From a climber’s chimney a messenger’s “Ho.”

A scree crumb landslide settles.

“Ho.” “Ho.”

Feeney argues that the text is free to explore its episodes, that a drop of blood is as interpretive as any action. Further, this blood, according to Feeney, is almost always of a national character.

“The valley of many small strides.”

“That we walk.”

“To what where? The who, the what?”

“What? Walk.”

“Walk.”

“To?”

“With.”

Tents furrowed around well water smile a dusty greeting. Cups flash.
The tribe’s refugee story told by night tells:


Toasts of bondage chain the hero and double, tribe to tribe, double and hero. A fictive kinship.
Weapon for weapon.

The story told tells:

“Blood must spill.”

Shared bread.
Recovered

... volcanic sparks from a pit spray coddled across blue gods to a spot in the blue-green, earth rumbled in another red pit… calmed

… ruled in peace… [the child of Atlas] lead the uprising… struggle, but were overthrown by [their children]

At the peak of Atlantean civilization the great ship builders spread their rule across the vastness of… resisted by… and the great catastrophe… ending the god-like lineage of Atlantean domination.

… bones wrapped and dipped in gold… carried [to the altar of Poseidon] in procession
The hero and double marry domination’s desire with their new-joined tribe.
Councils strategize.
Spear/dagger/sword orders hiss in the smith’s ear.
Well water benedictions pour and cobra sacrifices writhe.
A new lineage—before the fallen fall—is scribed.
Fire singed tales of past and future war choke the air.
Sand purifications whip the camp into a red eyed and war knuckled froth.

The double sneaks into the enemy city covered in night and sand. Hearth fires burn a domestic mirror to their campfires. Lineage storytellers in the town square recount a mirror to their pre-fallen. A smith pounds steel in a familiar chord. A sibling.

        Gilgamesh your city
        A covered display case
        Left crumbled into words!

        A pompous kingdom down
        The cool fountain bone dry
        Words shelved in an archive!

Caught, a spear point digs into the double’s side. At the liver.
A fore-spear point of a herder(raider points down
to the city and the sand trap dungeon of a covered pit.

A message sent.

The hero—heroically—shuffles old into the city disguised as a messenger offering negotiation in parchment.
Bhabha writes that criticism, as political ____, should be seen as a “translation: a place of hybridity… negotiation ___ than negation.” That is, “the event ___ theory” (2385) occurs as a discursive event where negotiations take place without ___ imperative of a foreseen or predictable ___, where the process of terms and positions produce practical political action ___ negative exclusion that inevitably creates binaries ___ hierarchies of domination.

In garland the gentleman warrior slays for his lady. The lady of the land. At court he cuts with his tongue the surface of propriety.

His lord his liege assigns the gentleman warrior to the furthest swamp to retrieve a flowering root. After the deflowering of his lady.

The lady in her chamber.

The gentleman warrior’s trial of courage, average; of virtue, below average; loyalty, above average. Through walls of fire, up razor cliffs, across oceans. Peasants offer their fearful bread and dry hay.

The gentleman warrior sits at the swamp’s edge waiting for the root to flower, meditating on his lady. The wait emaciates the gentleman warrior.

A wasted gentleman warrior presents his lord his liege with the flowering root. A feast. A wedding. The gentleman warrior retires to an awarded province.
The messenger-hero bows rigid bones—false—to the enemy court. Parchment unravels.

Hero: “My humility. For your hunt and capture of our lost lamb, our wandering cow, our missing double, we exchange ten fat goats.”

Leader: “Ten fat goats. An offspring, a double, a barker for your bleating kids. So. And to this a treaty. Nonhostility.”

H: “My humbleness. The camp weeps, the earth moans, the sun hides in mourning our lost one. Take our ten sweet, milk heavy kids. But, to that add nothing.”

L: “The number ten is too even. The scale must tip, so add drink.”

H: “We supply, then, one cask of wine.”

Leader’s Prophet: “From sand rises a double headed snake. It twines. It strikes and poisons the heels.”

L: “We armor our heels.”

H: “Take ten plus one.”

L: “Wash and eat my consideration.”

Just as a poor farmer—raised in dirt by dirt, crusted in dirt—relocates to the noise and clatter of the city, from the open green in spring and waving yellow of fall to the gritty sweat of summer and freezing slush of winter, and adapts—washing the dirt crust—and grows to love the crowd steam and rough towering buildings—dirt airborne—so that the old country seems as if a red saturated landscape painting gawked in the window of a department store, so the hero and double, treated to the many comforts—their lips swell—of the city and raiders, are captive to the raider’s life.

Toasts of bondage chain the hero and double, dweller to dweller, double and hero. A fictive kinship. A weapon for weapon, the hero and double weapon against the exiled tribe.

“Blood must spill.”

Shared bread.

Rising snake.
At night of dawn the cold moon yawns the warm bleary sun up. The city tribe and exile tribe unite in clash. Copper adrenaline tastes the raider’s palate in a dust cloud of steel springing from spearheads and scimitars. A blood cloud. A confusion of tribes slay

Aeneas, totem toting,  
Marches battle down the glade,  
Mistakenly claims Rome home  
In the savage, wet god’s realm

cousins. Fury scatters the exiles into the bush. A blind regroup, a blind scatter, a tribe as a school of convergence and blood. The hero, the double, blind in fury and loyalty, rejoin the exiles and trounce the raiders. The exiles take the city, raiders of raiders.

The traditional rhetoric of horse racing and wrestling is appropriated by modernists in the image of the athletic businessman racing off to work. But today, the picture of epic competition is the patient, androgynous figure waiting for the bus or subway. Or, the behind-the-scenes computer programmer working in a dark room.

As conqueror, the hero enters the exile’s camp. The hero offers a gift of tribal marriage and reconciliation. The hero is taken, bound, and ransomed. The double enters disguised as a messenger…


A tribe takes the city. Blood.

The hero and double thick in the black sticky entrails of civil war shutter and, as snakes zigzag sideways to keep off hot sand, slip off through the bush.

Scribes describe the blood cloud they leave as a “tremendous necessity” of “beautiful tonnage” the sand ever soaked.
Desert/bush horizons warp, rise, and tumble in heat, mist, exhaustion. A helix inscribed on a Peak! reads a harmony of death’s sequence. The Peak’s compass—needle of patient wind—points toward a mass of waves.

The double dreams a clam bridge to the hero.

A series of stern, keel, rib, and prow visions voiced by a growling leviathan lure the hero and double over ranges toward a large water pit. A history of genetic episodes drowned there, they fly at the sea.

Stripped by salt, painted by seagulls, cracked by the weather, the sea’s shipbuilder totem works an iron and carbon wheel with fire, whittles a mast of oak.
At sea’s edge a cotton field swirls a sail held by hemp. Wind spins the rudder and the waves make it screech.

“Shipbuilder.”

“Hero/double.”

The hero and double explain a future inscribed with transistors, nanotechnology, ones and zeros. The shipbuilder picks from the sea bright orange and spiked treasures to manifest their sailing. With the sea’s guts they predict their chances of survival. In convivial agreement, the shipbuilder raises timber and pitch into a tight vehicle and floats it.

“Do not go down to your dying.”

“We will.”
Under the sea totem’s sail with shark force, whale speed, and flood surge the hero and double\textsuperscript{18} split the air and crack across sea peaks. From their flying sea vehicle land flashes

Karazawaka combines traditions of the sea as ritual hunting ground, dangerous food supply, mysterious double of solid land, personified deity, mythical test of a hero’s mortality, the site of birth and death, and political capital to show that throughout theoretical and philosophical history ecocriticism has been unconsciously at work in all economic and kinship relations.

as faces glowing with wine. They glide the sea’s streams and push blind as with mapped calculation.

But, the wind dies, the sea flattens, the air stills. They stop, are stopped, and anchor.

The sacred knife rite at the sacred time
A stuttering of light kites circle down
Jet sets laugh at night at the falling Dow

From below a warble of luminescent bubbles wobble up. They tense at the sea’s surface, rise, pop and say, “dive.”

The hero and double strip ascetic wool/bark and bow, lean bodies to the ocean. And as bubbles, dive the Epipelagic Zone.

\textsuperscript{18} Transformed by a sea salt difference.
Recovered

At the court of... and as the instrument, most common to those story tellers, lulled them on, a fantastic... thunder from the sea, a calm, and the shivers of that great land swallowed them slowly...

Yet another encounter with... History of that missing culture from the rich merchant... [who] recounted a long History of naval exchange between primitive [sailors] and Atlantean sails.

... unlike any of the pirates we know. Though...

[Atlantean] mechanisms intricate in their application to bodily... never found, only rumored to have transported the entire civilization to the center of our...

... only scrap, only this one inscription, if it [can be] authenticated...
“Glug.”
Dive.
“Glu ga.”
The hero and double merge an ocean. Squid points tangle them through the Bathypelagic Zone. They bend in the current, swim the fins of dolphins. A glow glides them as stars to sailors.

American capitalism works either as motivation for episodic movement or its opposite, critique. As Laupin points out, episodic and ideological pastorals transpose individual and community ruggedness and austerity onto the landscape. On the other hand, lyric capitalism emphasizes holes and gaps in the communicative process of earning a living.

From the deep the god of gamma bursts\(^\text{19}\) streams a lure through their hair.

They dive through the Abyssopelagic Zone.

Not for treasure but for glory
Amundsen, Scott, and Shackleton
Shine as flawless blue diamond ice

Down, Atlantis’ warp-glow gurgles them closer. The god of gamma bursts\(^\text{20}\) hums lost secrets in a sunken language which flows as a school of marlin. The double translates the hero and the Atlantean march rite of kings draws them into city central. The thoroughfares and gardens stand blank, sooted, and waterlogged.

The god of gamma bursts\(^\text{21}\) appears skeletal in a kelp orchard. Rattles.

\(^{19}\) (\(\gamma\)-ray/t (time in days)) \(^{56}\)Ni \(44.0/t -20\)
\(^{20}\) (\(\gamma\)-ray/t (time in days)) \(^{56}\)Ni \(43.8/t -15\)
\(^{21}\) (\(\gamma\)-ray/t (time in days)) \(^{56}\)Ni \(43.7/t -10\)
Recovered

A [god] devised the foundation to drop, sea to rise. Secrets…

… deserved the earth’s heaves, groans, and final buckle for their heretical practices, inhuman carnalisms, and…
Strumming from the kelp orchard the god of gamma bursts\(^{22}\) rattles boned fingers through deep-sea pressure. Acoustics to the hero/double sound glory with future with lines of immortality.

“Is there a Peak!”

“Peak!”

“Impervious…”

“To grit…”

“To grind…”

“Points to…”

“The name.”

“My…”

“Name.”

Language is not a precise form of expression but is an impulse towards journey. It would seem fantastic patterns construct invisible articulations through repeated exposure, which in turn make the unfamiliar route familiar.

“From peak to trough…”

“Named.”

The god of gamma bursts,\(^{23}\) bursts. The sea roils with gamma.

    Echo: trench!
    Echo: warfare!
    Echo: peace!
    Echo: fallout!

The sunk city sinks in its foundations, cracks, moans, and grows in legend. The ruins release a mud cloud—once walls against the sea—to be carried by currents and washed and mixed and mortared and plastered into ruins again.

\(^{22}\) (γ-ray/t (time in days)) \(^{56}\)Ni 43.5/t -5

\(^{23}\) (γ-ray/t (time in days)) \(^{56}\)Ni 43.4/t 0
Among Atlantean flotsam\textsuperscript{24} the hero-mote reaches through legendary mud for the double’s hand.

The double limp in death.

Cold in a coffin of sea, the double freezes in a world of legend.\textsuperscript{25} The hero’s tears and the sea…

The god of gamma bursts\textsuperscript{26} sings in whale song:

“Crust will cake the earth.”

The hero moans:

“Each to watch.”

The god of gamma bursts\textsuperscript{27} laughs:

“All.”

The hero moans:

“What seeing.”

The god of gamma bursts,\textsuperscript{28} in the guise of the kelp orchard skeleton, materializes on the hero’s shoulder.

“All.”

The skeleton wraps red kelp over the hero’s left hand.

“All.”

From Atlantean fragments, settleings, and mud a ship rises. The hero, double in hand, follows it up.

\textsuperscript{24} Debris flood in the flood of flood.
\textsuperscript{25} A fantastic cryogenic Disney dream.
\textsuperscript{26} (\gamma-ray/t (time in days)) \textsuperscript{56}Ni 43.3/t 5
\textsuperscript{27} (\gamma-ray/t (time in days)) \textsuperscript{56}Ni 43.2/t 10
\textsuperscript{28} (\gamma-ray/t (time in days)) \textsuperscript{56}Ni 43.2/t 15
An excavation—explosion—of Atlantis’ navy in death—the double—reveals the bright surface of the sea.

Rehydrated from spermaceti and the squid’s tomb, a vessel crafted from legend bobs taunt and austere in the sun, dripping sea aft to bow, creaking its hempen bindings to life. The hero

... is any one form (oral, poetry, prose, drama) more fitted to any one aspect of character, episode, nationalism, etc.?

pulls the double aboard. The mast hoists, the rudder sets, the wind carries the god of gamma bursts’ message, “home.”

    Each to the grave every Helen, lost
    All brothers and teachers to the tomb
    Left, the mourner with flowers and wine

The hero catches, strips, and wraps the double in marlin. The marlin skin wrapped double pickles in the bilge. They sail towards continent. The hero anoints the double in whale oil, sends seahorse sacrifices to the sky.

From sea spray the god of gamma bursts projects a ghost theater in vase dancing a prophetic narrative in clay. Machinegun fire sprays a tall glint credit tower. Faceless mobs move. A nest hatches a hero. Smears of chrome gilt a prance of fleeing dogs. The vase falls.

---

29 (γ-ray/t (time in days)) ^56Ni 43.1/t 20
30 (γ-ray/t (time in days)) ^56Ni 43.05/t 25
31 Cellophane.
Book V
Constellatory Chart

eachtoeach
eachtoeach
eachtoeach
eachtoeach
toeach
The thin grimace of home bobs between a gnashing sea and toothsome sky. In sight

   Gray smear!
   Pine crown!
   Garden!

the hero plunges kelp and hand into the double. Fingers wiggle
at the skin in a slathering of blood as a psyche guides the sea covered hand.
A collection of spirits—original language, original espiritistas, origin of law—
transport the hero a moment to the original land—moats… cultivation… armada—
and guide the hand to the death-lump. Its quivering flesh burns with cold.

Peak!

   The persistence of totems attests to a psychological need for external forces. Whether this
need comes from personal or group investment and solidarity, or from environmental pressures,
will never be fully understood. Hence, the totem’s power, it seems, is in its transmission.

Without tear, stitch, or scar the hero wrenches the death-lump from the double, wraps it
in kelp. Holding high the red lump in red seaweed against the green sea and distant peak
of home, the hero calls fertility into fertility. And swallows the lump.
In the form of sea spray and lightning, the god of gamma bursts\(^{32}\) plucks electromagnetic energy from ions, grumbles, and belches a window of life and heat. Then sinks into an oblivion of time dilation and Hawking radiation.

The title of hero the hero grants the double. The double rises and transfers the title of double to the hero. They breathe each to each.

The cove of home takes them shuttering in.

Recognize who?
What’s that ghosting?
A warm body!

Haggard by sea by death, they step with emaciation in scraps. A riot of birds discover the hero, the double. A sign

Field argues that the real moment of epiphany comes with the dangerous realization of the failed project of “normality” and the need for a future state or undiscovered land that can sustain the wanderlust or speculative nature the swashbuckler represents.

tends them with sun glint through the wild fringes of their familiar shore. Untamed fruits recollect them sweetly as family. Their language comes back.

\(^{32}\) (γ-ray/t (time in days)) \(^{56}\)Ni \(43.0/t \ 30\)
A fascist “leader,” wrote Gramsci, can ___ advantage of the disconnect between party and party representatives and the ___ they represent. A state bureaucracy is ___ which hides the military-civil relationship. Where one institution, civil government, appears ___ hold power, in reality the other, ___, holds power. “Caesarism” involves a mutual destruction of state and civil ___ where “forces of conflict balance each ___ in a catastrophic manner” (219), and can be in the form of ___ person or party. Modern Caesarism allows ___ margins, which turns the polis into a police rather than military ___ (222). Conflicts between church and state operate ___ the same way as military and civil. Self-criticism of and by ___ state is hypocritical and operates to ___ the state.

Cosmic forces birth the hero and twin from an earthen womb (cave, mountain, spring). In youth the hunt.

   Exile.
   They pass many trials. They travel over desert, bush, and ocean. They retrieve a totem. They confront death. They return home.

   Home disorder is reordered. Pleas from a distant land carry them away. Rumors of a glorious death are written.
The mud/steel town mumbles its slow commerce around the hero and double begging in shadow their meals. In the warm blow of the thread shop’s doorjamb the tailor’s yellow eye—as a woodpecker spies tree wood for home and bangs and needles the bark and pulp to fashion a vessel for its naked being—measures their frames. Knowing the exiled hero and double’s inseam and shoulder, the tailor tailors them in royal robes, silk underthings.

The town drink talks the nation in beer halls:

“Those that pluck the shiniest berries, the lightest loads, the woolliest grazers, the choicest timber for home and floating.”

“Backyard bandits filch a potato here a roof shingle there, menaces for the invention of locks.”

The hero and double

Gates shut and shot through
Brother killed for brotherhood
Grave flies buzz their buzz

weep their people. Their leaderless people. People bumping in their autonomous living. Their penless people unaware of the page of their history. Their people—they think—call them to action.

A messenger—young, poor, starving—goes lean-footed to carry news of the hero and double’s return to the state-court. Fresh, precious well water is slipped into the messenger’s sweating body.

The curmudgeon plots malicious in the council’s shadows while the ruler and elegant court arrange a feast.

Hearths and factory floors buzz tales of ghouls and ghosts put under their national foot:

“When they step, we step back.”

“Our borders divided equally.”

Blowing a wind of relief at their feet, the land lightens the hero and double’s travel home to a cheer of grass rustle and dust howls.

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Cumulus cloud of speech.
One hundred silver tassels strung on one hundred sycamores around the royal court welcome feasters to the hero/double’s return. The peasants of bread flour the ground followed by wine makers to sacrament the earth. Polished and oiled spears point to the Peak! Children, lifted from their bending and aging chores gather wild flowers to distribute along the road to court. Spring fineries—frocks inlaid with a single gold thread, velvet hats green as sprigs, square toed suede boots—rise from dusty chests. On each face a smile over creases of worry and toil.

A hemlock and nightshade flask lifts in the shadows, dashed with nutmeg and cinnamon. Bent, curmudgeoned hands spice malice for the heirs of souls and arms and stock. As a murder of crows flock to death and perch with small glass eyes and eager their pointed beaks, the curmudgeon’s conspiracy waits for prey.

Hail! Rama returns!
Hail! The ship’s prow in!
Hail! Sundiata!
Hail! The coming storm!

The hero and double amble home in innocent weather like two bees, drunk on pollen, buzz to the hive. Fresh leaves and moist earth move their thoughts.

Hero: “What oak.”

Double: “What dust.”

Rakis emphasizes the contextualization of rhetorical intent. We see, for instance, medieval punishment as a particular kind of rhetoric because of Foucault’s understanding of history. It is perhaps the unknown cultural rhetoric of Homer’s time that has made his text an emblematic template. Not only can we read all of history’s rhetoric into the unknown, we can also typify the unknown to great rhetorical effect.

Sun snows the turrets, gables, spires, and court for the exiles’ return to a choreographed trumpet of cheers. Pockets of bright moss snuggle in shadows. Warmed well water bowls sit for dipping. Lace.
A royal veneer quivers their faces smug at the approach of home. Bouquets of officious honeysuckle, the calculation of scales behind walls smoothed by judgment, contrition, and the backs of underlings reach them far ahead of the gates. The hero sighs and accepts a ring from a scout of conviviality. The double bends and accepts a kiss from the dry lips of a welcome ambassador.

Crown, soul integrate
Whole, corona trapped

Tomatoes, potatoes, celery—skinned, whole, skewered, stewed—dressed by local hands, lamb cubes, ground bovine patties—dripping, sizzling—romaine with cucumber, radish, avocado, goat cheese, pickled pepper, balsamic vinegar, basil, new-pressed olive oil—sliced eggs, sun dried tomatoes—rye stuffed roast chicken, wheat and honey bread, cranberries, apples, ground venison in roasted pepper and garlic sauce—ground chickpeas cumin and parsley spiced in coconut and curry sauce—the globe delivers—kale, beet, and onion sweat in butter and soy—brown and white rice—portabella mushrooms—smoked and steamed fill bowls and plates.
The royal gate takes the hero and double. One pistol shot (or arrow or spear or spell) sends one lead death (or bronze or words) through an oval of air they make with their joined hips and raised crossed arms. A curmudgeon’s hand lifts.

A creative text from another culture provides a new understanding of a familiar theme—romantic interest, for example. We see the subtlety of cultural differences while at the same time understanding our shared mammalian existence. Yet, when a text must be translated, as in a written text, some of this cultural exchange is compromised. Yet, one becomes more directly immersed in another’s cultural expression in film—especially films with little dialogue.

High a hand signal. Just as a hand reaches for sweet, plump blackberries only to slow, reticent at thorn upon thorn stock vying for the innocent hand, so the hero and double advance into court, cooled by the curmudgeon’s band of curmudgeons’ daggers emerging.

Sapling-like limbs—thin but strong springs—under their new royal garb snap a field of plan, landscape, and symbol into view and the curmudgeon’s scheme is sketched just as one the hero and double’s minds run their play through the trap’s offenses.

“Hail!” they say.

“Hail!” the crowd yells and crowds.

A press of home warms between them and flashes of dagger glint. They slip slow and smiling into safe inner chambers.
The crown-temporary—shy ruler—orders wine and nourishment for the hero and double in low-lit secret walls of granite/oak/drywall far from the crowd, and cautiously welcomes them.


The crown-temporary calls forth a design of mist to bear the hero and double in the likeness of a curmudgeon and beggar. The molecular spell hazes about their heads.

In mist they pass unnoticed. The beggar begs and the curmudgeon curmudgeons in a host of curmudgeons.

The curmudgeon’s band conspires:

“These beasts from the Atlantean mysteries back for the throne.”

Curmudgeon to curmudgeon:

“These beasts bleed royal blood to be took and cooked.”

The beggar/hero/double uptakes a rye loaf and smuggles it.

Curmudgeon:

“Beggar! Fool! That beggar fool escapes with sneaked bread without lashes!”

Curmudgeons:

“After! After!”

… something as simple as a wash rag can take the greatest significance; whereas something as seemingly important as a talking sword recovered from the furnace of Hades can be mentioned once then forgotten entirely… hence, the joke of continuity
All in a pack the curmudgeons race with swords and staffs after the beggar/hero/double. They rush through smaller and smaller corridors. A backup of curmudgeons stall and stick, pile and wriggle. The double and hero emerge from their designs.

Hero and double, from above:

“By lines and rites, succession and design, time and space, rule and love, we pronounce…”

Something in the darkening sky cries.

The hero and double announce:

“Exile!”
Book VI
Constellatory Chart

darkartsbe
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stablesteeringpoint

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coinjangle

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fillinggravelminewishesofrocksaltforwoundsfore
shadowwingsellablesmoothstonesfromroadsideshacksa
longthefurrowedfacesfacingcartsofget
tinggotheroilingbellsclangingtombtonesear
splittingthebasketsoilsofgravelhandsflingbruisesfromby
standersgawkingfromshadowsofstallswaitingforbruiseberryblooms
talksattombslonginthesmoothbusinessofshackssendsseedsofhopecartloadtocart
toloadablestonesliftedfromfurrowsthoselongfacesroilingandtoilingthetoiltthebell
tollsnontheearthebrayinggatherthesthemineworkersoncartswithgravelforwounds
aroundwithstringthestonetossandretrievethetot
emptytombstfortheirfacesfur
rowedwithgaw
kings
Exile

The nation’s mobs—entitled simple in rule and border—cluster along curbs, ready with stone-toss. But the hero/double’s hands halt them. Tense, the murderous stones turn eyes thrown on the curmudgeons’ backs.

The curmudgeon band skulks the cobble/dirt/asphalt road away from home towers, the peak’s shadow, death’s happy caravan of old age, warm beds, cool well water—the hero and double’s soft fate.

The curmudgeon-elect straightens, breathes desert/bush air, and feels lungs expand further than expected. Cloudless rain glitters warm sun through the air.

When the trope of journey and war, narrative and return, death and regeneration are extracted from a tale, as Mayor notes, we must ask if we are dealing with a tale at all.34

Swung ice coated sledges
Through clear cracked crevasse fields
Multitudinously
Carry cold into snow

34 The paradox of nothing as nothing. Rather, the multiplicity of a text should be celebrated.
Recovered

A great [thing]… gone down… [to]
Pillows under the hero and double raise their chins. The rightful ruler pens and delivers new rules through erasure. The hero and double raise a lodgepole pine at center to mark the origin of new twists.

The Peak! redubbed Double\textsuperscript{35} shadows a new founding. The hero and double’s ascetic garb dusted with desert/bush and death lifts on high posts and flitter piecemeal across scatters of dead zones.

From nothing

Rise! If imperfect!
So new so civil!

births the vindictive heir. Children.

\textsuperscript{35} Now, Mt. Anchor.
Horse-mouthed

:

The monotone poet:

If brick then out or in the tale of windows, the move meant toward the gap in droves, they lay still, but a hole, a light peering, a face, wind a light touch owed to own if spoke into the hand, drives, says, light’s just day.
Exile/Home

The curmudgeon’s hand lifts spring/well water to dusty lips. Exalted, the head looks up.

Beast-calls from the west nourish the curmudgeon’s feet to speed.

A messenger from the west delivers a plea to the hero/double to slay the wilds.

    The heavens trumpet
    Bright, twinkling signs
    Of names in the sky

Called, their bones go.
Homeward, Postmodern Epic Conventions in Eleni Sikelianos’ *The California Poem*

**Introduction**

Karla Kelsey writes in a review of Eleni Sikelianos’ *The California Poem* that “[i]n scope and mode *The California Poem* directly descends from the epic tradition carried so stunningly through the twentieth century in America, and the project could not have been written without Pound’s *Cantos*… Williams’ *Paterson*, [and] Olson’s *Maximus Poems* […]” Kelsey adds, “Sikelianos continues the twentieth century epic’s exploration of the material, constructed nature of history by ‘sampling’ various historical and cultural texts and stitching them into the body of her work” (“*The California Poem* and *The Book of Jon*”). And though *California* has roots in modernist aesthetics, it is a textually and linguistically playful and fragmented postmodern poem, as Kelsey acknowledges, in conversation with political issues of feminism and subject positionality in economic structures. The political concerns of *California* are also in conversation with traditional epic structural devises such as invocation, the journey narrative, and homecoming and the restoration of order on the home front. Rather than matching the fragmentary quality of *California* with American epics,36 this essay will compare *California* to the prototypical epic, *The Odyssey*, to better highlight how traditional epic conventions and postmodern epic conventions are in conversation. Comparing *California* to *The Odyssey* will reveal subversive techniques of traditional epic tropes in *California* as well as highlight narrative oddities in *The Odyssey*.

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36 For critical studies of contemporary American epic see Josephine Nock-Hee Park and Zhou Xiaojing separate studies of Myung Mi Kim’s *Dura*, as well as Page DuBois’ work on Alice Notley’s *The Descent of Alette*; bibliographic information to be found in the bibliography section of this paper.
This essay will draw on a variety of poets and critics to demonstrate that *California* is a postmodern dream narrative in which, as Alice Fulton argues for postmodern fractal poetry, “interruption, artifice, disjunction, and raggedness [are] facets of its formal vocabulary” (74). Also, *California* can be read, via Fulton, as a “feminist postmodern poem,” that “questions the assumption of ‘naturalness’ surrounding, for instance, heterosexuality… woman’s association with nature and man’s with culture” (71). Also present in *California* is a feminism that operates to “understand and (re)constitute the self, gender, knowledge, social relations, and culture without resorting to linear, teleological, hierarchical, holistic, or binary ways of thinking and being” (Flax 39). And though Jane Flax’s essay, “Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory,” quoted here does not address *California* or Sikelianos directly, there are correlations to the way Flax considers postmodernism, feminism, and gender and the way these notions operate in *California*. The feminist quality of *California* operates as a critique of phallocentric models of episodic narrative by gendering the hero of *California* as multiple, and often female, rather than masculine to destabilize controlled notions of “self, knowledge, social relations, and culture” (39). The postmodern structure of *California*, with its appropriations of epic tropes as well as its political addresses, operate to articulate a varied and inclusive picture of Californian history, individuality, and regional linguistics.

**Dream Narrative**

*The California Poem* uses various structural techniques in ways that often run counter to the expectation of unity one might have of a text proclaiming the story of California, being “The” “Poem” of “California,” as emphasized in the title. It is a 193-
page poem which begins with epigrams and a prologue, has no table of contents, intersperses collages, photographs, and postcards, uses footnotes and endnotes, and ends with a “Key” to abbreviated names, “Further Acknowledgements,” and “A Note on the Type.” All of these elements work against a linear model and toward a synchronic, dreamlike model of reading because they are an intentional part of the reading experience of the text rather than being organizational or scholarly devices.37

The speaker of California oscillates between poet, personification, abstraction, and sometimes the self-referential “I” (Eleni) to reconfigure heroic action along the lines of “her” instead of “him.” The speaker also moves and speaks in multiple ways as though in a dream, a dream that has feminist overtones. Another postmodern epic writer, Alice Notley, notes in “Epic and Women Poets,” that when considering the relations between and among “women and action in the area of myth and dream […]” myth and dream are “unreal, illogical, symbolical… stories which may involve sex, death, violence, journeys, quests, all the stuff of epic & much of narrative” (103).38 Dreams abound throughout California, and the reader is often hard pressed to tell the difference between concrete representations and dream images. The “Prologue,” for instance, opens with the invocation, “Let me tell you of my cat-o-nines cosmovision” (7). The torture device “cat-o-nines” indicates a kind of violence, though not so violent because of the absence of the “tails” that inflict injury, and is juxtaposed with the sublime when entering a “cosmovision,” a sort of slang for Buddhist bliss. If this is an invocation of a vision of

37 It should be noted that a scholarly edition of The Odyssey would have footnotes, endnotes, etc. Yet, I want to emphasize that Sikelianos writes these types of scholarly devices into California as part of her text, where scholarly notation in Homer occurs via others (scholars) writing into a Homeric text.
38 Notley is speaking of her own epic, The Descent of Alette, but also certainly speaking of women writing epics in general.
California as well as of a woman’s story “which may involve sex, death, violence, journeys, quests, all the stuff of epic & much of narrative,” Sikelianos is invoking a personal “my” story of bliss and violence. The reader, then, is initiated into an ambivalent epic space where personal and universal stories of violence and bliss will be explored. Ambivalence is further expressed through the juxtaposition of elevated epic language and quotidian slang, creating a dreamlike synchronicity of contradictory linguistic registers.

By comparing California’s invocation to the opening of The Odyssey, we can see how California uses the invocation trope and rewrites it in postmodern ways. The Odyssey begins:

Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story
of that man skilled in all ways of contending,
the wanderer, harried for years on end,
after he plundered the stronghold
on the proud height of Troy. (1)

Where the speaker in The Odyssey must bring the Muse in from the outside to sing through him the story of Odysseus, the speaker of California presupposes “my” possession or containment of the “cat-o-nines cosmovision” of California that will be told. Where the distanced “he,” or Odysseus, is the focus of The Odyssey, the speaker’s “my,” or personal experience, is emphasized in California. Instead of the “wanderer” who “plundered” in The Odyssey, the speaker in California evokes an ambivalently sublime place filled with the emotional threat of a “cat-o-nines,” as well as a blissful “cosmovision.” Where a literal story of plunder and contending is being told in The
Odyssey, a more implied story of intimate violence and universality is being told in California.

The postmodern, dreamlike sequence of events in California moves action away from the tradition of a single heroic narrative. The nonlinear contemporary epic here replaces the traditionally episodic epic with multiple perspectives, tones, emotions, and memories. For instance, the first time California is mentioned in California is in the context of dream: “I want to tell you about the dream. The California is a paradise lake with colorful animals dream” (12). “The California” is a self-reflexive reference to the title of the book and a way of entering the confused vocabulary of dream by adding the grammatically strange definite article that attaches California to “a paradise lake,” “colorful animals” and “dream” all at once without the benefit of hyphens. The speaker’s “dream” also operates as the operative lens through which all things California will be seen; furthermore, this focus on dream allows for multiple voices to weave in and out of the text and, in essence, create multiple speakers who relay events. The speakers come in varied forms: disembodied, or omniscient; the first person poet, Eleni; the personifications of various Californians, including surfers and Chicanos; and finally as California, the landmass and its history, itself. Sikelianos, in an interview with Eric Elshtain, specifically addresses this kind of multiplicity of voice and perspective, and the resulting relation to the self:

I think [The California Poem] was kickstarted, in part, by interior questions of self and place—how landscapes, hometowns, cities, provide methods for naming the self, putting one’s self “in place”—how place helps to produce the fictions and realities of the subject… The California

39 Besides in epigrams and the title.
Poem wanted to be more available, to include a more personal and quotidian kind of everything; I was driven to write something more accessible [...] (332)

California, as Sikelianos points out, contains a mix of quotidian “place” and the poet’s personal experiences and memories and blends these together, which creates an amalgamation that gives California its dreamlike quality. The postmodern dreamscape of California allows Sikelianos to tap into various inner and outer experiences and to pastiche literary, popular, scientific, and historical forms into California to make the text more “accessible” to the reader. Yet, the line between the landscape, including its history, and the personal quotidian is blurred, and a liminal space is created where the multiple speakers of California experience at once the violence of “the napalm of sun-shore-sun” as well as the consumer bliss of the familiar localized space in the “margins of coconut novelties” (13). Bringing violent “napalm… sun” together with “novelties” does not necessarily make for an “accessible” text, but does reflect the ambivalence of the personal dream of California Sikelianos wants to convey. Through various registers and speakers we oscillate in a dream space that brings to our awareness social concerns of “napalm” and war, and the consumerist tourist purchases of “coconut novelties.”

Compare California’s dream to an equally surrealistic dream in The Odyssey. Penelope is speaking to Odysseus who is disguised as a beggar and asks him to interpret her dream that consists of “a water’s edge” with “twenty fat geese,” an image in which “a mountain eagle with great wings / and crooked beak storms in to break [the geese’s] necks / and strew their bodies [...]” A voice in the dream tells Penelope that the geese are the antagonistic suitors and the eagle is Odysseus who has come back to bring order to

40 Athena creates the beggar disguise for Odysseus, the illusion in which acts as a sort of dream.
their house. The disguised Odysseus answers that this is true, and so the dream must come to pass in reality (370). Penelope’s dream reflects external events and, as a direct symbolic correlation, foreshadows them. And, her dream is Homer’s plot device that allows the characters Penelope and Odysseus to communicate code-like imagery to each other. In other words, dream in *The Odyssey* operates to support the episodic structure of conventional narrative and is a literary device that operates as omen for the characters, and is present as allegory for the characters’ predicaments at the climactic moment in the *Odyssey* when Odysseus homecoming is about to be revealed and chaos returned to patriarchal order. In *California*, on the other hand, dream is the structural and narrative basis for the poem as a whole. Dream, in *California*, operates as allegory for the structure of not only of the multiple speakers’ expressions and experiences, but also for the structure of postmodern poetry itself. Dream as structure, as Notley puts it, “is the ocean into which all of twentieth century forms are being dumped, those forms being forms of dissolution, the dissolving of the old continuous narrative and lyric coherences & the reconstituting of them into fragments, collage-like entities, & disjunctive & often abstract pieces of language” (106).

Structurally, the postmodern dream of various “twentieth century forms” that come together in *California* range from fragmented narrative and lyric to pictures and graphics. Yet the fragmented and collaged nature of *California* does not imply a disregard for form. Postmodern poetry, as Joseph Conte points out, “maintains a high level of [formal] interest because of its subtle blend of innovation and renovation,

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41 It must be noted here that Notley is opposed to this sort of “dumping” in epic. Yet, if we extract the pejorative from Notley’s concept, and frame it as postmodern fragmentation, pastiche, and reconfiguration, then we see her assessment of twentieth (and twenty-first) century poetry is quite useful.
mutation and fusion” (11). By means of postmodern techniques of innovation, *California* fuses and mutates aspects of Homeric epic into Sikelianos’ dream world, a world that reveals a synchronic experience of the poet, relationship to the land, heroic action, and textuality to express a postmodern synchronicity of time and space.

Considering how narrative operates in *California*, we see it condensed into a mix of lyric episodes. There is, for instance, a passage where a speaker recounts a memory of her grandmother, depicted here within Californian history:

My grandmother spends weekends in ghost towns looking for scorpions to cast in Lucite. She collects California rocks, for she is a rockhound, and she collects California rattlesnakes, for she is a tailhound, and she will open a health-food store and sell frozen buffalo meat for this is California and she will embezzle money from the local paper and live in a trailer plunked in the middle of the sands […] (15)

Here the narrative follows dream logic by compressing associative memories of the speaker’s grandmother, moving from the present to future tense, and from this compression an outline of the grandmother as rebel and outsider forms. The “ghost towns” the grandmother visits speak to the boom towns of the gold rush, and to the economic collapse and abandonment of these towns. The “frozen buffalo” the grandmother sells also speaks to a bygone era of the open range where buffalo roamed. These animals are now farmed, packed and frozen for consumption in the ubiquitous, or so the stereotype goes, “health-food store[s]” of California. Interspersed in this mini-narrative are markers distinct to the less glamorous side of California, desert “sand,” “scorpions,” “rattlesnakes,” and the
lonely “trailer plunked in the middle of the sand.” This list of Californian landmarks contains the poisonous and desolate, yet works to build a case for the redemptive possibility of Californians weathering and surviving a harsh environment and thriving in economically hard times. The grandmother also, wittingly or unwittingly, takes action against the local media institution and “embezzle[s] money from the local paper” and lives apart from large economic or capitalist institutions in a “trailer” to make a living off the land. History of the defunct goldmines and roaming buffalo intermingle with the snakes and rocks of the current Californian landscape to create a dream that encompasses the past and present, and which makes postmodern political comments on the female individual in light of Californian desolation.

**Feminist Mini-Narrative**

The mini-narrative of the self-sufficient grandmother quoted above works to support the notion of universal economic struggle, particularly when the universal is understood within the context of the grandmother’s feminist subject position. The specific example of the grandmother working off the grid in her trailer can be applied to a universal model of resistance because the grandmother’s subject position can be universalized as a model of resistance to pregiven conventional economic and subject positions. And in this way, as Judith Butler might put it, “The term ‘universality’… [is] left permanently open, permanently contested, permanently contingent, in order not to foreclose in advance future claims for inclusion” (8). Butler, in “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of ‘Postmodernism’,” discusses postmodern feminist
performance of subject positions in relation to power. The subject positionality of the grandmother in California, then, can be seen as a feminist performance of resistance both on an individual as well as universal level in relation to capitalistic power structures. In this way, Butler can be used to read the feminist intentionality in California. Or, the grandmother is allowed to embody the universalizing position of resistance to include not only herself, but other individual feminist, resistant subjects as well. Specifically, the grandmother identifies with universal resistance via the analogy of women surviving hard times in Californian history.

This example of the grandmother’s subject position in California can also be seen as feminist when read against a particularly unusual mini-narrative in The Odyssey. The narrative moment in The Odyssey under consideration is the moment when King Alkinoos’s singer sings the song of Odysseus’s part in the Trojan War. The singer sings the story of the Trojan Horse, which is praised as the Greek deception that brought death and destruction to the Trojans. Yet, while the singer sings, we see Odysseus react sorrowfully:

And Odysseus

let the bright molten tears run down his cheeks,
weeping the way a wife mourns for her lord
on the lost field where he has gone down fighting
the day of wrath that came upon his children.
At the sight of the man panting and dying there,
she slips down to enfold him, crying out;
then feels the spears, prodding her back and shoulders,
and goes bound into slavery and grief.
Piteous weeping wears away her cheeks:
but no more piteous than Odysseus’ tears […] (140-141)
The narrative here is a story within a story within a story: the story of Odysseus told by
the poet/Homer, the story of Odysseus told by Alkinoos’s singer, and the story of
Odysseus’ sorrow as narrated through the image of the weeping Trojan wife. The singer’s
song mixes with Odysseus’ memory, which mixes with an analogy, all of which create a
dream-like synchronicity. As the passage in California implies economic destruction and
independence, here The Odyssey implies an anti-war message. As the wife weeps so
Odysseus weeps for his fallen comrades. But, interestingly, Odysseus weeps “the way” a
wife weeps for her lost lord, for a lost city/kingdom; or, for the overall horrors of war.
And we can see that because Odysseus is lost at sea, he sympathizes with the figure of the
wife who has lost everything. This show of sympathy for the enemy is something rare
and certainly more implicit than overt in both The Iliad and The Odyssey, and mixes an
individual and universal commentary on the horrors of war.42 Yet, the mini-narrative
here, the metaphoric image of the weeping wife forced into slavery, not only reinforces
notions of male dominance, but also serves the single purpose of symbolizing the hero
Odysseus, even as the implied horrors of war speak to larger cultural issues. That is, the
use of the feminine in The Odyssey serves the heroic male, whereas the feminine in
California serves as feminine independence from phallocentric capitalist devastation, as
the grandmother passage in California shows. Where the mini-narrative in The Odyssey

42 The implications of Odysseus’ reaction were first pointed out to me in a lecture by Michael
Schmidt at the University of Arizona several years ago.
works in a closed metaphoric system that refers to the hero who suffers and is the only vessel for the regrets of war, the mini-narrative in *California* opens the narrative up to multiple subjects as well as local, state, and global history. To open the narrative in *California* is to invite other forms of poetic expression and political content into the text. Sikelianos’ narrative, in particular, serves to comment on narrative cohesion as well as phallocentric models of self-preservation by appropriating stories of economic conquest and feminizing individual and universal struggle along economic lines. In another related parallel, the investment in the personalized relation of the speaker to her grandmother has some resonance with Odysseus’ relationship to Laertes, who also lives in isolation. Yet, *California* emphasizes feminine over the masculine lineage without incorporating filial bonds into the overall structure of *California*. Where Odysseus gets crucial and lasting help from his father, the speaker in *California* speaks of her grandmother and moves on to other Californian themes.

The complex issue of feminizing California in a feminist or phallocentric manner, overtly or inadvertently, is framed in postmodern terms in the following.

Be down with that brand of California, for in
foreign CA we have no densely built devil’s forest
No evil swarm of suffocating green tear
hair by hair, no black flies biting
No bower, no brothel of leaves happily uniting (48)

The irony of to “Be down with that brand of California” draws attention to local colloquial diction as well as the “brand[ing]” of California as a site of a dangerous wilderness seen through “foreign” eyes. Sikelianos writes that there is “no” “devil’s
forest,” “evil swarm of suffocating green,” “black flies biting,” and “brothel.” The absence of the “brothel” is a direct negation of the notion of California as a metaphorically feminine place to be ravaged and conquered. The negation of perceptions of a wild California and its absent brothels reads all the more feminist when considered alongside one of California’s epigrams. The epigram, by Garcia Ordonez De Montalvo (a Spanish author who inspired conquistadors such as Cortez to go to the mythic California), describes California as a “Terrestrial Paradise… peopled by black women… who live in the fashion of Amazons.” Here we have an imaginative version of California, a literary dream depicting the land as both ideal, a “Terrestrial Paradise” if conquered, as well as wild and dangerous but sexually alluring to men, as indicated by the “Amazons.” Sikelianos includes this epigram to remind us that phallocentric notions of the land are prevalent, and that one can rewrite these notions and offer an alternative reading of one’s relation to the land. Part of this rewriting can be seen in the image in the epigram of Amazons “all adorned with the most precious stones, which are to be found in the island of California like stones of the field for their abundance…” (5). Sikelianos takes De Montalvo’s warrior Amazon women and later transforms them into her tough grandmother who is an individual “rock hound” resistant to phallocentric models of economic domination of the land, who finds value in the empty gold mines. We encounter here the chaos of the various structural and linguistic forms that, on closer inspection, reveal a pattern or cohesion of feminist thought, which re-renders the phallocentric wilds of California into a land populated by individuals and community. We are asked, then, to put down “that brand of California” imagined as wild wilderness and women, and “[b]e down with,” or support, “that brand of California” that recognizes
feminine struggle and the real effects of devastation caused by the ideology of the conqueror.

Fractal Form

The narrative and subject matter of *California* and *The Odyssey* are contained, of course, in some formal manner. Where *The Odyssey* is in dactylic hexameter, contains a narrative, and is organized into 24 books, *California* is not written in regular meter and lacks a table of contents. Yet, as Conte notes, “[p]ostmodern poets have by no means viewed form suspiciously, nor have they been particularly devoted to ‘antiformal’ methods of composition. These poets have in fact a decidedly imaginative and innovative approach to formal methods” (12). Some innovative formal techniques in *California*, which will be shown to work in a fractal manner, include the use of white space, photographs, a timeline of Californian history, various “Keys”, and geometric shapes, one of which operates as a dingbat. The textuality of the dingbat, the most recurrent graphic in *California*, can be read in the context of a page with “A Simple Lettered Key” positioned at the top. The “Key” is set up as a chart in the form of individual and paired letters (“A.,” “AA.,” “B.,” for example), followed by types of winged insects, followed by a key to the letters. Under this are twelve variations of geometric shapes, all with extended lines with dots at the end, including the recurrent dingbat; all the shapes look like they have arms radiating or reaching (47). Interestingly, the shapes could be abstract representations of the insects listed in the “Key,” but another interpretation of the shapes presents itself on the next page. At the bottom of the next page is a lone geometric shape.

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43 The term “free verse” will not be used here. This term was coined by a group of Modernists and does not adequately describe the postmodern formal qualities of *California*.

44 Other formal devices not examined here are the use of epigram, question and answer, sign language, and collage, among others.
similar to, but different from, the other twelve on the previous page, embedded in the text:

For did not California elaborate beneath her gown the most essential sweet and watery matter, as master of the pentagonal Oreaster? (48)

We see here the elegance of a “gown” and “sweet watery matter” juxtaposed with the scientific “Oreaster.” The embedded shape, though, embodies both an elegant shape as well as a scientific, or geometric, design; the geometric shape, then, brings the elegance of the “gown” and “Oreaster” together in one form. Yet, the embedded geometric shape does not contain any “pentagonal” shapes within it. Rather, the geometric shape is composed of, mainly, hexagons. Interestingly, the hexagon could be seen as a mutation of a pentagon. But this, too, draws on a linguistic and geometric association and brings the two together, each informing a reading of the other.

Formal structure and content in California, then, can be understood in relation to fractal theory, as indicated by the geometric shape and the fractal formation of starfish, “Oreaster.” Theories of fractal structure reflect postmodern notions of multiplicity and can be traced in such postmodern poetry as California; and, Fulton argues for an applicable formulation of postmodern, fractal verse in her essay “Of Formal, Free, and Fractal Verse: Singing the Body Electric.” Fractals, a term coined by Benoit Mandelbrot, are seemingly chaotic structures with underlining patterns. And, “each part of a fractal form replicates the form of the entire structure. Increasing detail is revealed with increasing magnification, and each smaller part looks like the entire structure, turned

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45 An associative link can be seen between the “hex” of hexagon in California and the “hex” of hexameter in Homeric verse. We can see, perhaps, Sikelianos punning on Homeric form.
around or tilted a bit” (55). Fractal verse operates in a similar way, as a “turbulent composition […]” that “introduce[s] some elements of chance” (56). Formally, “[f]ractal form… is composed of constant digressions and interruptions […]” (57), as seen in *California* with the geometric shape interrupting and reinterpreting the line as well as the language of the elegant “gown” associated with the scientific language of the “*Oreaster*.” Fulton argues for a fractal verse where

> Any line when examined closely (or magnified) will reveal itself to be as richly detailed as was the larger poem from which it was taken; the poem will contain an infinite regression of details, a nesting of pattern within pattern… digression, interruption, fragmentation and lack of continuity will be regarded as formal functions rather than lapses into formlessness; all directions of motion and rhythm will be equally probable […] (58)

Not only do the geometric shapes in *California* refer back to the “Key,” as abstract representations of the insects listed, but also to the “pentagonal” and “*Oreaster*,” opening a field of multiple interpretation and associative connections. And, *California* as a whole operates as a self-reflexive system patterned on the reification of the possible manifestations of California. This is reminiscent of how the speaker’s grandmother can be read as both individual and universal. Further still, when California elaborates “beneath her gown” she can be read in relation to fractals and the self-same organization of “watery matter,” where the water of California mixes with the *Oresters* of the sea.

*The Odyssey*, on the other hand, is organized into books, a loose template for later epics, which can be seen as an organizational container for the narrative structure as opposed to the open-endedness of *California* with its missing table of contents. Yet, there
is something of a fractal affinity in the various asides and digressions that occur in both *The Odyssey* and *California*. The interruptions in *The Odyssey*, though, support the narrative, whereas *California* “elaborates” and is less concerned with a return to any specific narrative. Hence, *California* has no table of contents, no specific organizing principle of reading the text.

**Fractal Politics**

Fractal verse is postmodern verse, operating not only as a formal devise, but also as political commentary. The complexity of a fractal and political reading of a text can be understood through Joan Retallack’s consideration of fractals and their relationship to language:

Fractal models (with their scalar self-similarities and unpredictable variations) bring into the foreground of our attention the large patterns and erratic details, the dynamic equilibrium of order and disorder in complex life systems like weather and coastlines. This is a geometry of nature that has helped us attend more productively to the chaotic processes of complex turbulent phenomena… I have begun to think of certain forms of art… as having fractal relation to the rest of life. They are complex constructions that, among other things, present their material presence as a dynamically indeterminate “coastline” for audiences to explore via their own complex cultural and psychological dispositions. If one acknowledges language itself as a complex life system, the linguistic tensions and instabilities, semantic ruptures, and self-similar variations in a work… invite comparison to fractal forms… The closer you look at
fractal models, or the natural phenomena they describe, the more (self-similar) details you see, the more complex things become. (153)46

The action of reading described here is in the form of synchronic growth, repetition, and re-rendering of meaning through linguistic reiteration and variation. Or, a journey over the surface of language and text. As will be shown, language becomes disturbed to reveal cultural and political contexts outside the text. The fractal complexity in California disrupts readings of history and politics, where the looming feminine disturbs the image of the ocean to “elaborate beneath her gown the most essential / sweet and watery matter” and “masters” not only complex fractal forms like the starfish, but the logic of science that categorizes an “Oreaster” via language.

Fulton also argues for the political in fractal verse: “Its ‘political’ explorations, structurally embedded, can retain subtlety. The gender of pronouns and the relation of linguistic figure and ground can provide formal mean of addressing cultural visibility and negation” (69). California can be read as a fractal structure that disturbs the phallocentric narrative “he” and reformulates images of femininity through the use of the feminine pronoun, and provides a re-reading of phallocentric relations to the sea, such as the male conquest of the sea and all things in it. The conquest of the sea and land by a singular hero is disturbed in California by a multiplicity of voices that rove the land and create a fractal system of representation rather than represent the land as wilds to be conquered. That the “coastline” of California was a site for phallocentric conquest and often imagined as a “her” or “she” to be dominated, makes Sikelianos’ individual feminine rendering of California important. Though California is given the feminine pronoun,

46 Interestingly, part of fractal theory was the study “coastline[s],” which lines up nicely with our study of California, its textual land and “coastline[s],”
there is a singular “her” that “elaborates beneath her gown that most essential / sweet and watery matter” and mixes with the sea. And, as noted, the Californian “her” dominates via language, the “Oreaster,” rather than through physical violence. The “elaboration” and mix with Californian coastal water further connects the feminine to a structure of complex and intermingled relation to the land in opposition to claims of ownership.

Fractal Form and Politics

The fractal nature of California, with its repetitions, disruptions, and reiterations, moves the reader through California, operating in similar ways plot and the episodic work in The Odyssey. Just as the singer of The Odyssey frames the narrative structure of The Odyssey as episodic, so the geometric and fractal references of California frame it in terms of fractal models. Patterns in California emerge as the text grows, and grows as in reference to the Oreaster. The chaotic and patterned nature of Sikelianos’ writing, and specifically how this operates in California, is revealed in an interview:

I don't know if I'd say I was after a unified theory of my own—but at the same time, the idea of a unified theory is often in my head, and I do believe, whether it's strings or waves or quantum gravity or thought or what—such a thing is at work—that all things are connected by the simple fact that forms of matter most often share patterns of structure and behavior, that larger governing systems probably do line up with that in some way or another. (How atom and dark matter and dark energy share amongst themselves has yet to be revealed.) But part of what intrigues me is that it perhaps cannot be apprehended by our usual measures—that

47 The repetition of the word “dream” and dream imagery, for example.
these systems elude us—and so I don't think I'd be able to think that there’s a simple explanatory principle applicable to everything. (334)

That Sikelianos did not set out to create a “unified theory” when writing *California*, but had a notion of a unified theory in mind, fits the fractal nature of *California* where discernible patterns within a structural and formal framework form while language shifts through multiple narrative, lyric, fragmented, personified, scientific, and colloquial registers to reflect a poetics that expresses what “cannot be apprehended by our usual measures” and meanings that “elude us.”

Ambiguous meaning-making, but overall cohesion, in *California* can be seen in the following passage:

In California we don’t say bodega except for the bay, we say market, which is what it is. We don’t say buttercup we say butter box or butter cut. I you say margarine, we bodacious we don’t say you be we say I is (14)

The enjambment of “bodega except / for the bay” is surprising in its redefinition of bodega, replacing a manmade, ethnic grocery with the natural landscape of the bay. The idea of a “market” in general is questioned; “market, which is what” becomes a question when read as a single line. Yet definition is redefined again when the sentence “we say / market, which is / what it is” comes together and a bodega, in the end, is what it is, a market rather than a bay. Interestingly, Spanish is not used in connection to the bodega, but like the widespread use of English, the bodega becomes a communal space inhabited

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48 Fractal verse here is a convenient way of labeling what Sikelianos mentions cannot be labeled.
by many. The fracturing of meaning-making across lines provides both multiple linguistic readings as well as an overall cultural reading. Enjambment shifts the tone slightly, but near the end of this verse phrase there is a definite grammatical shift, where the colloquialism “I you say margarine, we bodacious” has the flavor of Californian surfer life, connecting the shift in tone back to the bay or coast, as well as what might be heard in the colloquial of a non-native English speaker when the speaker utters “I you say margarine… we don’t say you be we say I is,” connecting the shift in tone back to the bodega. The intersection of these various tones implies a mixed neighborhood situated both around a bodega and within a bay area. This neighborhood, then, debates the correct usage of a food, butter. Here wordplay catches our attention and draws it to the materiality, or multiplicity of language. What butter is used for is less important than the various signifiers used to identify butter, as “buttercup” (not butter at all), “butter box” (shape of butter or a box for butter?), “butter cut” (is this a cut of butter?), or “margarine” (a butter substitute). None of the usages of “butter” is definitive, which yields a sense of banter associated with the polyvocal play of an intimate community, which is both fluid and held together by the constraints of community norms. Language meanders in a seemingly chaotic way, yet each reiteration of butter comes to expose fractal patterns that contain a specific Californian community. It is as though Sikelianos has taken the echoes of a neighborhood’s language, mixed it together on the page, and allowed the language to connect back to the site from which it originated. It should be noted that the place created here is one of mixed diction, yet still dominated by English and the unifying experience of being in California and the US. Structurally, through meandering and patterning, an
experience of California is created through association rather than by description or narration.

An obvious difference between California and The Odyssey is that California operates fractally whereas The Odyssey operates as an episodic narrative. Yet there are some similarities. The structure of The Odyssey doesn’t follow a linear path, but rather shifts in time and space as different narratives are told. Also, the highly metaphoric language of The Odyssey often disrupts the flow of the text. Homeric examples range from natural metaphors, “When primal Dawn spread on the eastern sky / her fingers of pink light” (19), to the example of extended metaphor concerning human life described in the landscape of Achilles’ shield in The Iliad. The scene mentioned above where Odysseus weeps over the memory of war is another instance of an interruption of the narrative, an aside that functions to echo Odysseus wandering, the horrors of war, and the male dominance of the heroic type. A kind of fractal forms where the metaphor of the weeping wife comes to represent the mourning Odysseus. The weeping wife metaphor is also tied to the end of The Odyssey, where the gods defuse the threat of violence between Odysseus and his kinsmen after the slaughter of the suitors. The difference between California and The Odyssey here being that California is constructed mainly of fractal patterns that disrupt linguistic cohesion, whereas The Odyssey meanders from its main narrative only to return to it to support the integrity of its episodic structure. Also, the victimization of the weeping wife in The Odyssey does not reflect injustices done to women, but rather reinforces male dominance. The disruptions in California, on the other hand, reflect disruptions done to phallocentric ideology.

Much of the metaphoric language in Homer is connected to the formal qualities of the oral tradition of story telling. For the authority on this, see Albert Lord’s Singer of Tales.
Linguistic Homecomings

The complex imagistic and linguistic structure of dream logic and fractal pattern in *California* brings representations of time and space together as Californian landscapes and history are navigated in tandem. This synchronicity allows for a fluid speaker, or speakers. Though multiple speaker positions make a heroic reading of *California* difficult, focusing on postmodern appropriation and play will allow for a reading of how heroic performance in *California* differs from Homeric heroic action, often considered traditional heroic action in an epic, as manifest in the homecoming trope.

An example of multiple speaker positions occurs when *California* opens with a high tonal register of epic invocation, while being in the cheapened context of “$35 worth of history.” The speaker then jumps through various images such as the landscape of “the known world” with its “Hi-summer, lo-summer… hordes of killer bees; smoking holes, haloes / on copper mines.”50 And, at the first occurrence of the first person “I,” yet more speakers emerge. Following “Haloes / on copper mines” comes “When I looked up it had already changed again— / No more fair, no flaxen clouds […]” (7). This point of view and time-lapse implies both an observation by a speaker/Californian, as well as time being marked by the land itself where copper mines change as well as cloud patterns as observed by the speaker/California. Moving from poet to Californian to California, the complex arrangement of speakers and voices becomes apparent. The idea of multiple speakers, then, can be exemplified by the notion of a speaker who is “planning on not

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50 The “Hi” and “lo” here resonate with changes in tonal registers, elevated and quotidian). In addition, “Hi” and “lo” can be associated with hi- and lo-fi recordings, which refer to the oral song (Homeric) and written text (here, postmodern) presentation of epic. For more on oral and written epic, see Albert Lord’s *The Singer of Tales*. For a more contemporary take on oral and written epic, see the anthologies *Perspectives on Epic*, Frederick, Strange, William, eds., and *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World: The Poetics of Community*, Beissinger, Margaret, Tylus, J., Wofford, S., eds.
being that person I was” (35). This is further complicated when the speaker/author asks “Listen: who’s creating the world / here, Eleni or opossums?” (58). That the author Eleni Sikelianos intrudes into the text with an opossum indicates an attempt to locate a central speaker is less important than experiencing the spatial multiplicity of “creating the world” through multiple, fractal perspectives. The authority of the poetic, authorial, or even textual speaker is decentralized and radiates from a conglomeration of Californian speakers articulating multiple voices. Without a discernable narrative structure, the voices of California are fragmented and associative, whereas the many voices and perspectives in The Odyssey serve the episodic nature of the text. Interestingly, various perspectives are part of both California and The Odyssey’s homecoming trope.

Where the narrator of The Odyssey uses the framework of the oral poet and narrates the heroic action of one hero through various perspectives, in California each speaker acts not so much with a goal in mind, but rather moves in flux within various perspectives. This postmodern decentering of the speaker operates to better “understand and (re)constitute the self, gender, knowledge, social relations, and culture without resorting to linear, teleological, hierarchical, holistic, or binary ways of thinking and being” (Flax 39). This spatially complex matrix of the speakers’ positions in space is complicated still further by the speakers’ positions in time.

Time is conveyed through lyric rather than narrative conventions in California, and coupled with history, renders movement synchronic in time and space. As the two pages entitled “Timeline” show, California’s history, from “12,500 years ago” to “currently,” can be compressed into 17 historical markers. These markers are a mix of

51 The speakers identified here are a sampling of the various speakers and voices present throughout California.
poetic lyric and appropriated historical and scientific text. Yet another example of relative time in *California* is exemplified in a more complex manner by a picture of Eleni Sikelianos as a child, most likely taken in California (72), who peers at the reader as well as the facing page, which reads, in part:

> I think it’s too late
> to make this poem
> into a specific traffic (pall
> of bright melancholy)
>
> to know where I falls
> on the inside or outside of time/space
>
> too late – the marked
> body
> of the land has
>
> submitted its own
> dream & question
>
> seize me a city from that pale corridor, the future, traveling headfirst [.] (73)

The “specific traffic” the poem cannot travel involves a linear notion of time and narrative. The speaker Eleni Sikelianos is given textually as a child in the photograph,
which indicates a collapsing of time between the child photographed and the adult writer of the lines on the facing page. This “melancholy” in the face of time’s non-fixity causes the speaker to structure the poem “outside time/space,” or synchronically. The land, California, itself is “marked” bodily by questions of “time/space,” as well as the body of the poet as a child photographed in the body of California, and must submit to notions of synchronic “dream” logic and “question” notions of linearity as child and adult face each other in the text. Yet, something does emerge from the loss of linear time/space, a hope for destination, “a city,” or organization. Yet, this, too, is elusive and becomes a fractal representation of being “outside time/space” by being in the future and always ahead of arrival while “traveling headfirst.” To delay the act of arrival both works to keep one moving in a perpetual state of the desire to arrive, as well as to make motion moot in the sense that arrival will never occur. As will be shown, Odysseus is also delayed in his homecoming, but eventually does arrive home.

That time and space are juxtaposed, synchronic, sometimes linear, and always questioned in language and image in *California*, draws a parallel to the postmodern language act. Self-conscious use of unstable language to express a complex world is often cited as a postmodern mode of expression. To draw a parallel to fractal verse, the notion of linguistic openness has been theorized in Lyn Hejinian’s notion of an open text:

Language itself is never in a state of rest. Its syntax can be as complex as thought. And the experience of using it, which includes the experience of understanding it, either as speech or as writing, is inevitably active—both intellectually and emotionally [….] It is impossible to discover any string or bundle of words that is entirely free of possible narrative or
psychological content. Moreover, though the ‘story’ and ‘tone’ of such works may be interpreted differently by different readers, nonetheless the readings differ within definite limits. While word strings are permissive, they do not license a free-for-all. (50-51)

The postmodern fragment works in California to break up language while breaking apart notions of linear time and cohesive space. And yet, as Hejinian points out, a sort of narrative can form when fragments are read together. These “word strings” come together to form the emotional and intellectual articulation of California, the story of California, through the use of multiple registers speaking synchronically. There are discernable fragments of narrative in California, as with the grandmother, that come together to form an overall story of Sikelianos’ California without using an overall cohesive narrative structure. Where language and narrative fragments, so too does the notion of a stable speaker. Taken together, these fragments of California work as a fractal, reflecting an overall multiplicity that makes up California as a whole.

In The Odyssey, Odysseus is constantly kept from his destination, and when he finally reaches home, he has yet to fulfill his promise to Poseidon of delivering an oar to a foreign land. The delay in The Odyssey, though, operates as a plot device and serves the movement of the story overall; whereas in California, delay operates to delay meaning on smaller scales, such as the line, stanza, and page, which eventually forms the overall story or articulation of California.

Inside and outside, emotion and intellect, time and space, all are brought to bear on each other through various tonal and structural registers in California. How these spatial and temporal organizations operate and differ in heroic performance in California
and heroic action in *The Odyssey* can be exemplified in a comparison of how they occur in the homecoming trope of each.

If California is represented as a dream, and the speakers in and of *California* journey through the typography and history of California, then the notion of coming home is expressed as a synchronic dream in time and space. The speakers’ heroic performance is to attempt description, to take the dream of California and “--Wrestle the damn dream down!” (33) into something comprehensible or presentable in some experiential and communicative way. Yet, because of a postmodern understanding of language, true representation is not possible. In *The Odyssey*, however, the image of home is at first obscured to Odysseus, only to be revealed when he comprehends that his home is in danger of being usurped by unruly suitors vying for his wife’s hand in marriage.

The speakers in *California* are in flux between departure and arrival from and to California. When the speakers leave California, they do so in idea or in a dream, and instantly arrive back in California as though home from a long trip. The ambivalence of departure and home allows the speakers to experience the familiar in new ways, which is reflected in the way language fluctuates between cohesion and fragmentation. California becomes emblematic of not only the speakers’ emotional and logical experience, but also of linguistic and cultural collisions. The act of language, in fact, becomes the speakers’ only form of action, a performance of utterance loose from narrative and spatial constraints, and that attempts to encompass the multiplicity of time and place. The speakers’ comfort with, and simultaneous estrangement from, home in *California* reflects the politics of postmodern familiarity and fragmentation, where the speakers can utter:

52 That is, the text presents itself under the terms of understanding that language is slippery.
California
was my glistening chapel
Westminster Cathedral, gothic
beach scenes to the west (23)

We are placed yet again in “California” as well as in the global and US “west” where the land is seen in prototypically Western religious terms, as a “glistening chapel,” perhaps wet from the “beach,” and “Westminster Cathedral.” Yet, the speakers also see the land as “gothic / beach scenes,” which expresses ambivalence towards sacred notions of land where the double meaning of “gothic” as both an architectural church design and a contemporary horror genre juxtaposes with the secular, quotidian beach image. The parataxis here also delays any sense of completion, or arrival. With ambivalence and parataxis is the compression of time and space, traveling the distance of California to Westminster Cathedral in London and back to the Californian beach, compressing a Western “gothic” and quotidian “beach” into the same space.

Lest the speakers in California become too comfortable with the gothic cathedral of the beach, a proclamation of rootlessness is made:

my heredity admiralship of Ocean Sea
in a swarm a storm, my restless
my rootless people
just as a bird is homeless
I am homeless too [.] (23)

The speakers align themselves with the ever-changing “Ocean Sea” turbulent with “a storm.” The vastness of this “heredity” leaves the speakers anonymous figures among the
many “rootless people” where the land cannot offer the comfort of home. The speakers enact and are caught in an ever-changing sea of language, space, and time and are in effect “homeless.” Or, the speakers continuously wrestle with place:

to be wrestled with for the world’s “more solid prizes, the ceaseless vehicle of tide”

I too will wrestle with the human hurricane, hulking black storm

--Wait, what is
“the human”? : the will, & “I have a hand”

that disintegrates into darkness (127)

Tossing about in the tide of the ocean evokes Odysseus’s ten-year journey home across the wine-dark sea, yet homecoming occurs very differently for him than for the speakers of California. The progress homeward for Odysseus is narrative and episodic and works toward conclusion, whereas “the human” and home in California “disintegrates into” a “darkness” of “the human hurricane” of multiplicity. Yet, the way Odysseus reaches home and how the land is presented is not as straightforward as might be expected of an episodic narrative.

Odysseus sleeps as the Phaiakian sailors deliver him home. The sailors are the first to see Ithaka, as narrated from the third person omniscient perspective. Geopolitics and myth intermingle with the description of the land:

Phorkys, the old sea baron, has a cove

53 Here sleep, and hence dream, robs Odysseus of agency, whereas in California dream is the world the speakers act within.
here in the realm of Ithaka; two points
of high rock, breaking sharply, hunch around it,
making a haven from the plunging surf
that gales at sea roll shoreward…
There, on the inmost shore, an olive tree
throws wide its boughs over the bay; nearby
a cave of dusky light is hidden
for those immortal girls, the Naides.
Within are winebowls hollowed in the rock
and amphorai; bees bring their honey here;
and there are looms of stone, great looms, whereon
the weaving nymphs make tissue, richly dyed
as the deep sea is; and clear springs in the cavern
flow forever. (232)

Bound up with the land are the politics of the sea, the sea tamed by those like “Phorkys, the old sea baron,” as well as local mythical “Naides.” In addition, Ithika is a place of wealth, where nature produces products such as “winebowls,” “amphorai,” “honey,” “tissue,” and clear spring water. This draws an interesting parallel to the perception of an exotic California. Where California was seen as a feminine wilderness to be tamed, here Ithaka is seen as feminine comfort. The land is rendered as a haven from the “plunging surf” and dangers of the sea, as a place of plenty and safety. Yet, when the sailors arrive, they place the sleeping Odysseus on the beach so that when he wakes, he doesn’t recognize his home. In effect, Odysseus’s homecoming is delayed by his confusion. Here
we see Ithaka from another point of view, Odysseus’s. Athena clouds Odysseus’s vision, giving him an obstructed, dreamy point of view, so that he sees nothing of the geopolitical or mythic: “The landscape looked strange, unearthly strange… paths by hill and shore, / glimpses of harbors, cliffs, and summer trees” (236). Without context, Odysseus sees his home as yet another hostile encounter to be weathered, much as California was seen as a land to be conquered. Ithaka begins to look like California’s “gothic” horror in its “unearthly strange” form.

Ithaka is next described to Odysseus by Athena, disguised a shepherd, as “no nameless country. / Why, everyone has heard of it, the nations / over on the dawn side, toward the sun, / and westerners in cloudy lands of evening” (237). Slowly the familiar Ithaka Odysseus knows comes into focus as the Athena tells him the land is called Ithaka and Athena lifts the dreamy fog from his eyes. Athena describes the land as described in the sailor scene, then Odysseus “kissed the earth, / and lifting up his hands prayed to the nymphs” (241). The confusion and disorder of home Odysseus experiences is reordered, the ground is hallowed by a kiss from its ruler and the mythological nymphs reinhabit the land. Dream in The Odyssey serves to hinder action, as the dream world in California delays action, but can also be awoken from, where the speakers in California act only in a dream world. From here, Odysseus enters the human world and eventually reclaims his kingdom. Where California sustains postmodern ambivalence and a distrust for closure that comes with the comfort of home, The Odyssey dabbles in multiplicity through various points of view, but must reclaim the land for phallocentric dominance and

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54 Here, a parallel can be drawn to representations of California as a western land to further support that Sikelianos turns the notion of a mythic land, a “Terrestrial Paradise,” on its head.
political stability. And even though Odysseus must eventually depart to fulfill his promise to plant an oar in a foreign land, the narrative of *The Odyssey* does not extend to this story and ends with Odysseus bringing order to his home. Where Odysseus can find comfort in home once his domination is reestablished, the speakers in and of *California* can find no stable relation to time, space, or expression. Where Odysseus can wake up, California is caught in a whirlpool of postmodern dream.

**Conclusion**

By putting *California* and *The Odyssey* side by side we can see how *California* operates in dialogue with epic tropes such as invocation and homecoming, but works through a postmodern lens to express linguistic ambivalence in order to critique stable notions of political hierarchy. When the textuality of *California* destabilizes language and subject positionality, it not only updates the structure of epic, but also destabilizes notions of the genre as phallocentric. As the subject position in *California* shifts, it becomes a subject under investigation. Hence, as Butler notes, “[t]he critique of the subject,” in many senses of the word, “is not a negation or repudiation of the subject, but, rather, a way of interrogating its construction as a pregiven or foundationalist premise” (9). The performance of subject in *California* in many ways takes on a fractal nature, where feminist critiques and linguistic slipperiness operate to interrogate political norms and linguistic stability. Where *The Odyssey*, the traditional epic, has come to represent a stabilized heroic type, *California* operates to destabilize the subject and subject matter and hence identify *California* as a postmodern epic in the political and linguistic sense.

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55 For more on the politics of epic see, for instance, Paul Merchant’s *The Epic; Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World: The Poetics of Community* Margaret Beissinger, J. Tylus, and S. Wofford, eds.; Norman Wacker’s “Epic and the Modern Long Poem: Virgil, Blake, and Pound;” and E.L. Risden’s *Heroes, Gods and the Role of Epiphany in English Epic Poetry.*
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