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Writing in Inclement Weather: The Dialectics of Comparing Minority Experiences in Threatening Environments

Vivek Freitas

This article forms a response to Bryan Cheyette's essay in this journal, "Against Supersessionist Thinking: Old and New, Jews and Postcolonialism, the Ghetto and Diaspora," and focuses on the dialectics of comparing minority experiences in a climate of implicit and explicit violence toward minorities. Agreeing with Cheyette's invocation of such threatening environments, I speak to what he characterizes as the importance of nonbinary thinking by gesturing to similar work unfolding in Black studies, specifically in the theorization of anti-Blackness and the work of Christina Sharpe. I end with a brief discussion of the Modern Jewish-Indian poet Nissim Ezekiel to focalize the practice of the comparative work between Jewish and postcolonial studies in threatening environments. I argue that Ezekiel's approach highlights the "fluidity" and in-built multiplicity of such environments, and so undermines the seemingly rigidity of violent and singular binaries.

Keywords: Bryan Cheyette, supersessionism, Christina Sharpe, anti-Blackness, Nissim Ezekiel, Modern Indo-Anglian poetry, minority literature

Bryan Cheyette's essay "Against Supersessionist Thinking: Old and New, Jews and Postcolonialism, the Ghetto and Diaspora" is a welcome caution for the many fruitful interactions already underway between Jewish studies and postcolonial studies, and which this journal has sought to theorize in recent issues.[1] Focusing on the ontological primacy of Jewish experience in ongoing comparative work, the essay critiques "supersessionist," "disciplinary," and "foundational" thinking in a wide range of comparative projects—from postcolonial studies to memory studies. Cheyette highlights how easy it is for these comparative projects to exhibit a "slippage into the crudest forms of analogical thinking" and argues for the need to "decentre Jewish history so that it can be perceived as unexceptional." [2] Furthermore, he gestures, via Adorno, to a negatively imagined space

Vivek Freitas received his PhD in English from Tufts University (2017) and teaches at Manhattan College in New York City. He is working on his first book project, *Looking Laterally: Cosmopolitanism and the Postcolonial Novel*. His research interests also include critical race theory, environmental humanities and environmental justice, and multi-ethnic British literature. (Email: vivek.freitas@gmail.com)

1 Bryan Cheyette, "Against Supersessionist Thinking: Old and New, Jews and Postcolonialism, the Ghetto and Diaspora," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Inquiry* 4.3 (2017): 424–39. See also Willi Goetschel and Ato Quayson, "Introduction: Jewish Studies and Postcolonialism," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Inquiry* 3.1 (2016): 1–9.

2 Cheyette, "Against Supersessionist Thinking," 426, 438.

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of possibility where "nuance" and critical thinking resist the temptations of the "binary, analogical and moralized world of political action which [quoting Aamir Mufti] the 'folks in Jewish studies' find themselves confronted with."[3] Resisting the pressure to participate in "the moralization of politics" is indeed what drives Cheyette's critique, and specifically "the pressure [from postcolonial studies] to take sides in relation to Israel/Palestine."[4] Instead, Cheyette argues, again via Adorno, for a "moral imagination" that can "acknowledge" the "compromised and impure humanity on all sides of a centuries old confrontation."[5]

My response to Cheyette's essay unpacks the significance of the pressure to "take sides" in the ongoing comparative projects between Jewish and postcolonial studies by highlighting the difficulties of writing this "imaginative" comparative work in perceived "threatening environments." Consequently, I speak to the importance of what Cheyette characterizes as nonbinary thinking, in "the academy" and "outside the academy," by gesturing to similar work unfolding in Black studies, especially in the theorization of anti-Blackness and the work of Christina Sharpe.[6] To do so is to emphasize the often deadly consequences of binary thinking and highlight why Cheyette's caution to resist the "moralization of politics" must indeed give us pause. I end with a brief discussion of the Modern Jewish-Indian poet, Nissim Ezekiel—an "ally of the dialectic" who insistently identified as both Jewish and Indian (postcolonial). I employ Ezekiel's poem "The Patriot" to focalize one way of engaging in the comparative work between Jewish and postcolonial studies.[7] An "Able Seaman," Ezekiel, in his last published book of poetry *Latter-Day Psalms* (1982), also insists on navigating the ever present "impure humanity" of one's threatening environment.[8] However, Ezekiel refuses to cower to the threat of binary thinking—"All that fuss about faith . . . the division of men into virt-/uous and wicked!/How boring and pathetic, but/also how elemental"— and defiantly focuses on the humorous profusion of multiple traditions at the heart of an emerging right-wing Hindu nationalism.[9]

The Weather

To read Bryan Cheyette's essay is to have the impression that "postcolonial studies" has two indubitable characteristics: polemical anti-Zionism and a "regressive" demand for political action.[10] There are, of course, several problems with such assumptions. For one, "postcolonial studies" is a remarkably broad field of study, variously applied to the criticism emerging out of practically every country in the world.[11] We might, however, along with Ato Quayson, agree on a "somewhat narrower deployment of the term" to refer to literature that "gains tremendous

3 Ibid., 425, 426.
4 Ibid., 426, 438.
5 Ibid., 430, 439.
6 Ibid., 425.
7 Nissim Ezekiel, *Collected Poems* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 244.
8 Vilas Sarang, *Indian English Poetry Since 1950: An Anthology*. (Mumbai: Disha Books, 2004), 18.
9 Ezekiel, *Collected Poems*, 260.
10 Cheyette, "Against Supersessionist Thinking," 425.
11 See Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," *Critical Inquiry* 20.2 (1994): 328–56.

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acceleration in the long 1980s when writers from the erstwhile cultural margins begin to regularly be awarded Nobel and other prestigious literary prizes."[12] Cheyette seemingly shares this narrower definition later when he characterizes something he calls an "institutionalized [postcolonial studies] in the 1980s and 90s" which, implied in the unflattering use of the word *institutionalized*, does not possess the "moral imagination" of "imaginative postcolonial writers" like Salman Rushdie, who were also publishing at this time.[13] Here, as with every instance of the term in the essay, "postcolonial studies" is subtly coded as undesirable, restrictive, and unimaginative.

The only evidence Cheyette provides for such an unflattering characterization is to quote another generalized claim from the editors of *Colonialism and the Jews* who write that "Jews and colonialism frequently became reduced to polemics over Zionism, flattening the issue rather than taking account of its nuances."[14] Given that explicit comparative project of placing Jewish studies in conversation with postcolonial studies is relatively new, it remains unclear who is "flattening the issue."[15] Yet the threat feels real for Cheyette and compels him to ask a standalone question following this quote—a perceived accusation that haunts the essay: "What use is nuance when urgent political action is needed?"[16]

The person who has arguably done the most, recently, to further this comparative project, Aamir Mufti in his book *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (2007) becomes the stand-in figure of this regressive, anti-Zionist, and politically obsessed "postcolonial studies."[17] Quoting from Mufti's interview with Ato Quayson in this journal, Cheyette fixates on a single sentence of Mufti's description of his next book project. Mufti wishes "to explore the horrific dialectical reversal [in the case of Israel] that can turn victims into perpetrators, or—I know this is explosive and painful for both peoples I am naming here—'Jews' into 'Germans.' "[18] Cheyette is quick to note that his "point is not that Mufti is reductively

12 Ato Quayson, "Comparative Postcolonialisms: Storytelling and Community in Sholem Aleichem and Chinua Achebe," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Inquiry* 3.1 (2016): 57, 58.

13 Cheyette, "Against Supersessionist Thinking," 430. Furthermore, Cheyette's distinction between an "institutionalized postcolonial studies" and "morally imaginative" writers like Salman Rushdie may indeed be an unsustainable one. As Neil Lazarus writes, "I am tempted to overstate the case, for purposes of illustration, and declare that there is in a strict sense only one author in the postcolonial literary canon. That author is Salman Rushdie, whose novels—especially *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*—are endless and fatuously cited in the critical literature as testifying to the imagined-ness—that is to say, ideality—of nationhood, the ungeneralizable subjectivism of memory and experience, the instability of social identity, the volatility of truth, the narratorial constructedness of history, and so on." Neil Lazarus, "The Politics of Postcolonial Modernism," *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, eds. Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton, and Jed Esty (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 424.

14 Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel, eds., *Colonialism and the Jews* (Bloomington, IN: Indian University Press, 2017), 2. Quoted in Cheyette, "Against Superseccionist Thinking," 425.

15 Cheyette similarly makes the distinction between early comparative projects conducted by writers from colonized countries and Jewish intellectuals immediately following the aftermath of the Holocaust, and the more recent comparative projects that attempt to bridge two "disciplinary boundaries." See Cheyette, "Against Supersessionist Thinking," 427.

16 Ibid., 425.

17 Aamir R. Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

18 Ato Quayson and Aamir R. Mufti, "The Predicaments of Postcolonial Thinking," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 3.1 (2016): 152.

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calling for unthinking activism . . . but the slippage into crudest forms of analogical thinking at this point in the interview is illustrative of precisely what is lost when critical thinking is replaced by actionism."[19] Without expanding on it here, I will simply agree with Cheyette that Mufti's work needs no defense against the charge of uncritical logic or indeed the charge of demanding unthinking activism.[20] Given that this one example from Mufti overshadows and colors the entire essay, however, we should note that "postcolonial studies" and Mufti are simply employed as bogey men—a ruse by which Cheyette can launch a broader critique of supersessionist thinking in the "academy."

Indeed, Cheyette is at his strongest when unpacking the "most important of the binaries"—supersessionism.[21] He is right to point out the "recent appropriation of so-called postmodern or theo-political Pauline theology by Agamben, Badiou and Zizek," as well as the troubling implications of their theorization of "eventicity," whereby, in the historical example, Jews are precisely what "Paul's conversion event" seeks to replace and cast aside as "old."[22] Here, rather than originating from the bogey man of "postcolonial studies," we have the first markings of what we might call, following Christina Sharpe, a "weather" of supersessionism.[23] Coupled with the recent global rise of the far right, and the election of Donald Trump to the American presidency, anti-Semitism, majoritarianism, and White supremacy are also more explicitly back in the public discourse with ever-present threats and acts of violence toward minorities. To point out, here, Donald Trump's easy relationship with Israel's far-right prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, is to, once again, seemingly force "the folks in Jewish studies" into a political and un-nuanced denouncement of the state of Israel. To unpack this relationship between, at first glance, uncanny bedfellows in Trump and Netanyahu, we might well look forward to Mufti's project that critiques "the militarized Spartan state . . . [which] can exist precisely by refusing to compromise with its actual human and social environment."[24] What we can say for sure, however, is that the pressure that energizes Cheyette's critique of binary thinking—supersessionism, disciplinary thinking, and foundational thinking—whatever its supposed origination, is indeed a force to be reckoned with in a climate of avowedly threatening and anti-minoritanism rhetoric.

Yet to characterize all political action in this climate as that which "evokes taking a swing" is perhaps a bit of an exaggeration on Cheyette's part.[25] Following "Adorno's critique of modern culture, one of the most thoroughgoing and pessimistic that we possess" leaves Cheyette, much like Fredric Jameson's assessment of Adorno's negative dialectics, with giving "an exaggerated and distorted importance to the moment of failure which is present in all modern thinking: and it is this overemphasis, more than anything else, which seems to account for the lack of political commitment."[26]

19 Cheyette, "Against Supersessionist Thinking," 426.

20 Cheyette praises Mufti's non-reductive analysis at a number of points in the essay. See, for example, Cheyette, "Against Supersessionist Thinking," 434.

21 Ibid., 427.

22 Ibid., 428. See also Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 102–03.

23 Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 106.

24 Quayson and Mufti, "The Predicaments of Postcolonial Thinking," 152.

25 Cheyette, "Against Supersessionist Thinking," 425.

26 Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 3, 59.

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Consequently, even when Cheyette attempts to "overcome this binary impasse"—the "this" referring to his enumerated preponderance of binary thinking in a number of distinct fields of study—through a recuperation of "interdisciplinary concepts which travel" like "ghetto" and "diaspora," he cannot help but "fail" or at least appear compromised.[27] With both terms, he remains stymied by the historical Jewish diaspora and ghetto as the "origin"/"classic instantiation" of both concepts, making his proposal "prey to supersessionist and foundational thinking."[28] Continually qualifying, therefore, that the use of his "traveling concepts" is not intended to "separate the history of the ghetto or diaspora into old or new," but to place these "histories in dialogue," one could argue, quite reasonably, that these concepts also display the very real *possibility* of "slippage into analogical thinking," leading us back to Cheyette's argument with Mufti.[29] But here is where I believe the vital importance of Cheyette's work lies: it is a profoundly serious example of the pressures and seemingly inevitable failure awaiting " 'good Jews,' on the side of angels," who are attempting to take a critical approach to the contemporary and unfolding connections between Jewish and postcolonial studies.[30] This pressure forces Cheyette into only one real possibility—the negatively imaged space where "critical thought" can insist on "nuance," and "overcome[ing] this binary impasse" "unexceptional dialogue" can take place.

Threatening Environments

Imagining differently for a moment what Cheyette's Adornian response to a "weather" of supersessionism and right-wing political ideology might look like, I would like to highlight another critical intervention to similarly characterized, threateningly binary environments—Christina Sharpe's recent book, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016).[31] For Sharpe, Cheyette's question, "Does the academy, in the twenty-first century, still have the authority to speak on such urgent political issues [which] . . . takes place outside the academy?," is irrelevant insomuch that as a Black scholar, the "weather" of antiBlackness is still ever present, "the academy" providing no protection—"In what I'm calling the weather, anti-Blackness is pervasive *as* climate . . . it is the atmospheric condition of time and place."[32] In this weather of anti-Blackness, where "Blackness become[s] the symbol, par excellence, for the less-than-human being condemned to death" and "Black deaths are produced as normative" in a wide range of public, private, creative, and political discourses, the threat to Black bodies is ongoing, omnipresent, and does not stop to verify a university affiliated identification card.[33] So when Sharpe directly and repeatedly writes about

27 Cheyette, "Against Supersessionist Thinking," 437.
28 Ibid., 437.
29 Ibid., 437, 439.
30 Ibid., 439.
31 In choosing Sharpe to place in a dialectical relationship with Cheyette, I take my cue from Cheyette, who, for better or for worse, focuses primarily on examples from US history and culture when unpacking the difficulties with and resonances of the terms *ghetto* and *diaspora*.
32 Cheyette, "Against Supersessionist Thinking," 425 and Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 106.
33 One need only recall the well-known incident where, in 2009, the noted Black scholar and Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. was arrested in front of his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His neighbors assumed he was attempting to break-in to his own house and called the police.

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her experience with Black death in her family, quoting Patricia Saunders, the "autobiographical example . . . [is] not about naval gazing, it's really about trying to look at historical and social process and one's own formation as a window onto social and historical processes, as an example of them."[34] Furthermore, unable to breathe, literally and metaphorically, and "living in the afterlives of slavery, sitting in the room with history, in a lived and undeclared state of emergency," Sharpe's book forms an investigation into the need for "at the very least, if we are lucky, an *opportunity* . . . in our Black bodies to try to look, to see."[35] It is easy, therefore, to see how Sharpe and Cheyette share a project of making legible the nuances of lived, minority existence, both in the academy and without.

Early on in the book, Sharpe draws particular attention to interactions and difficulties between approaches to making legible the horrors of the Holocaust and North American slavery in one of her classes, titled "Memory for Forgetting."[36] She writes, "When I taught the course chronologically, I found that many, certainly well-meaning students, held onto whatever empathy they might have for reading about the Holocaust but not for North American slavery."[37] Indeed, in Sharpe's experience US students are often unable "to think slavery as state violence" in a manner similar to their ready understanding of the Holocaust.[38] Consequently, Sharpe, changing her method and now "teaching the Holocaust first and then North American chattel slavery," is able, through analogy, to demonstrate how unlike the Holocaust, the "means and modes of Black subjection may have changed, but the fact and structure of that subjection remain."[39] In such moments of comparative study we glimpse less sinister and empathetic uses of what Cheyette critiques as foundational and supersessionist thinking. As Willi Goetschel and Ato Quayson, invoking David Suchoff, note, Jewish experience has often served as "a form of shadow discourse to substitute for confronting the challenges [of] various national agendas" and, for better and for worse, is never far for public consciousness.[40] Jewish experience, and Jewish suffering specifically, has therefore, come to be a powerful lens—a "liberating shadow discourse"—through which a number of minority groups have sought to refract their own experiences with the hope of being made legible to a wider audience.[41] Cheyette remarks on this "anxiety of appropriation," both in his essay during his discussion of Rushdie's use of Jewish characters and in his book *Diasporas of the Mind*, but is always at pains to highlight how the act of employing Jewish experience, despite its benefits, always culminates in an attempt to "transcend" Jewish history and consign it to be "in the past."[42] This ever-present threat is indeed also Sharpe's double bind of living in a

34 Quoted in Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 8.

35 Ibid., 100, 101. For Sharpe's discussion of "Aspiration" see 108-113.

36 Sharpe shares Cheyette's interest in the centrality of "forgetting" in accounts of both the Holocaust and North American Slavery. See Ibid., 69.

37 Ibid., 11.

38 Ibid., 11.

39 Ibid., 11, 12.

40 Goetschel and Quayson, "Introduction: Jewish Studies and Postcolonialism," 6.

41 David Suchoff, "The Hidden *Rabe*: Kafka's Openings and Beckett's Cage," *The Germanic Review*, 90 (2015): 124.

42 Cheyette, "Against," 432. Bryan Cheyette, *Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and Postcolonial Writing and the nightmare of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

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climate of anti-Blackness—the Black (Jewish) body is the most legible precisely at the moment at which it is to be annihilated, superseded, murdered.

Consequently, Sharpe, like Cheyette, also resists the "moralization of politics" and is hyper-ware of the very real dangers of being an "exceptional" body/peoples/historical example. So when Sharpe asks what it might be for Mikia Hutchings, a twelve-year-old Black girl, to be made legible in a the *New York Times* article about her disciplinary hearing regarding a school suspension, her argument "for Mikia to come into sight should not be mistaken as an argument for representation or representational politics."[43] Through what Sharpe calls "Black annotation and Black redaction," where Mikia's direct quotes, all of two sentences, are highlighted by "Blacking out" the text around her words, Mikia can only emerge through such "negative space." Indeed, much like Adorno's writing, Sharpe's genre- and form-bending work of criticism proceeds through a continual use of parataxis. Coupled with italicized definitions and quotes that interrupt, expand, rupture, broaden, and awaken the writing, her work demonstrates the difficulty, and necessity, of a space for Black life to emerge in a climate of "Black death." Writing of the death of Michael Brown, Sharpe writes, "The constant production of Black death *is* and *as* necessary returns us to the singularity. But just as the weather is always ripe for Black death, the singularity also produces Black resistances and refusals."[44] Part of that resistance is the refusal to participate in a political reality that is premised on and continually produces Black people as "no-citizen."[45]

The Hidden Openness of Tradition

In the last section of this essay, I would like to turn briefly to the Jewish-Indian poet Nissim Ezekiel as a way to focalize the practice of comparative work in a threatening environment—an approach that highlights the "fluidity" and multiplicity of such environments and so undermines the seeming rigidity of violent and singular binaries.[46] The first Indian poet to publish in English after India gained its independence in 1947, Ezekiel (first published in 1952) was *the* pioneer of Modern Indian poetry written in English. Some of his most controversial poems were part of the series titled "Very Indian Poems in English," where he attempted to mimic the patterns of Indian English—a deviation from his more customary iamb-inflected free verse—and for which he was widely judged to be mocking Indian English. [47] As the poet Arvind Krishna Mehrotra tactfully notes, "I think he wrote far too many 'Very Indian Poems in English.' "[48] In his own defense Ezekiel said, "In some poems, 'Indian English' poems, I'm not sneering, I am using the language actually used in [Bombay] city. In the case of [one such poem], I even showed the poem to the person concerned. He felt

43 Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 123.
44 Ibid., 124.
45 Ibid., 22.
46 Cheyette, "Against Supersessionist Thinking," 434.
47 Both Rushdie and Ezekiel were working on literary experiments with "Indian English" around the same time—Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* came out in 1981, and Ezekiel's experiments with Indian English first caused a stir with the poem "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S." in the collection *Hymns in Darkness* (1976). See Ezekiel, *Collected Poems*, 190.
48 Eunice De Souza, *Talking Poems: Conversation with Poets* (New Delhi: Oxford, 1999), 107.

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that it is the English we speak and hear around us."[49] Despite Ezekiel's claim of linguistic faithfulness, his poems are indeed quite humorous because they highlight the often funny linguistic idiosyncrasies of Indian English, which draws on structures of meaning-making from a wide range of Indian languages. This capacity for humor, arguably vital in our own comparative work, is an important part of what David Suchoff, in his analysis of a "Kafka's Jewish linguistic sources," calls "the hidden openness of tradition"—the notion that seemingly singular national-linguistic identities (in Ezekiel's case, Hindu nationalism) draws from a multiplicity of linguistic and cultural sources.[50]

In "The Patriot," Ezekiel gives us a speaker who, similarly, humorously draws from such varied sources as Mahatma Gandhi, Shakespeare, "Ancient Indian Wisdom," and the Indian daily *The Times of India*.[51] Notice, however, that central aspects of the poem also revolve around highly charged contemporary political events:

> I am standing for peace and non-violence.
> Why world is fighting fighting,
> Why all people of world
> Are not following Mahatma Gandhi,
> I am simply not understanding.
> Ancient Indian Wisdom is 100% correct.
> I should say even 200% correct.
> But Modern generation is neglecting—
> Too much going for fashion and foreign thing.
>
> Other day I'm reading in newspaper
> (Everyday I'm reading Times of India)
> To improve my English Language)
> How one goonda [thug] fellow
> Throw stone at Indirabehn. [Indira Gandhi, assassinated two years after this poem is published]
> . . .
> Friends, Romans, Countrymen, I am saying
> (to myself)
> Lend me the ears.
> . . .
> What do you think of prospects of world peace?
> Pakistan behaving like this,
> China behaving like that,
> . . .
> All men are bothers no?
> In India also

49 Ibid., 5.
50 David Suchoff, *Kafka's Jewish Languages: The Hidden Openness of Tradition* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 10, 12.
51 All the poems I discuss in this section come from Ezekiel's last book of poetry, *Latter-Day Psalms* (1982).

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Gujaraties, Maharashtrians, Hindiwallahs
All brothers—
Though some are having funny habits.
Still, you tolerate me,
I tolerate you,
One day Ram Rajya is surely coming.[52]

Unlike what we have seen in Cheyette's and Sharpe's analyses of threatening singularities, Ezekiel's depiction of an "Indian patriot" is suffused with a seemingly contradictory profusion of both "foreign" and Indian cultural and linguistic references. Yet the speaker is unperturbed by the contradictions, including that of espousing "tolerance" and claiming that all "men are bothers" while calmly pronouncing that "Ram Rajya"—the kingdom of the Hindu god Ram and rallying cry for the far-right Hindutva movement, which demands an "India for Hindus"—"is surely coming." Holding a mirror, as it were, to the world, Ezekiel deftly embeds the threat of fundamentalism into a largely "funny" poem, thus exposing the often hidden dialectical tension between a substratum of plurality that animates threatening singularities.

Indeed, Ezekiel's poems often willfully carve out space for multiplicity. "Latter-Day Psalms," for example, rewrites nine Psalms and undoes their desire for clear distinctions, say, between "the blessed" and "the scorned" in Psalm 1:

Blessed is the main that walketh
not in the counsel of the con-
ventional, and is at home with
sin as with a wife. He shall listen patiently to the scorn-
ful, and understand the sources of their scorn.

He does not mediate day and
night on anything; his delight
is in action.[53]

Here we see that Ezekiel's desire to "listen patiently" and think dialectically, rather than through the binary logic of exclusion, directly relates to his "delight in action." As a poet, this leads him later in the poem sequence to argue that "It is the story-teller who/ keeps saying that we did not/ keep God's testimony. He ne-/ ver learns that it cannot be kept" and "Perhaps the story-teller/ is to the blame; perhaps it is/ neither God's fault nor/ that of his chosen people."[54] I would like to end this essay with the suggestion that perhaps it is also our task, as storytellers in inclement weather, to follow Cheyette, Sharpe, and Ezekiel, and open up, rupture, and challenge narratives of singularity, but to do so politically, with humor, and with "a pleasurable form of heresy [that] keeps a straight face."[55]

52 Ezekiel, *Collected Poems*, 237–38.
53 Ibid., 252.
54 Ibid., 257.
55 Suchoff, *Kafka's Jewish Languages*, 203.

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