

A Possibility of Lyrical Progression: An Analysis of the Thing-power in Natasha Trethewey's *Native Guard*¹

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Abstract Natasha Trethewey is a former US Poet Laureate, whose third collection of poems *Native Guard* (2006) won the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. It is a book about her personal history, her mother's memories and the nation's memories during the Civil War (1861-1865). Through details such as photographs, daffodils, her mother's tombstone, a black soldier's palimpsest journal, a monument, etc., Trethewey depicts many "things" in the 26 poems in *Native Guard*. In light of Phelan's narrative progression (2007) and Bennett's "thing-power materialism" (2004), this paper argues a possibility of lyrical progression which is embodied in Trethewey's *Native Guard*. The poems are arranged in a sequence of three sections and form a flow of matter-energy both for the speaker and the readers, which gives impetus to the development of Trethewey's emotions and changes of her mood. The interactive dynamics between the poet and the readers construct the lyrical progression in the book.

Key words Natasha Trethewey; *Native Guard*; thing-power; lyrical progression

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Natasha Trethewey is a former US Poet Laureate whose collection of poems *Native Guard* (2006) won the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. It is her third book, after *Domestic Work* (2000) and *Bellocq's Ophelia* (2002). It was followed by two other collections of poems, *Beyond Katrina: a Meditation on the Mississippi*

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Gulf Coast (2010) and *Thrall* (2012). Trethewey's work has been read through the lens of history, memory, loss and biracial problems. A great deal of research has demonstrated her contributions to the African American contemporary Southern society, and poetic and women's literary traditions (Hall 2009; De Cenzo 2008; Debo 2008; Kim 2011; Turner 2012; and Davis 2011).

Native Guard is a book about Natasha Trethewey's personal history, her mother's memories and the nation's memories. It consists of three sections: elegies to Trethewey's late mother who died at the hands of her second divorced husband; a black soldier's documentary records about the erased history of the Louisiana Native Guards during the Civil War; and the poet's mediation on her own identity development as a biracial poet. Through details such as photographs, daffodils, her mother's tombstone, a black soldier's palimpsest journal, and a monument, Trethewey depicts many "things" in the 26 poems in *Native Guard*. The question arises why Trethewey positions all these concrete objects and places in the particular sequence she chooses and divides them into three sections of the book. If the structural design of this book reflects the dynamic progression of her lyrical experiences, it adds gradually to an emerging theme. This paper argues a possibility of a lyrical progression embodied in Trethewey's *Native Guard*. In light of Phelan's narrative progression (2007) and Bennett's "thing-power materialism" (2004), I would suggest that the "things" in this book, arranged in a sequence in the three sections, form a flow of matter-energy both in the speaker's and the readers' experience, which gives impetus to the lyrical progression. The following three sections will first introduce the theoretical scaffolding of "narrative progression" and "thing-power" for the proposal of a lyrical progression, and then focus on the three "things" and their effect on the speaker and the readers. The fourth and final section deals with the completion of the lyrical progression in *Native Guard*.

Phelan's Model of Narrative Progression

Borrowing Phelan's conception about narrative progression, this paper proposes that there exists a lyrical progression in poetry. Phelan does not spend much time discussing lyricism, for his main efforts are devoted to fictional narratives. However, at least twice in his works he has distinguished between a lyrical and a narrative progression (Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric* 1996; *Experiencing Fiction* 2007). Here I would offer a brief summary of Phelan's ideas on lyricism before explaining what "lyrical progression" means.

First, Phelan's rhetorical definition on lyrical poetry identifies two main modes: (1) somebody telling somebody else (or even himself or herself), on an occasion,

that something is — a situation, an emotion, a perception, an attitude, or a belief; (2) somebody telling somebody else about his or her meditations on something. This point differentiates the lyrical from the narrative. Unlike narrative poems, lyrical poems record the speaker’s thoughts and feelings. Second, in lyrical poetry, the authorial audience is less in the position of a judgmental observer, and more in the position of a participant. The readers are invited to adopt the speaker’s perspective in order to experience the change of the feelings in the speaker. This element of lyricity also depends on the absence of the distance between the implied author and the “I” of the poem. Third, the standard case of tense for lyrical poetry is the present. Lyrical poetry does invest in characters and events but mostly in their thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and specific conditions. Fourth, the dynamics of the audience’s response stems from adopting the speaker’s perspective without judging it (Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric* 33). Thus, the double movement of lyrical poetry is toward fuller revelation of the speaker’s situation and perspective; toward deeper understanding of, and participation in, what is revealed on the audience’s part (Phelan, *Experiencing Fiction* 3-6). Based on the above points, it is possible that there exists a lyrical progression as referring to Phelan’s narrative progression. While narrative progression emphasizes the interaction among the author, the text and the reader, a lyrical progression also has a two-way interactive communication process. Phelan presents a model in rows and columns so that, reading across, one can see how the two aspects of textual dynamics and the two aspects of readerly dynamics develop (Phelan, *Experiencing Fiction* 21).

Beginning	Middle	Ending
Exposition launch	Exposition Voyage	Exposition/Closure Arrival
Initiation	Interaction	Farewell
Entrance	Intermediate Configuration	Completion

There are three stages — beginning, middle, ending — and twelve aspects of narrative progression. The first two rows focus on the textual dynamics, while the third and the fourth rows focus on the activity of the authorial audience, or readerly dynamics. Based on Phelan’s ideas on lyricism and his model of narrative progression, we can formulate the following ideas of “lyrical progression” which may prove very useful in dealing with lyrical poems.

First, in a lyrical poem, there might not exist a distance between the speaker and the author. That is to say, the speaker fades back into the image of the implied

author. Just as in most of Trethewey's poems, the implied author is identical with the speaker and the poet herself. Therefore, the belief or thought of the speaker in a lyrical poem is always shared by the implied author and there is no ironical distance between them. Second, as there is no conflict between the speaker and the implied author, the readers' attention is directed towards the poem's thematic point and readers are asked to take in, understand, and contemplate the speaker's argument or thought for its own sake. Last, the poet presents an idea or an attitude in the poem, and the readers' response to the poem is not complete until readers pass some judgment of that idea or attitude. This judgment is not internal to the poem but external to it; it is part of evaluating what we are asked to take in, and, in effect, it is an evaluation of the implied author and the poem itself.

During the course of the lyrical progression, the beginning unit generates the movement by introducing the speaker's meditation on a topic, which will arouse the readers' attention or inspire a projection through which they can contemplate their ideas on the topic as well. The middle unit develops with ongoing communicative exchanges between the speaker and the readers. The textual dynamics and readerly dynamics collaborate with each other to build an intermediate configuration until the readers achieve an evolving response to the overall development of the speaker's mind and thought. The lyrical progression is completed in the end unit. The speaker experiences a movement of the change of her feelings and emotions, while it also affects the readers' attitude and thoughts toward the topic at the end. The whole poem provides an opportunity for the readers to experience and participate in the speaker's mental activity throughout the lyrical progression.

In Wordsworth's poem "I Wandered Lonely as A Cloud," the speaker's mood changes from the beginning to the end. The readers can sense the speaker's mood changes by interacting with the text. At the beginning, the speaker feels lonely and he wanders aimlessly upon the hill by the Lake District. Upon seeing the large patches of daffodils, he experiences surprise, excitement, relief and companionship. At the end of the poem, when the speaker comes home, his spirit connects with the daffodils and the Nature by reflecting on the relief from solitude daffodils bring to him. In the lyrical progression of this poem, the speaker "I," the implied author, and the poet can all be identified as one person. The poem also vividly depicts the speaker's psychological development. Within the communication between the textual details and the readers' schematic information, readers are initiated into understanding the speaker's feeling in the progression.

The poem "I Wandered Lonely as A Cloud" not only exemplifies the possibility of lyrical progression, but also raises other questions — if there is lyrical

progression, what would be the impetus of it and how does it push the proceeding of the movement? As in this poem, it is the daffodils that push the development of the speaker's emotion. Most of the time, humans are the active subjects in the world, but "things" like worms, birds, or a dead rat also have the capacity to "animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle" (Bennett 6). In the following section, it will be discussed that all matter is pulsing with life and the "thing-power" (Bennett 1-19) of the vibrant matter may function as the driving force for the lyrical progression in some of the lyrical poetry.

Bennett's Ideas on "Thing-Power"

Jane Bennett gives voice to a thing-power in her essay "The Forces of Things" and highlights the active role of nonhuman materials in public life (Bennett 2004). She quotes W. J. T. Mitchell, "Things, ...[signal] the moment when the object becomes the Other, ...when the subject experiences the object as uncanny and feels the need for what Foucault calls 'a metaphysics of the object'..." (Mitchell 156-157). Bennett wants to dissolve the binary between subject and object, showing objects are alive because of their capacity to make a difference in the world, to have effects, to shape the web of interrelationships of which they are a part. She also develops the "thing-power materialism" to explore the "less specifically human kind of materiality," to what she calls "thing-power." Bennett figures materiality as a protean flow of matter-energy and the "thing" as a composed form of that flow.

For Bennett, the thing-power has different kinds of effect on humans (the animate): the power that commands attention; the power of turning inanimate things into animate, to act, to produce dramatic and subtle effect; the power as an agency to make connections and form networks of relations; the power of being an *actant* — which does something, has sufficient coherence to perform actions, produce effects (Bennett, "The Forces of Things" 351-359). Bennett's thing-power theory confirms the "acting" power of inanimate things and in her thing-power materialism, the things have the power to move humans and they are also self-movers that have free will.

In Franz Kafka's short story "Cares of a Family Man," the protagonist Odradek is a spool of thread who/that can run and laugh. The animate wood exercises an impersonal form of vitality and it straddles the line between inert matter and vital life. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the writer depicts the thing-power through which she creates a horror effect. As mentioned in Bennett's essay (2004), the "thing-power" sometimes has a negativity, which makes itself known as an uneasy feeling of internal resistance. But this negativity is also the same matter from which

positive realizations emerge. In the following section, three things are selected from Trethewey's collection of poems — her mother's tombstone, a black soldier's journal and the Monument. All of them exert an ambivalent feeling on the poet's mind. At the same time, they also provide an opportunity for Trethewey to find a way out from the loss of her mother and develop her own cultural identity by reading and reflecting on the black soldier's work.

Things, Lyrical Progression and *Native Guard*

There are three things with negative powers in the book *Native Guard*: Trethewey's mother's tombstone in Section one; the black soldier's palimpsest journal in Section two; and a monument built by ants in front of her mother's grave in Section three. These three things in three separate sections in the book push the proceeding of Trethewey's confession on not tending her mother's memories well, with relation to the accusation of the nations' history erasure of the Louisiana Native Guards, and her struggling attitude toward her biracial southern poet identity. The appearance of three things in a sequence in the book marks the three stages of the progression: beginning, middle, and ending. In the following section, this paper aims to analyze the three things-powers and their effect on the speaker (the implied author/the poet Trethewey) and on the readers (both authorial readers and flesh-and-blood readers).

Through Trethewey's emotions toward her mother's death, her attitude to the nation, and her Southern experience, we see a great change from loss and ambivalence to forgiveness and love. This section focuses on the three "things" to analyze the lyrical progression of *Native Guard*. The analysis consists of four parts — description of the things; exploration of the thing-power; operation on two-way interactive communication; proceeding of the lyrical progression.

The first poem of the book *Native Guard* "Theories of Time and Space" is like an invitation sent from Trethewey to her readers to come and join her on a journey into the Deep South. The readers are like tourists, ready to take the ferry to a tourist spot. Literarily it is about a journey to an island near her hometown, Gulfport, Mississippi and she writes:

"Try this:

head south on Mississippi 49, one-
by-one mile markers ticking off

another minute of your life. Follow this
to its natural conclusion—dead end

at the coast, the pier at Gulfport where
riggings of shrimp boats are loose stitches

in a sky threatening rain” (Trethewey 1)

The speaker in this poem is not identified but it can be acknowledged as Trethewey herself. The poet recalls the journey before she wrote this poem and it was after she went with her husband and her brother to Ship Island. Her younger brother Brett had never been there and Trethewey wanted to show him the island. It is not the first time Trethewey went to the island and she noticed that during the tour there was no mentioning of the black soldiers who had been stationed and died there. The island is a symbolic place which not only refers to the exact site where the Louisiana soldiers were buried with no markers, but also refers to the Trethewey’s hometown and the South. During or after the journey, there is a moment that gives Trethewey a strong desire to write about being taken on the tour and being awakened to something (McHaney 58). That is why she writes:

“Everywhere you go will be somewhere
You’ve never been.

...

On the dock
Where you board the boat for Ship Island,
Someone will take your picture:

The photograph—who you were—
Will be waiting when you return.” (Trethewey 1)

This poem marks the beginning of the lyrical progression and the beginning unit proceeds to the end of Section one in this book. The exposition here is about the speaker’s background--she is familiar with the land for she was born here. She knows about the island and tells the readers that there would be someone taking photos of the tourists. The launch is the revelation of the speaker’s state of mind toward the South. When she says “everywhere you go will be somewhere/ You’ve never been,” she expresses her ambivalent attitude toward this land. But for the readers, the initiation is to read along the rest of the poems, which is like accepting Trethewey’s invitation to the South. The launch is the readers’ doubt and wonder

for the abstract ideas and figurative lines, which request both authorial audiences and the flesh-and-blood readers to assume the perspective of the speaker in order to experience similar emotions.

Tombstone

The tombstone in “Graveyard Blues” from section one is a further exposition of Trethewey’s emotions related to her mother’s death, discussed briefly above along with its negativity in terms of its thing-power. The inanimate thing — the tombstone, provokes a strong feeling of loss of one’s mother.

Graveyard Blues

It rained the whole time we were laying her down;
 Rained from church to grave when we put her down.
 The suck of mud at our feet was a hollow sound.
 When the preacher called out I held up my hand;
 When he called for a witness I raised my hand—
 Death stops the body’s work, the soul’s a journeyman.
 The sun came out when I turned to walk away,
 Glared down on me as I turned and walked away—
 My back to my mother, leaving her where she lay.
 The road going home was pocked with holes,
 That home-going road’s always full of holes;
 Though we slow down, time’s wheel still rolls.
 I wander now among names of the dead:
 My mother’s name, stone pillow for my head. (Trethewey 8)

The final image of this poem rests on the “stone pillow for my head.” The stone pillow here is a strong image of hard, or cold comfort to the poet. The combination of the phrase “stone pillow” not only tells the readers that her mother is dead with the word of “stone” to relate to the tombstone, but also inspires empathy among the readers for the poet who has lost her mother. The readers can imagine Trethewey laying her head down on her mother’s tombstone and deriving a kind of comfort from it. The tombstone also commands attention to the readers for more information about it for there is an ambiguity in the last two lines:

“I wander now among names of the dead:

My mother’s name, stone pillow for my head.” (Trethewey 8)

The poet was walking in the cemetery after she buried her mother. She passed by

those tombstones and it is possible that her mother's name is also one of these names. It is also possible that while she was walking among those dead names, there is no tombstone for her mother, so that she could only imagine that the pillow for her head is the tombstone for her mother because every night before her sleep, she would miss her mother. The tombstone creates a gap between reality and text; and the gap induces pain and suffering of Natasha Trethewey. Trethewey's mother was killed during a domestic violence incident involving her divorced second husband. For various reasons, when her mother was buried, there was no tombstone in fact. Natasha Trethewey recalled in an interview, because her mother was killed by her second husband, it would not be proper to inscribe the murderer's surname on the tombstone and it would not be right to put Trethewey's biological father's name on it either, for Natasha's younger brother would not agree. The truth is, there is no tombstone on her mother's grave. The gap between reality and the text generates energy to push the lyrical progression further.

So, the image is real in the second interpretation of the tombstone that Trethewey's mother does not have any kind of stone on her grave. There is no marker, no memorial at her grave, and Trethewey had lied about this. In McHaney's interview with the poet, she confesses that:

"It was stunning to me when I realized that I had, for the sake of one poem, told a lie and needed to fix it in another one." (McHaney 48)

Later, Trethewey writes another poem "Monument" as a testimony to her lie and about her not tending her mother's grave. It is at that moment that Trethewey realized these elegies to her mother could be in the same book with the Native Guards (McHaney 45). Her mother's history that had not been properly memorialized, remembered, and tended by someone native to her. Her mother is just like the black soldiers, for whom there is no monument. In a way, she and those soldiers were both erased from the landscape. Therefore, the progression moves to the next stage and also to the next section of the book.

At the beginning unit of the progression, this poem reveals to the reader the speaker, a daughter who lost her dear mother and her sorrow can be observed from the "stone-pillow" image. The readers are ready to listen to the sad story of the daughter. The poem "Graveyard Blues," combined with other poems in this section, provides information about Trethewey's late mother. Writing elegies to her mother for Natasha Trethewey is not only recalling her mother's memory but also exposing a strong traumatic pain in the daughter's heart.

Palimpsest Journal

In the second section of *Native Guard*, Trethewey writes about the erased history of a regiment of African American soldiers in the Civil War. They were stationed on the coast of Trethewey's hometown Gulfport, Mississippi. It is a coincidence for Trethewey to hear the stories of these soldiers. She had visited Ship Island many times never having seen any markers about this historic event. Trethewey is interested in the Louisiana Native Guard and she does research on the historical documents about these soldiers. These Native Guards consisted of freed slaves who were charged with guarding the white Confederate prisoners.

The discovery of Colonel Daniels's cross-written document records on a diary at the home of a Confederate inspires Trethewey to write the corona sonnet "Native Guard." It is a palimpsest journal written by a black soldier from the Louisiana Native Guards. He found the journal at one of the Confederates' abandoned homes:

"December 1862

...We take those things we need
 from the Confederates' abandoned homes:
 salt, sugar, even this journal, near full
 with someone else's words, overlapped now,
 crosshatched beneath mine. On every page,
 his story intersecting with my own." (Trethewey 26)

In the journal, there are not only words of the black soldier, but also the words of its original owners. The speaker in the poem is not Trethewey this time — it is the black soldier who is recording his personal history and the collective memories of the Louisiana Native Guards.

In the palimpsest journal, there are a lot of crosshatched lines where the literate black soldier writes letters for the illiterate Confederate soldiers. Trethewey felt it was ironic that the white soldiers were disadvantaged because of the lack of education, while this black soldier was ordered to write letters for them. It would be the soldier who would not only have the job to write home to the families of deceased Union soldiers, letting them know that they had died, but also who begin to write for these other white prisoners who wanted to send word back home. But these white prisoners do not trust him. They would write down something on their own like an X (In history the X was a legal personal signature of a person signing the document).

“*February, 1863*

...Some neither read nor write,
 are laid too low and have few words to send
 but those I give them. Still, they are wary
 of a negro writing, taking down letters.
 X binds them to the page—a mute symbol
 like the cross on a grave. I suspect they fear
 I’ll listen, put something else down in ink.” (Trethewey 27)

Bennett emphasizes the thing has power by “virtue of its operating in conjunction with other things” (Bennett 54). She further explains the world as a network of relations that “various materialities constantly engaged in.” Thus, when Trethewey’s mother’s tombstone creates a sense of loss and regret both in the speaker’s and the readers’ mind, it could also relate to the black soldier’s journal in a way. Trethewey’s mother does not have a tombstone and Trethewey confesses that she could have had one made but she didn’t. Writing the elegies to her mother, in a way, is erecting a tombstone for her. It is why Trethewey presents the documentary records of these erased soldiers’ history into the second section of this book. Writing it down erects the monuments to history (Haney 29). So Trethewey empowers a fictional character, the black soldier, as the speaker in this corona sonnet with writing and making history. This speaker not only keeps records of his own personal history, but also of the collective memories of the Louisiana Native Guards. The palimpsest journal connects with the tombstone and also with the monument in section three, since the action of writing is like erecting a monument. The three inanimate things interact with each other and give impetus to the lyrical progression in *Native Guard*.

In this middle unit of the progression, the speaker is not the implied author/the poet, but a narrator/a character in the poem. The opening line of this sonnet is “Truth be told” which is repeated in the last line. The speaker’s anger is expressed through the repetition as the implied meaning of “truth be told” is that the truth has not been told properly (Birdsong 107). It is also the accusation of the implied author/the poet, that the nation has not properly remembered the history of the Louisiana Native Guard. It has been mentioned previously that there is no marker on Ship Island where these soldiers had worked and been buried. At this dynamic level, the readers’ responses toward the speaker’s strong emotion changes along with more details of the documentary records. The soldier’s palimpsest journal reveals how these soldiers had been trained to participate in the war but later were required to do the dirty work, guard the imprisoned Confederates, and were finally killed by Union

soldiers. Readers are taken in by the records of the journal and empathize with these soldiers. The readers' evolving configuration of these soldiers' tragic memory takes shape from the onset.

The outstanding feature of "crosshatching" of the journal can be read as a metaphor of Trethewey's poetry which is the integration of her personal story, crosshatched with the public history of the soldiers (Turner 160). It is the thing-power of the palimpsest journal which could be linked to the writing of the whole book *Native Guard* and the collection of poems is itself a palimpsest. It is this matter-energy that motivates Trethewey to cross-write her own personal history of being a biracial southern poet with the history of the nation.

Monument

There are eleven poems in section three of *Native Guard* and the poem "Monument" is placed by the side of "Elegy for the Native Guards" right before the concluding poem "South." The monument is in fact a mound built by ants in front of her mother's grave.

Monument

"Today the ants are busy
beside my front steps, weaving
in and out of the hill they're building.
I watch them emerge and—

like everything I've forgotten—disappear
into the subterranean—a world
made by displacement....
At my mother's grave, ants streamed in
and out like arteries, a tiny hill rising

above her untended plot. Bit by bit,
red dirt piled up, spread
like a rash on the grass; I watched a long time
the ant's determined work,
...Believe me when I say
I've tried not to begrudge them

their industry, this reminder of what
I haven't done. Even now,

the mound is a blister on my heart,
a red and humming swarm.” (Trethewey 43)

In this poem, the speaker is the implied author and the poet Trethewey. She comes to her mother’s grave and notices that a group of ants are working on building a mound in front of the grave. For the speaker, the mound is like a tombstone, like a monument the ants build for her mother. The thing-power of the monument is a negativity which arouses pain in Trethewey. She confesses that she should have done the work herself but she didn’t, which explains how she feels when she sees the mound — “It is like a blister on my heart/a red and humming swarm” (Anderson 89). The speaker is making a judgment of herself, which also takes in the readers to evaluate the speaker’s judgment. As the only daughter, isn’t it a shame for not tending her mother’s grave properly and nor tending her mother’s memories well?

As Bennett’s thing-power materialism suggests, negativity is the same stuff out of which positive things emerge (Bennett 365). Another possible way to read the implication of the monument is to place it in the context of the entire book, not specifically in the context of tending the mother’s grave as a daughter. Trethewey’s writing elegies to her mother means erecting a monument for her. This poem is arranged side by side with “Elegy for the Native Guards” because this elegy is Trethewey’s erecting a monument for the Louisiana Native Guards as well. Thus, it can be read as the resolution of Trethewey’s regrets for not having done her duty and accusation of the nation for not tending well the Native Guards memories. In the ending unit of the lyrical progression in this book, the readers experience a dynamic turning before the farewell. The speaker’s negative feeling expressed in the text interacts with the readers’ evolving response toward the speaker, which brings the readers closer to the speaker. The following section will conclude the lyrical progression.

Completion of Lyrical Progression

Three sections of the book *Native Guard* seem to the readers as juxtaposition at first sight, but from the poet’s perspective, by analyzing the lyrical progression, we see there is a meaningful design in the book with the current sequence. This connection and relations of the three sections also embody the thing-power proposed by Jane Bennett.

This book is like a palimpsest itself: section three is the autobiographical story of Natasha Trethewey herself and it is cross-written with the elegies of her mother and the documentary records of the Louisiana Native Guards. Section three marks

the ending unit of the lyrical progression with Trethewey's own history of being a biracial southern poet. Trethewey finds the intersection is a gift and claims *Native Guard* is a book about intersections of white and black, north and south, slave and free (Turner 160). In another poem in this section, "Pastoral," Trethewey writes about her dream and in it she is taking a picture with the Fugitive poets and she pictures herself "in blackface" in the middle of the photograph.

"We're lining up now—Robert Penn Warren,
his voice just audible above the drone
of bulldozers, telling us where to stand.
Say "race," the photographer croons. I'm in
blackface again when the flash freezes us.
My father's white, I tell them, and rural.
You don't hate the South? they ask. You don't hate it?" (Trethewey 35)

By standing along with the Fugitives, Trethewey is interacting with the canon of Southern poetry not by creating something new, but by filling in the spaces in the tradition. Trethewey thinks her work is a synthesis of the tradition of Southern poetry and there is the theme of love of country in this case of the South—or of a desire to cling to it—despite all the pain and suffering and all the attempts at dispossession (McHaney 32). Finally, she resolves her struggling attitude toward the South, as she writes, "in my native land, this place they'll bury me" (Trethewey 46). The progression of Trethewey's attitude toward her mother's history, the nation's history and her personal history proceeds to a resolution in section three of *Native Guard*. This book is like a monument Trethewey is building with words and writing her mother's name, the Native Guards' name and her name on it.

Bennett believes the relevant point of thinking about the thing-power is a function of grouping (Bennett 354). The three things discussed in this paper are closely related with each other. The tombstone is an expression of Trethewey's mourning over her mother's death and connects with the palimpsest because both Trethewey's mother and the Louisiana Native Guards are forgotten and not remembered properly. The tombstone and the monument are also related to the ants' laboring work of building a mound in front of her mother's grave, which symbolizes erecting a monument for her mother. Trethewey's writing the elegies for her mother and the black soldiers keeping the palimpsest journal are both part of making history.

Last but not least, the lyrical progression completes its two-way interaction

communication process. The completion of the dynamic in the ending unit is marked by the readers' understanding of the title of the book *Native Guard*. "Guard" is from the first O.E.D. definition which is almost obsolete, that is "to take care." "Native" is used by Trethewey in "Native Daughter" that C. Vann Woodward uses when he talks about the early part of the twentieth century (Haney 29). It was the Daughters of the Revolution who were the Native Daughters, and they were the ones responsible for creating a lot of the public memory about the Civil War. They were erecting monuments, they were hosting events, remembrances and non-Daughters were excluded from this act of public memory making. The title of the book does not only refer the Louisiana Native Guards, but also to Natasha Trethewey as a native daughter, a native guardian to her mother and her memory; and to the nation's memory. At the completion stage, both for the authorial audience and the flesh-and-blood readers, after their evolving response toward the overall development of Trethewey's changes in her emotions and attitudes, there emerges a new sense of reflecting on their own identity as a "Native Guard" as well.

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