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Poetic Resistance: Monitoring, Policing, and Black Visibility in Contemporary Poetry

Michael Bakhtin characterizes poetry as monologic and exclusionary, by contrasting it in binary opposition to the novel as a genre and contends that poetry "suspended from any mutual interaction with alien discourse, any allusion to alien discourse," "destroying all traces of social heteroglossia and diversity of language." "The language of the poetic genre," he further emphasizes "is a unitary and singular Ptolemaic world outside of which nothing else exists and nothing else is needed" (1981, pp. 285, 298, 286). However, a closer examination reveals that poetry, much like any other literary genre, actively engages with and reflects paradigm shifts and contemporary realities. The 21st century marks what W.J.T. Mitchell terms the "pictorial turn," a shift where visuality becomes a central epistemological category. While time dominated the epistemological frameworks of the early 20th century and space defined the era of globalization, contemporary culture revolves around the omnipresence of images and their role in shaping perceptions. In this vein, poetry becomes a dynamic medium for visualizing systemic injustices and voicing resistance. Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric* and Morgan Parker's *There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé* exemplify this phenomenon, using textual and visual strategies to expose the hypervisibility and simultaneous erasure of Black individuals within cultural and political discourse. By interrogating surveillance and visuality, these poets shed light on how contemporary poetry fosters new forms of social and political awareness, challenging entrenched ideologies and redefining the boundaries of the genre. In particular, the works of Claudia Rankine and Morgan Parker subvert Bakhtin's claims by engaging deeply with the sociopolitical landscape of our time. Their poetry critiques the mechanisms of surveillance, policing, and the visual monitoring of Black bodies in a society dominated by racial inequities.

Works Cited

M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981),

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Short Bio:

Buket Doğan, received her BA. from Foreign Languages Education Department at Middle East Technical University in 2004. She completed her MA studies in English Literature at Middle East Technical University in 2008 and received her Ph.D. in the program of English Literature in 2018, at METU. She has been a visiting scholar at Columbia University, English and Comparative Literature Department, in the City of New York, USA 2011-2012. Her academic interests include contemporary and modern poetry, critical literary theory, and 20th Century British and American

Drama. She has been working as an instructor at Modern Languages Department at METU since 2014.