In the poetics of Otherness, risk is a priority. When a poem risks something, it puts its speaker on the line as a member of a marginalized, or Otherized, group. This group exists in direct conflict, and thus tension, with the Norm, or the non-marginalized group that is capable of oppressing the Other. The risk of a marginalized poet to write about their own body in a Normative world is that of putting themselves at risk of being oppressed. When this risk is realized, the speakers of their poems exist outside of Normative categories and thus create a divisive relationship between the speaker and the Norm, however it is represented. Through metaphors in poems, marginalized poets can take on any role they choose, allowing them to potentially transcend their marginalization and become a member of the Norm, or to reinforce their own Otherized nature.

Insects are considered far outside the Normative category. In many ways, insects are treated as being “as different from humans as an organism can be and still be of this planet.” Insects themselves “[have] always suggested Otherness” in being so far from other organisms in terms of their morphology and their appearances. This bizarreness is complicated further when an insect is compared to a human, or anthropomorphized. When bugs are turned into humans, the insect associations “are uncomplimentary.” Further, “the more we move toward insects and subject them to our anthropomorphic gaze, curiously the more difficult they are to ‘meet’ or grasp, and the further

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away from us they seem.” Thus, when bugs are associated with human beings, it is not only confusing to the Normative expectation of humanness, but also emphasizes the Otherness of the figure being turned into a bug.

This destabilization begs the question—what does it mean when a marginalized speaker takes on the role of insect? When someone is already considered Other, and then furthers their Otherness, they emphasize the characteristics that make them stray from the Norm. When marginalized people are “symbolized as a noxious insect (a metaphorical vehicle that simultaneously expresses alterity, powerlessness, and worthlessness), [this] group of human beings is classified as Other and thus dehumanized.” But when the speakers decide to dehumanize themselves, as Wittig states, they depict a “[c]onsciousness of oppression [that] is not only a reaction to (fight against) oppression. It is also the whole conceptual reevaluation of the social world, its whole reorganization with new concepts, from the point of view of oppression.” By reevaluating the world around them through Otherizing themselves, the speakers redevelop themselves as powerful figures who control their own oppression.

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WORKS CITED


