Neither East Nor West

Postcolonial Essays on Literature, Culture and Religion

EDITED BY KERSTIN W. SHANDS

▪ ENGLISH STUDIES 3

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Neither East Nor West:
From Orientalism to Postcoloniality

Kerstin W. Shands

> Postcoloniality is a condition requiring a cure,
> and the passage to that cure involves a return
> to buried memories of colonial trauma.
> (Rukmini Bhaya Nair xi)

When the Saudi Arabian author, Rajaa Alsanea, published her novel *Banat Al-Riyadh* (*Girls of Riyadh*), she did not expect it to be of interest outside the Arabic-speaking world. In the Author's Note to the English translation (2007) she explains that:

> It seemed to me, and to many other Saudis, that the Western world still perceives us either romantically, as the land of Arabian Nights and the land where bearded sheikhs sit in their tents surrounded by their beautiful harem women, or politically, as the land that gave birth to Bin Laden and other terrorists, the land where women are dressed in black from head to toe and where every house has its own oil well in the backyard! Therefore, I knew it would be very hard, maybe impossible, to change this cliché. (vii) [1]

Are Alsanea and many other Saudis right when they say that the old orientalist clichés and stereotypes are still with us in the twenty-first century? Have decades of migration, globalization (and postcolonial theory) had no impact on orientalist world views? Are latent and manifest forms of orientalism still with us in this era of postcoloniality, underpinning and justifying new imperialist pursuits leading to new formations of 'us' and 'them'? These questions, among many others, were raised at an international conference held at Södertörn University College in Stockholm in 2006. The present anthology consists of papers presented at that conference.

The 'orientalism' in the conference title refers, of course, to Edward Said's study *Orientalism*, the now classic work in which Said examined European discourses on the 'Orient,' "that semi-mythical construct which

[1] *Banat Al-Riyadh* was first published in Arabic in 2005. Contrary to Alsanea's expectations, she has "captured a vast constituency" and become "a bestselling author, the only chick-lit from the Arab world, and as such she has become a sort of spokeswoman for 21st-century Saudi women" (Thomas 14).

since Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in the late 18th century has been made and remade countless times" (Said 2003). Even though some orientalist accounts were admiring and even romanticizing, the orient was usually described as less developed, civilized, and rational, as a negative mirror image reflecting the self-described positivities of the occident. Said showed how the alluring and appalling image of the Orient was used to underpin and legitimize European imperialist and colonialist undertakings. Orientalist discourses built on binary oppositions contrasting the 'typical' features of East and West, dichotomies that were unequal in praising the West as more 'progressive' while viewing the Orient as static, non-progressive, or even backward. In sharp contrast to the supposedly rational and straightforward West, the East was painted in irrational and mysterious hues. Conscious or unconscious, the image of the Orient was a fantasy filtered through Western fears and desires. The Orient was as much an imaginary as a real territory, while Orientalism, well-intentioned or not, was a discourse serving imperialist and colonialist aims.

In the pre-postcolonial days of orientalist study, scholars were proud to call themselves orientalists, and the very term—the Orient—was associated with magic. In her 1993 preface to the Swedish translation of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Sigrid Kahle writes that in her youth, the Orient was revered as the cradle of civilization, and it was a place to which Kahle herself ardently wished to travel. In Sweden, the interest in the Middle East increased in the 1920s, in particular when a Swedish Orient Society was formed in 1924 with the aim of encouraging trade in the Middle East. For Kahle, to be an orientalist meant nurturing a wish to transcend boundaries, to see Europe from a much larger perspective, not so much to search for differences between peoples as to see what we share as human beings. However, according to Kahle, nobody today dares define themselves as orientalists since the word has acquired negative connotations (7).

Indeed, from a postcolonial perspective, it seems to be as reprehensible to be an orientalist as to be an imperialist. Not surprisingly, Rudyard Kipling tends to be exposed as the arch-colonialist par excellence, and his lines from "The Ballad of East and West" (1889), *OH, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall* meet," are quoted on all kinds of occasions as proof of a permanently unbridgeable gap (to the point that it has become, as Gayatri Spivak puts it, "an old slogan" [1995 xxiv]), even though the poem continues: "*Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgement Seat; | But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, | When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!*" Gender biases aside, then, there is an imagined future time of equality when East and West will meet, when boundaries of birth, rank, and geography will dissolve, and equals will stand "face to face." Surprisingly,

Kipling's 'arch-colonialist' poem seems to suggest that East and West are self-deconstructing mental constructs.[2]

So where are we now? Have we reached the stage when not only men but (strong) women, too, "coming from the ends of the earth," can stand "face to face" and proclaim that "*there is neither East nor West*"? Or are we still rehearsing the first line of Kipling's poem only, unwittingly reinforcing the idea that East is permanently East and West is forever West? Twenty-five years after the publication of *Orientalism*, Edward Said writes that although he might wish that the "general understanding of the Middle East, the Arabs and Islam in the US has improved," he finds that it has not. To the contrary, it is "quite common to hear high officials in Washington and elsewhere speak of changing the map of the Middle East, as if ancient societies and myriad peoples can be shaken up like so many peanuts in a jar." Said concludes that the 'us-them' binaries are still sadly in place and that "without a well-organized sense that the people over there were not like 'us' and didn't appreciate 'our' values—the very core of traditional orientalist dogma—there would be no war [in Iraq]" (Said 2003).

To say that nothing has changed is as fallacious as it is condescending, but change is slow.[3] In the new global landscapes in Europe, a multiculturalist celebration ranging from a quiet acceptance to a zealous celebration of difference is often held up as a solution to the conflicting us-them dichotomies arising in the wake of decolonization, migration, diaspora, and globalization. Some would see multiculturalism not so much as a positive principle as an unavoidable way forward even on pragmatic and economic levels. In two books in which he has used the term, the 'creative class' (*The Rise of the Creative Class, The Flight of the Creative Class*), Richard Florida has discussed the shift from industrial and information economies to what he calls a creative economy, the basic requirements for which are not only innovative technology and talented individuals but also, and primarily, a society that cultivates an open and tolerant attitude toward minorities, immigrants, and homosexuals. The more we study these questions, the more we realize how important the 'tolerance factor' is for success in the creative economy, according to Richard Florida. Ranked at the top of Florida's TTT Index, Sweden may seem like a forward-looking country infused with 'creative tolerance,' a place where postcolonial theoretical concepts have less relevance.

[2] Bart J. Moore-Gilbert's conclusion in *Kipling and "Orientalism*," a study in which he "explore[s] Kipling's relationship to the characteristic discourses of Anglo-Indian culture" is that "[f]or all the doubt and unease in his writing, Kipling, typically, is trapped by the political realities out of which 'Orientalism' emerged" (1986 1, 198).

[3] As concerns South Africa, to take one example, Achmat Dangor, the head of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, asserts in an interview in *The Cape Times* that "what seems to be missing is a consciousness by the government and the people that we are not going to overcome all our problems in a short time" (Adams 11).

But Swedish society is marked by ethnocentricity and Eurocentricity, and Swedish visions and practice of multiculturalism need to be scrutinized.[4]

At the same time, celeberations of alterity can end up re-exoticizing and re-objectifying 'other' people and products, concealing and reproducing imperialist power and prestige even in the process of criticizing it. Looking at postcolonial studies from a sociological perspective, Graham Huggan observes in the *Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001) that "academic concepts like postcolonialism" may be "turned . . . into watchwords for the fashionable study of cultural otherness." As postcolonial critics we may unwittingly contribute to a "global commodification of cultural difference," a process in which the postcolonial literature and culture we may wish to promote become cultural commodites that are part and parcel of a "booming 'alterity industry' that [postcolonial studies] at once serves and resists." Since there may thus be "varying degrees of complicity between local oppositional discourses and the global late-capitalist system in which these discourses circulate and are contained," Huggan finds it useful to make a distinction between 'postcoloniality' and 'postcolonialism' (vii).

While postcolonialism is a term that has been used primarily in discussions of the geographical areas of the former colonies of the British, French, German, and Portuguese empires, today, the term has turned out to have relevance in a much wider context. At least three-quarters of the world's population has been affected by colonialism and its aftermath. In their influential *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Helen Tiffin argue that any culture affected by colonization can be seen as part of a postcolonial geography, which would mean that the United States could be included among postcolonial countries (1, 2), something other critics have regarded with more skepticism. Øyunn Hestetun, for example, makes the important distinction in "The American Postcolonial and the Ethics of Cross-Cultural Reading" in *Identities and Masks: Colonial and Postcolonial Studies* (2001), that while post-independence American literature "declaring cultural independence from the former colonial center" could be seen as postcolonial, "the trope of 'writing back' to the imperial center . . . can hardly be regarded as significant" in "mainstream twentieth-century literature." On the other hand, for "writings generally referred to as minority ethnic, and immigrant literatures," Hestetun continues, a postcolonial perspective *can* be useful since "for the contemporary American context it makes more sense to relocate and rename the center of power so as to speak about internal colonialism and Euramerican dominance." Hestetun (following Vijay Mishra and Bob Hope as well as Arif Dirlik), rightfully warns against an all-inclusive

[4] Christian Catomeris has suggested that in Sweden, the immigrant has been made into the 'other' against which 'real' Swedishness can be formed, a process in which the media have played a not inconsiderable part. See Christian Catomeris, " 'Svartmuskiga banditttyper'—svenskarna och det mörka håret," in *Orientalism på Svenska* ("*Orientalism in Swedish*") ed. Moa Matthis (Stockholm: Ordfront, 2005), 20-55.

postcolonial perspective where "the literatures of settler populations are put into the same category as the literatures of colonized peoples" (2001 21).

'Postcoloniality' is not located at the opposite end of a temporal spectrum beginning with colonialist conquest. As John McLeod has pointed out, "'postcolonialism' is *not* the same as 'after colonialism', as if colonial values are no longer to be reckoned with. It does *not* define a radically new historical era, nor does it herald a brave new world where all the ills of the colonial past have been cured" (33). Rather, as this anthology suggests, postcoloniality is a time period and condition marked by the challenges of difficult change and complicated continuity within an unpredictable mix of pre-, anti-, post-, and neo-colonial elements. Postcoloniality might be defined as a time and mindset occurring after the historical time of colonialism, a time when the colonial, decolonializing, and postcolonial processes and effects can be expressed and examined in literary and political narratives. Bart Moore-Gilbert's definition remains a useful point of departure, perceiving postcolonialism as a 'reading practice' related to a multi-dimensional continuum of past and present colonialist- and imperialist-inflected power relations and "understood as preoccupied principally with analysis of cultural forms which mediate, challenge or reflect upon the relations of domination and subordination—economic, cultural and political—between (and often within) nations, races or cultures, which characteristically have their roots in the history of modern European colonialism and imperialism and which, equally characteristically, continue to be apparent in the present era of neo-colonialism" (1997 12).

Whereas postcolonialism has been developing and diversifying in several ways, something our conference and anthology testify to, it has also institutionalized itself and established new hierarchies, part of which is the development of what postcolonial scholars have called the 'high theory' of works by Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha. In her introduction to the 2005 edition of *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba asks what meaning the term 'postcolonial' has today. On the one hand, she writes, postcolonial critics are accused of being esoteric; on the other hand, they supposedly do not understand the complexity of contemporary global politics. Postcolonialism is deemed to be too radical, and then again, it is not radical enough. In this case, how valid or useful are 'postcolonialism' and 'postcoloniality' as terms? Is postcolonialism on its way to becoming limiting and old-fashioned? Is it, like feminism, moving towards making itself obsolete? Rukmini Bhaya Nair's response in *Lying on the Postcolonial Couch* (2002) would be a resounding yes: "Postcoloniality awaits consignment to oblivion" (xi). Similarly, colonialism itself, as Stefan Jonsson has argued, is a project that has to remain a half-measure: if the 'civilizing mission' had been completely successful, the Empire would very quickly have lost its *raison d'être* (340, my trans).

Although 'postcolonialism' and 'postcoloniality,' as Graham Huggan explains, are "inextricably interconnected," the first-mentioned refers to "localized agencies of resistance" and the second "to a global condition of cross-cultural symbolic exchange" (ix). Postcolonialism may be seen as "an anti-colonial intellectualism that reads and valorises the signs of social struggle in the faultlines of literary and cultural texts," an intellectualism that resides within "and is bound up with postcoloniality" (6). Most importantly, for Huggan, "ostensibly *anti*-colonial writers/thinkers are all working, some of them conspicuously, within the *neo*colonial context of global commodity culture" (7).[5] Other critics, such as Arif Dirlik and Kwame Anthony Appiah, have to some extent conflated postcoloniality and postcolonialism, Dirlik arguing that postcoloniality is "appealing because it disguises the power relations that shape a seemingly shapeless world and contributes to a conceptualization of that world that both consolidates and subverts possibilities of resistance" (584), and Kwame Anthony Appiah, similarly, arguing that "[p]ostcoloniality is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a comprador intelligentia" (qtd. in Dirlik 584). "Postcolonial studies," writes Graham Huggan, "it could be argued, has capitalized on its perceived marginality while helping turn marginality itself into a valuable intellectual commodity" (viii). Aijaz Ahmad goes even further in his imploding critique of postcolonialism, arguing that in the end "everyone gets the privilege, sooner or later, of being colonizer, colonized and postcolonial—sometimes all at once" (qtd. in Huggan 2).

While being aware of the limitations as well as the institutionalization of postcolonial studies, the papers in this anthology show that a postcolonial perspective is still useful. As Ania Loomba concludes in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, postcolonial studies, with all its limitations, has managed to place European imperialism in relief. Furthermore, despite the institutionalization and the self-seeking, commodifying, commercializing, and neo-colonializing forces, the field of postcolonial studies, as Graham Huggan rightfully observes, "has provided a catalyst for some of the most exciting intellectual work to be seen today" (1). Perhaps, as Ato Quayson puts it in *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Proceess?* (2000), postcolonial studies concerns not so much a series of events as a process of multiple origin—not only in the experience of colonialism but in all kinds of progressive or radical challenges in Western society and discourse. Recognizing that

[5] Postcoloniality, then, "is a value-regulating mechanism within the global late-capitalist system of commodity exchange," according to Huggan, who argues that "in the overwhelmingly commercial context of late twentieth-century commodity culture, postcolonialism and its rhetoric of resistance have themselves become consumer products" (6), because "[p]ostcoloniality's regime of value is implicitly assimilative and market-driven: it regulates the value-equivalence of putatively marginal products in the global marketplace. Postcolonialism, by contrast, implies a politics of value that stands in obvious opposition to global processes of commodification" (6).

the effects of colonialism are by no means eliminated or eradicated, and quoting Peter Childs' and Patrick Williams' argument that 'postcolonialism' is 'an anticipatory discourse, recognizing that the condition which it names does not yet exist' but is one we are moving towards, Ato Quayson suggests that postcolonialism can be "perceived as a *process of postcolonializing*" (9). Even though he underlines that postcolonialism may have its limitations in throwing very different cultures and countries together under the same rubric (such as Brazil and Nigeria), he argues that it is still a useful theoretical perspective in emphasizing "the notion of the centrality of colonialism for understanding the formation of the contemporary world" (10). Postcolonialism can then "be seen as a project to correct imbalances in the world" (11). For the time being, then, postcolonialism and feminism can be seen as still viable concepts addressing conditions that are constantly changing and evolving.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri suggested in *Empire* (2000) that societies everywhere are interpenetrated by global forces as "the nation-state has less and less power to regulate these flows and impose its authority over the economy" at the same time as there is a "new global form of sovereignty" that Hardt and Negri call "Empire," "composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule" (xi-xii) and "characterized fundamentally by a lack of boundaries" (xiv). Despite the globalizing forces, one of the main tasks of postcolonialism may be to provincialize Europe, as the title of Dipesh Chakrabarty's book *Provincializing Europe* suggests. Firstly, provincializing Europe would mean recognizing and dealing with anti-western and occidentalist perspectives. According to Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit in *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies* (2004), "East's fantasies and assumptions about the West have not really been explored. What do we know of oriental or occidental stereotypes of the West? How do we understand the dehumanized picture of the West that emerges, making the West into a 'machine society' marked by 'sterile Western rationality'"? Occidentalism is perhaps more often focused on America than on Europe, perceiving "Westernism" as a corrupting influence that undermines spiritual and cultural values. The West, in this view, is intolerably rootless and crassly commercial, with the Western mind capable of achieving goals but less good at finding the *right* ways of getting there.[6] Buruma and Margalit write that:

> The attack on the West is among other things an attack on the mind of the West. The mind of the West is often portrayed by Occidentalists as a kind of higher idiocy. To be equipped with the mind of the West is like being an idiot savant, mentally defective but with a special gift for making arithmetic calcu-

[6] Even someone as celebrated in the west as Dalai Lama has made critical statements about the West. In an interview in 2006 he stated that people in the West "have become too self-absorbed" (17). "The West is now quite weak," he said, "it can't cope with adversity and has little compassion for others" (Thomson 20).

> lations. It is a mind without a soul, efficient, like a calculator, but hopeless at doing what is humanly important. The mind of the West is capable of great economic success, to be sure, and of developing and promoting advanced technology, but cannot grasp the higher things in life, for it lacks spirituality and understanding of human suffering. (75)

Secondly, provincializing Europe would include confronting what Menakshi Mukherjee (1996) has seen as an anti- or postcolonial over-reliance on European conceptual frameworks to formulate anti-colonial responses. Thirdly, a provincialization of Europe would involve the realization that, as Elleke Boehmer puts it, "what is frequently ignored in postcolonial criticism is the difficulty or otherness of the postcolonial text: the implications for us as readers of its possibly untranslatable cultural specificity" (238).[7] According to Sam Durrant in *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J.M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison* (2004), this is what postcolonial writers such as Coetzee, Harris, and Morrison do: "Instead of seeking, like Orpheus, to wrench the other into the light of day, to render her fully present, they teach us how to remember the other's irretrievable difference" (14). Postcolonial critics need to pay renewed attention to the otherness of the other. Arguing that a "post-imperial critical discourse [like orientalist scholarship] can be presumptuously all-embracing or totalizing in its responses to the various and the mysterious in other cultures" and that "from the point of view of its own assumed cultural centrality, the discourse takes what it needs for its own theoretical purposes, and disregards what is seen as 'incomprehensible,'" Boehmer also points out that "[i]t is widely taken for granted that post-imperial cultural diversity is not only comparable across regions, but is all more or less equally transparent and accessible to a European or North American reader": so that "different historical worlds of meaning can be exposed to one another merely by a leap of imaginative empathy" (240, 238-39).

In the field of literature and literary studies, leaps of imaginative empathy are, of course, tremendously important. Literature is a space where inner and outer worlds can be imagined with empathy and where inner and outer experiences of those worlds can be articulated in narratives ranging from the reassuringly realist to the formally sophisticated and defamiliarizingly innovative. Literature is a place where subjective and collective truths can be voiced, where a restorative re-imagining and re-inventing can take place, and where elusive and complex issues of deep significance to us as human beings can be explored without the need to prove points, empirically or quantitatively. Postcolonial theory and criticism is a counterpart in responsive dia-

[7] As Graham Huggan puts it: "Postcolonialism might thus be said to exist within the hybrid spaces opened up by cultural translation; it attests not to the transparency or accessibility of different cultural representations but, on the contrary, to the incommensurability—the untranslatability—of culture itself" (26).

logue with postcolonial literature. As Robert Young has expressed it so well, postcolonial theory is

> distinguished by the value and attention it gives to the personal and the subjective, which is why . . . its institutional origins were often located in literature departments which provided the solitary space within academic institutions where subjective forms of knowledge were taken seriously. Before postcolonialism, for example, there were plenty of histories of colonialism. But such histories rarely considerered the ways in which colonialism was experienced, or analysed, by those who suffered its effects. (Young 2001)

Postcolonial literature in English is important because it enables us to listen to and participate in a cross-cultural and multi-voiced dialogue. Introducing new aesthetic norms and modes of appraisal and challenging notions of English exclusiveness, postcolonial writers are laying bare submerged histories, bringing minority interests and ethnic diversities to the forefront, and reconfiguring cultural forms and ways of life previously relegated to the periphery. Although English is now the lingua franca of the globalized republic of the privileged, having been adopted by powerful interest groups within the mass media, popular culture, advertising, and information technology, postcolonial literature may well expand the scope of English and turn it into a less imperialistic global lingua franca by embracing and responding to literary contributions from culturally diverse areas.

Along with an attention to representation and narration comes a focus on language, both as regards the role of indigenous languages and debates of mono- versus multilingualism. "One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language," according to Ashcroft, Tiffins and Griffith (7), who suggest that English must develop and diversify and let other 'englishes' depict postcolonial experiences in new ways. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is an interesting case in point: looking back on his creation of a new language, Achebe says in an interview in 2007: "I knew I couldn't write like Dickens or Conrad. My story would not accept that. So you had to make an English that was new. Whether it was going to work or not, I couldn't tell" (Pilkington 5). A renewed attention to language is important, and if we remember that a majority of the population in some African countries cannot read or write, the practical work of civic organizations to promote literacy must be regarded as an urgent matter. Moreover, with India as an example, Rukmini Bhaya Nair reminds us in *Lying on the Postcolonial Couch: The Idea of Indifference* (2002) that there is a gender aspect to literarcy:

> Women's roles in the narrative of postcoloniality have been characteristically divided. Less than half the women on the subcontinent are literate, and India is one of the few countries in the world where, as a result of enforced malnutrition, female infanticide, and dowry abuse, there is a significant gender im-

> balance. At the same time, modern India has had upper- and middle-class women who have wielded great political as well as literary power—the most famous examples being Indira Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu. (xxiii)

A focus on translation is crucial, too. Critics such as Tejaswini Niranjana and Gayatri Spivak have pointed to the dangers of conventional notions of translation with particular regard to the translation of Third World literature into English, Niranjana reminding us that, far from being just "an interlingual process," "[t]ranslation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism" (8, 2). When Raoul J Granqvist in his paper on translation for this anthology ("Translation as an Emancipatory Act?") looks back upon the "pre-postcolonial" English department, wittily described as "an isolated enclave of prescribed modalities, standards, canons, and area-dependent normalcy, down to scrupulous apprehensions about British parliamentary procedures and the distribution of vowel stress," he finds that English departments in Scandinavia have in fact moved away from a "neo-colonial exclusivity" in recent decades. The teaching and translating of English has undergone a dramatic development, from the linguistic imperialism imposing on all learners a "received pronunciation," and from translation as a "politics of transference" where "language meets language" to translation as a more interactive form of communication that goes beyond the purely linguistic to embrace a much larger cultural framework that includes politics and economics as well as "indigenous voices speaking many dialects," making it "an embedded translation." Giving a striking example of translation as metaphor (as in John Donne's "Elegy XIX. To his Mistris Going to Bed"), Granqvist's illuminating and challenging paper also discusses Swedish translations and deconstructive re-writings of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* Suggesting that culture itself is translation, Raoul Granqvist sees translation as an act of "metonymic cross-writing."

In *The World, the Text, the Critic* (1991), Edward Said writes about how theory travels in a "circulation of ideas" that occurs because of "unconscious influences, creative borrowing, or wholesale appropriation," a movement that "is both a fact of life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity," because, as Said puts it, "what is critical consciousness at bottom if not an unstoppable predilection for alternatives?" (1991 226). Pointing to the circulation of ideas flowing from Lukacs to Goldmann and to Raymond Williams and to the dissemination of the ideas of Foucault, Said sees stages of assimilation, adaptation, and transformation in a circulation that easily and insidiously lends itself to rigidification, cultural dogma, and new institutionalizing walls that "[dull] the consciousness, convincing it that once insurgent theory is still insurgent, lively, responsive to history" (1991 247). Still, the risk of rigidification should not make us shy away from theory. Instead, in Said's view, we "should look at the circulation and solidification of ideas

and theory with scepticism and faith and "preserve some modest (perhaps shrinking) belief in noncoercive human community" (1991 247).

In a paper on "Excursions into the Literary Territories of the Other," Øyunn Hestetun explores travelling tropes as applied to literatures promoted and read globally, with particular regard to the new literary and conceptual worlds opened up for readers. While Hestetun's point of departure is Native American literature, her discussion of encounters with "textual Others" can be fruitfully applied also to other indigenous or postcolonial literature. Hestetun's paper raises a number of questions that are as difficult as they are urgent regarding readers' and critics' (and literature teachers') ways of approaching "the textual territories of the Other." Chiasmatically claiming that just "as literary texts are culturally produced, they also—in their own ways—produce culture," Hestetun's questions take on an ethical dimension in her suggestion that not only *responsive*, but also *responsible*, readings are called for. Drawing on Paul Ricœur's hermeneutic perspective, on Althusser's and Jameson's (political) unconscious, and on Louis Owen's request for a mind-changing Native American literature, Hestetun's paper, on the one hand, strongly urges us to avoid textual idealism: we need to ask ourselves "to what extent [our reading could] be construed as a (neocolonialist) project that might ultimately serve to reaffirm and consolidate preconceived ideas." On the other hand, Hestetun suggests that, if we take on the challenge of venturing into the literary territories of the Other towards conceptual horizons "where we might be encouraged to do some radical rethinking of the world we inhabit," literature *can* indeed be transformative.

It has been said that the past is another country, a place where touring can be enlightening in painful or positive ways. As Rukmini Bhaya Nair puts it: "Postcoloniality is a condition requiring a cure, and the passage to that cure involves a return to buried memories of colonial trauma" (xi). Similarly, in *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning*, Sam Durrant claims that "postcolonial narrative presents itself as a mode of mourning, as a way of consciously working through history"; indeed, "[t]he idea of narrative as a form of communal address takes on a particular resonance for the writer who attempts to bear witness to histories of exclusion" (11, 13). Mariangela Palladino's paper on Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) focuses on Morrison's insistence on a conscious engagement with the past, even when this is painful. Even though Morrison has said of her novel that "the characters don't want to remember, I don't want to remember, black people don't want to remember, white people won't want to remember," her novel shows how the failure to remember leaves us disempowered. Positing Beloved as a Christ figure, Palladino suggests that Morrison points to the betrayal of the collective memory "implicit in the postmodernist isolation of the Holocaust as the single defining moment that horribly illuminates the bankruptcy of the Enlightenment project" and argues that Morrison, "fusing an (inverted) version of the Christian tradition with the narrative of African-American history

. . . problematizes our notions of the resources of Postcolonialism." Morrison's use of Christological imagery has so far remained unexplored, according to Palladino, who, drawing also on flower imagery and numerology, uncovers correspondences that suggest that "as a sacrificed black, female Christ, Beloved becomes a focus for Morrison's concern with redemption through memory." Palladino's paper shows how postcolonialism challenges postmodernist ideas of the 'end of history.'

"The word diaspora suggests a line between two places—somehow a permanent displacement, always travelling and never fully feeling as though you have arrived," as Gina Wisker puts it in *Key Concepts of Postcolonial Literature* (2007 92). A paper on "Power Transformations of the Gendered Subject in Three Stories from Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*" by Karin Möller discusses a short story collection by Jhumpa Lahiri, a writer of Indian descent who has grown up in America. Linked to the Indo-American diaspora, the short stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* originally had a subtitle: "Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond," and they have been oxymoronically regarded (by Ketu H. Katrak) as "ethno-global." Intrigued by the "beyond" of the original subtitle, Karin Möller proposes that it "is meant to denote not only geographical extension but also the troubled complexity of a particular nexus of space and time in post-colonial, postmodern time." There is a narrative coherence to the stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* as well as a recurrence of themes and motifs. Looking at the development of three female protagonists, in particular (two of them indigenous Indians and one an Indo-American), and focusing on the transformations that occur, Möller finds that "[r]epresentations of female agency (or lack thereof) in these stories provides a basis for how we could understand some of the factors that have been instrumental in clearing the road to an ethno-global 'beyond.'"

Three female characters are also in focus in Rose Bloem's paper, "The Spectre of the Other in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and Nadine Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature*," novels that, according to Bloem, deal with a threatening 'female otherness' that ranges from the enigmatic to the demonic. In *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979) charted new feminist territory in their systematic search for "the threat of the hag, the monster, the witch, the madwoman" that, according to them, has been present in five centuries of literature and that "still lurks behind the compliant paragon of women's stories," a figure that is essential to understand since "women writers are both identifying with and revising the self-definitions patriarchal culture has imposed on them" and since "it is usually because she is in some sense imbued with interiority that the witch-monster-mad-woman becomes so crucial an avatar of the writer's own self" (79). The 'witch-monster-mad-woman' is celebrated in *Madwoman in the Attic* in the sense that, as Gilbert and Gubar put it, "from a female point of view the monster woman is simply a woman who seeks the

power of self-articulation" (79). In Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, it is Bertha Mason, Rochester's mad wife, who is the demonic Other. For Gilbert and Gubar, she is the 'madwoman in the attic,' Jane's avatar who does what Jane herself secretly dreams of doing, such as express her fury and be "violent and self-assertive" (359, 363). In this Anglo-American feminist reading, Bertha becomes "Jane's truest and darkest double" (360). Bringing in a colonial aspect, postcolonial critics have added another angle to the analysis, Gina Wisker, for example, proposing that "[b]y demonising Bertha, the Creole heiress, as a madwoman who nearly brings down Rochester's home and is a threat to Jane, she replays the ways in which colonial history was silent about the origins of British wealth" (160).[8] Further, in *Confluences: Postcolonialism, African American Literary Studies, and the Black Atlantic*, John Cullen Gruesser argues that *Wide Sargasso Sea* is not only a rewriting of *Jane Eyre*, but "a postcolonial and feminist re-vision on *Othello*," because *Othello* "concerns such matters as empire, colonization, slavery, race relations, miscegenation, and the male desire to control the female, and these are precisely the subjects addressed by Rhys in her novel" (32). Not only does Gruesser perceive striking similarities in terms of plot, he argues that "in each text a character from the mother country gains the trust of a colonized subject and uses this trust to destroy the Other's sense of him- or herself" (33).[9] It is Gruesser's contention that "[r]eading the novel primarily in relation to a single canonical text, that is, *Jane Eyre*, as postcolonial critics up to now have done, has made it difficult for them to account adequately for the racial theme" in *Wide Sargasso Sea.* Linking the constellation of Victorian views of race and gender in *Jane Eyre* (1847) to fears of and fantasies about a demonized and depraved colonial Other who does not and cannot speak for herself, not only to the reversal (through the voice of a creole Other) in the writing-back-to-the-empire narrative in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), but also to a third novel, Nadine Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature* (1987), Rose Bloem adds the racial perspective to the discussion called for by Gruesser. Gordimer's female protagonist is regarded as a 'sport of nature' because of her refusal to comply with the racist norms of white South Africa. While it is in this 'deviant' Otherness that she resembles the protagonists of Brontë's and Rhys' novels, there is a difference in Gordimer's "postcolonial depiction of the female Other" in that the protagonist renames herself and

[8] Wisker argues that "[g]iven her historical location, Bertha cannot achieve selfhood and awareness but must emerge a victim of cultural disempowerment. However, the rewritten narrative, Rhys' version of *Jane Eyre*, gives an insider exploration of Antoinette/Bertha's view, one view produced by colonised peoples, literally enabling readers to re-read history and cultural expression through the lens of the marginalised, disempowered, maddened and silenced Other" (160, 161).

[9] Although, as Gruesser points out, "[a]s a colonized Other deceived by someone from the metropolitan center, Antoinette resembles Othello; however, as a wife falsely accused of betraying, and then unjustly destroyed by, the man she married, her fate reenacts Desdemona's" (36).

"deliberately creates a new perception of self." In doing so, she becomes a part of a future-oriented, non-racist, new South Africa.

If America could be said to evince varieties of internal colonialism, South Africa has suffered from a double colonialism, one external, stemming from colonial conquest in the nineteenth century and the other internal and related to apartheid. Many South African writers have drawn upon this history of double colonialism and apartheid, among them J. M. Coetzee, Zakes Mda, Zoë Wicomb, Mandla Langa, Lewis Nkosi, Elleke Boehmer, Jeanne Goosen, Jo-Anne Richards, and Pamela Jooste. Contemporary South Africa continues to be haunted by the past. In a paper called "The Fantasia and the Post-Apartheid Imagination: History and Narration in André Brink's *Devil's Valley*," Osita Ezeliora explores the writings of one of the most prolific writers from South Africa, Andre Brink. Brink has published a great number of scholarly and creative works since the fall of official apartheid. Some of the novels published since 1994 are: *Imaginings of Sand* (1996), *Devil's Valley* (1998), *The Other Side of Silence* (2002), *Before I Forget* (2004), and *Praying Mantis* (2005). In a number of essays, Andre Brink has called for a 're-invention', 're-visiting', or 're-imagining' of history in the representation of post-apartheid South Africa. In focus in Ezeliora's paper is the kind of the magical, fantastical narrative mode used by Brink in *Devil's Valley*. Following Stephen Slemon, Ezeliora suggests that this kind of magic realism can be regarded as a postcolonial genre. Both realist and supernatural, *Devil's Valley* delves into the abysmal verticalities of racial and gendered repression in a fictional reconfiguration of South African historiographies. Ezeliora explores the Brinkian aesthetic from the point of view of the fantastical narrative mode and suggests that as a representational strategy, this narrative form, featuring many postmodernist aspects of irony and formal textual play, is a significant manifestation of the novelistic appropriation of colonial and apartheid spaces in South Africa's post-apartheid fiction in English.

If South Africa has suffered a double colonization, this could also be said of India. Who depicts the lives of the Others of the Others, those who are marginalized by the marginalized? Among the many Indian writers who have attempted to do so is Mahasweta Devi, whose strong social conscience and commitment to the welfare of the tribal community, the Harijans and the wretched, have made her into one of the most prominent contemporary women writers writing in India today. Born in 1926 into a family of writers and culture workers, Mahasweta Devi, who, according to Gayatri Spivak (who has translated some of her work), mixes the high-literary style of older Bengali literature with tribal language, has come to be regarded as one of India's most radical writers. In Bengali newspapers and journals, she has

written articles in support of tribals and their rights.[10] "I am wary of the West," Mahasweta Devi says in an interview with Gayatri Spivak. She underlines that "[t]he tribal population of India is about one-sixth of the total population of the country" and yet the tribals in India have not been part of decolonization, even though "they have paid the price" (ix, xi). Proposing in "Frames of Marginalisation in Mahasweta Devi's *Outcast: Four Stories*" in this anthology that Mahasweta Devi's stories can be read as "the voiced articulations of the tribal 'Others,'" Debasish Chattopadhyay suggests that Mahasweta Devi's "voice does not simply ventriloquise the plight of those at the edges of civilization, but goes deeper to analyze and reflect upon how the power structures that engender marginalization are replicated in the texture of the society of the marginalized." *Outcast: Four Short Stories* deals with the fate of four women characters who, belonging to the 'Other' world, are doubly marginalized and looked down upon even by those who are usually regarded as marginalized in Indian society.

Postcolonial criticism often detects and deconstructs the binary opposites inherent in power relations such as other-self, margin-center, and colonizer-colonized. In a discussion of colonial Indian fiction, Debendra K. Dash and Dipti R. Pattanaik, analyzing the nineteenth-century Oriya novel, *Six Acres and a Third* (*Chha Mana Atha Guntha*) by Fakirmohan Senapati, do find such binaries operating, but with a surprising narrative detachment. Since Fakirmohan Senapati was a colonial subject, Dash and Pattanaik ask, "why does [he] create a narrator who is so ubiquitous within the narrative yet so elusive when one tries to locate his real sympathies?" When Fakirmohan Senapati was born in 1843, the costal districts of Orissa had been occupied by the British for forty years, and British imperialism had brought immense changes in social structures and world views by the time he began publishing. His 'literary activism' was a response to the imposition of colonial administrative and cultural structures on a tradition-bound society, according to Dash and Pattanaik, who assert that Fakirmohan's response, like that of many disempowered colonized subjects, was ambiguous. At the same time as he realized how British habits, tastes, culture, developmental ideology and world views were corroding the existing, tried-out mores of the natives, he saw how colonial rule brought order into a society on the verge of disorder. Unlike many Hindu nationalist writers or the champions of the colonial rule of the period who either imagined the recovery of a Hindu arcadia by eliminating the Muslim and Christian (British) aberrations or openly welcomed the developmental models introduced by the colonial administration, Dash and Pattanaik conclude that Fakirmohan did not see the world in terms of conventional binary oppositions. While ridiculing the arrogance of the

[10] She says: "Wherever there is exploitation, I report it immediately. I write directly to the pertinent ministerial department. . . . I think a creative writer should have a social conscience. I have a duty toward society" (Devi xvi).

'civilising mission,' he also pointed to the superstitions, vulgarity, and meanness of internecine local conflicts. Fakirmohan Senapati reserved his most acidic observations not for the colonizer whose behaviour was, after all, fairly predictable, but for the growing compradore class and the hangers-on, all of whom were all too easily co-opted by the colonizer.

An important part of postcolonial literary criticism and theory has been the questioning of the established canon of English literature, even though, as Homi Bhabha has put it, "[t]he canonical 'center' may, indeed, be most interesting for its elusiveness, most compelling as an enigma of authority" (xi). The canon of English literature has been inextricably bound up with the Empire, and its world views and notions of power and domination have involved a derogation of indigenous peoples that has often been racist in nature. Even celebrated classics such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* have been criticized for their demeaning depictions of the Other. Chinua Achebe's scathing critique of the racism in Conrad's novel, for example, is well-known. The canon of English literature has ranked 'Other' literatures below itself. Commonwealth literature, for example, as John McLeod writes, "was really a sub-set of canonical English literature, evaluated in terms derived from the conventional study of English that stressed the values of timelessness and universality" (14). Canonization, of course, continues apace through critics' selection and celebrations, or rejections, of new publications. Looking at the canonization of postcolonial literature, Sarah Brouillette argues in *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (2007) that "several things characterize the postcolonial literature that achieves the greatest success in the current market: it is relatively 'sophisticated' or 'complex' and often anti-realist; it is politically liberal and suspicious of nationalism; it uses a language of exile, hybridity, and 'mongrel' subjectivity" (61). Literary prizes play an important role in the process of selection and canonization, a prominent example being the Man Booker Prize, awarded to outstanding fiction since the end of the 1960s. The prestige and promotion of and ambiguous role of the Booker prize has been scrutinized by postcolonial scholars and the "discrepancy . . . between the Booker's postcolonial winner and the company's high colonial background in the Caribbean sugar trade" has been noted (Huggan xii).

Indian literature, important in the English-speaking literary world for a long time, seems to have been particulary favored by the Booker Prize, something that has led scholars to wonder if this pre-eminence could be seen as linked more to a superficial, commercialized attraction to the exotic than a sincere wish to learn about 'Other' cultures. Indeed, as Amit Ray points out in his paper in this anthology on "'Indianness' and Contemporary Cosmopolitan Fictions: Of Bookers and 'Spice' and Everything Nice," the Booker Prize "bears the name of a European multinational that owes its existence to colonial domination and is, arguably, still guilty of neo-imperial practices." Why, then, the "disproportionate emphasis on India" among the authors

nominated and selected for the Booker Prize (among them Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy)? Analyzing the intricate interrelationships between literature, cultural fields and institutions, on the one hand, and capitalist production and consumption, on the other, and comparing the initial patterns of selection of the Booker Prize to that of the early Nobel Prize, Amit Ray, in disagreement with Aijiz Ahmad's argument that the commercial success of postcolonial literature undermines its political (anti-colonial) message, suggests that "[i]f we read the act of consuming 'Otherness' in literature as a venture in Western narcissism, we risk negating the materiality of those representations" and thereby, possibly, losing touch with "the moments when 'otherness' comes to the fore in the established metropolitan institutions of Literary production" that "can allow for an increasingly nuanced historiography of the consolidating, centralizing, conflicted and impossible project of rationally ordering and narrating a human life-world."

Issues of identity, such as the effects on identity of racial and gender discrimination, of dislocation and relocation, of exile and homecoming, are prominent themes in postcolonial fiction. One chapter in this anthology, "Identity Crisis in V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*" by Kumar Parag, finds that the crisis of identity in postcolonial societies often seems to be more important than any other question. In the Caribbean context this issue has been acute. While the social identities of people are rooted in their culture, one's identity at an individual level is formed by personal dreams and achievements. In order to achieve a sense of completeness it is necessary to fuse individual and social consciousness, something that is even more difficult in a colonial society like Trinidad. V.S. Naipaul, a diasporic writer who received the Nobel Prize for literature in 2001, is a product of this very society. One of his critically acclaimed works is *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), a novel depicting East Indians' struggle to find a foothold in the New World. On several levels, the novel is a fictive version of Naipaul's family history. The protagonist, Mohun Biswas, tries to overcome the limitations imposed on him by putting up a relentless struggle against the forces that aim to suppress his individuality. The manifest theme is the identity crisis, but on another level the cultural clashes within and the gradual disintegration of the East Indian community forms the major preoccupation. According to Parag, Mr. Biswas' house is "a central, unifying and integrating metaphor [representing] a search for emancipation from dependence." Although Naipaul's novel has an autobiographical motif, in a deeper sense it succeeds in transcending the individual self by universalizing issues of alienation and rootlessness in a postcolonial world. Parag's paper is an attempt to analyse the problems of identity crisis, displacement, and disintegration as well as the effects of colonialism on the culture and psyche of the colonized.

The role of the media in representations of local and global contexts is another increasingly important area in postcolonial studies. Today, the media is a major component in definitions and descriptions of culture, and our un-

derstanding of the role of the media is crucial for an understanding of power and domination. For example, the media can elevate some values and positions by positive coverage while eliminating others by denying them voice. In Denmark in 2006, the role and rights of the media and the representation of ethnic and religious groups in European news were widely discussed following the ill-advised publishing in *Jyllands-Posten* of what has subsequently been known as the 'Mohammed cartoons.' "Nothing in history has threatened Muslims like the Western media," writes Akbar S. Ahmed in *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise* (1992 223). Ahmed asserts that "Muslim parents blanch at the modern Western media" "because of their malignity and hostility towards Islam" (243).[11] Taking Indian media as a case study, one of the papers in this anthology, "Globalization, Muslims, and the Indian Media" by Mirza Asmer Beg, argues that Muslims in India are disadvantaged when it comes to opportunities to articulate views about their own realities. Instead, their experiences and world views are reported through hostile and distorting filters. One consequence of this is that peace-loving Muslims become unjustly conflated with the very small minority who are rather more fanatic than they are religious. Muslim men are regarded as the oppressors of women who, in turn, are stereotyped as victimized, imprisoned, and enslaved. As to the supposedly 'medieval' and misogynist Islamic laws, Mirza Asmer Beg suggests that they be compared to the misogynist views espoused by some Hindu priests and some orthodox rabbis. Furthermore, the concept of divorce in Islam is often distorted in the media, according to Mirza Asmer Beg, whose paper goes on to analyze contemporary images and stereotypes of Muslims and Islam in the Indian media as they occur in reports on the number of Muslims in the Indian army, Muslim oppositions to a Uniform Civil Code, and Hindu and Muslim population growth.

Racism in Europe, as Masoud Kamali has pointed out, has always had links to religion. This was the case with twentieth-century anti-semitism, and this is also the case in the twenty-first century, although today, Muslims tend to be the main target of hostilities (12). While religion and the sacred have not been prominent matters in postcolonial studies until recently, they are now important items on the postcolonial agenda.[12] One reason for the post-

[11] Kenan Çayir writes in *Islamic Literature in Contemporary Turkey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) that with Islam becoming "a global political and cultural phenomenon," various books and articles try to explicate "the religion and its apparent convulsed state," one example being John Esposito' book *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions* (2002) whose questions ("Why are Muslims so violent?" , "Are women second-class citizens in Islam?" or "Is Islam compatible with modernization?") "exemplify a discourse on Islam informed by their writers' powerful identification with the West" (xi, xii).

[12] This is evident in many new titles in religious studies from a postcolonial perspective. In their Introduction to *Postcolonialism, Feminism, and Religious Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 2002), for example, Laura E. Donaldson and Kwok Pui-lan, editors, write that while issues concerning religion and colonialism have been addressed in postcolonial studies, "[t]he interactions among colonialism, gender, and religion constitute some of the most sig-

colonial resistance to religion is no doubt the methods used by Christians in their so-called civilizing missions. Christianity has been used as a colonizing tool, something that is eloquently depicted in Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart*. In contrast, postcolonialism has been secular, at times Marxist and at times nationalist, but rarely spiritual in impulse. While spirituality has been a conspicuous characteristic of new age thinking for decades, it is now becoming a more central feature in postcolonial studies. Postcolonialism, in other words, may be in the process not only of provincializing Europe but also of desecularizing itself, something that is not without pitfalls since the very terms 'religion' and 'sacred' are problematically imbued with western presuppositions.

Throughout history, the links between religious world views and the worldly exertion of power have been multiple and intricate,[13] something that recent studies in religion have shown, and a postcolonial approach wishing to include voices hitherto submerged under Eurocentric political and religious rule has become more prevalent. But, just as the celebration of marginality may involve a commodification of literary and cultural products stemming from the postcolonial peripheries, and just as the exotic, as Graham Huggan (following Stephen Foster) has suggested, can be seen as a "*symbolic* system, domesticating the foreign," "a control mechanism of cultural translation," a "political as much as an aesthetic practice," and, as such, "a highly effective instrument of imperial power," Huggan has suggested that "[t]he exoticist rhetoric of fetishised otherness and sympathetic identification masks the inequality of the power relations without which the discourse could not function" (13, 14). In her well-known essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that postcolonial studies paradoxically risks perpetuating a neocolonial exploitation of the economically and politically dispossessed in the very gesture of speaking for these groups. A paper by David Thurfjell in the present volume, "Is the Islamist Voice Subaltern?", positing the Islamic voice as subaltern, contends that sociological explanations for religiosity given by scholars of religion sometimes actually impose the epistemic violence that Spivak discusses in her article. As Thurfjell emphasizes, the ambition to let the Other speak is far from easy to live up to. Thurfjell's paper suggests that Islamism is "one of many responses to the colonial and post-colonial situations in the so-called Muslim world" today and that the radical Islamist movement, although perhaps not the most obvious, might be the most challenging example of a 'subaltern' voice in the postcolonial world, and that the Islamist movement has,

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nificant and contradictory forces influencing our world today," and suggest that this "more expansive critical perspective incorporating all the threads in this intricate web" is required today (1).

[13] Writing about India, Ismail S. Talib points out in *The Language of Postcolonial Literatures: An Introduction* (2002) that "English literary education in India . . . was a way of imparting hidden quasi-Christian religious values to Indians" (11).

in fact, succeeded in 'provincializing' Europe by "providing an alternative center of moral, political and ontological focus among its adherents."

According to another paper in this anthology, "Minority Concerns: Female Scholars at the Cultural Intersection," Islamic studies in the West have been male-dominated. What light could a gender perspective shed on understandings of the reception in the West of Islamic and Arabic literature, culture, and spirituality? This question is posed in Saad A. Albazei's paper, in which he points to the enthusiastic scholarship on Arabic culture by western scholars such as Dorothee Melitski and Maria Rosa Menochal, on the one hand, and, on the other, female scholars from the Arab world exploring Western literature and culture—Hoda El-Sadda, Rana Kabbani, and Hessa al-Ghader being stellar examples. Looking at the work of these scholars, Albazei discerns two "generations" among the western scholars who in their scholarly methodologies and political approaches mark a transition from Orientalism to postcoloniality, the first generation working in a philological and erudite tradition aiming for objectivity, and the second more involved in contemporary theory and resistance politics. Possibly, it has been easier for women scholars who have experienced subordinate and alienated positions themselves to be drawn to and sympathize with cultures that have been seen as alien and inferior, and to be able to recognize that, just as women's contributions to literature and culture have been dismissed and disrespected, the greatness of the Arabo-Islamic culture and its importance for the development of Western civilization has gone uncelebrated and unsung. The Arab and Muslim women scholars discussed in Albazei's paper are Occidentalists in the sense that their work focuses on Western literature and culture, but not in terms of placing it in contentious opposition to Arabo-Islamic literature and culture. The sympathetic scholarly and intercultural criss-crossings explored in Saad A. Albazei's paper are much needed in today's increasingly polarized world.

In this context, it is appropriate to remind ourselves of the purposes and consequences of different forms of knowledge production. In "*Orientalism* 25 Years Later," Edward Said suggestes that, on the one hand, "there is a difference between knowledge of other peoples and other times that is the result of understanding, compassion, careful study and analysis for their own sakes, and on the other hand knowledge that is part of an overall campaign of self-affirmation." Said points to the "profound difference between the will to understand for purposes of co-existence and enlargement of horizons, and the will to dominate for the purposes of control" (Said 2003). Fittingly, the final paper in this anthology is charting a challenging pedagogic move in the direction of a "democratic epistemology": Elias Schwieler's "Reading *The English Patient*: Teaching and Difference" explores Sri Lankan-Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje's novel from the perspective of a postcolonial pedgagogics considering the didactic implications of teaching this novel. Building on Foucault's notion of heterotopia and Carl Schmitt's *The Con-*

cept of the Political, Schwieler analyzes the eponymous character and the indeterminate and heterotopical metaphor of the desert in the novel in terms of sameness and difference and suggests that the desert in *The English Patient* could be compared with the teaching situation, "where learning means to colonize knowledge, to circumscribe it, and determine it, to map it as an untouched desert, according to an ideology reminiscent of, if not colonialism, then at least of Orientalism." Just as Øyunn Hestetun (in her paper for this anthology) makes a plea for a responsive *and* responsible reading, Elias Schwieler, calling for a "responsible knowledge," examines the relationships between teaching, knowledge and colonialism and asks us to question our structures of teaching. How can concerns about history, (national) identity, and the sovereignty of nation states be incorporated into the teaching of textual analysis? Schwieler goes on to explore how the figure of the desert functions as a critical questioning of history, identity, and the sovereignty of nation states in *The English Patient*. Since Almásy, the English patient, "speaks by not speaking of/to/as the subaltern," Schwieler finds that Ondaatje's novel "gives voice to the excluded," something that can be seen as part of a "foundation of a democratic epistemology."[14]

Highlighting responsive and responsible reading practices, postcolonial forms of magic realism, democratic epistemology, demonized Others, the Others of the Others, critical insiders and subaltern voices, metonymic cross-writing and cultural criss-crossings—to mention but a few of the many concerns and foci of the papers, scholars in this anthology engage with issues of empowerment and disempowerment, tensions between modernity and tradition, and ideas of development and progress as connected to understandings of race, gender, caste, subalternity, and religion. Relying upon different methodologies and theoretical terminologies and paying implicit or explicit critical attention to the field of postcolonial studies itself, the papers in this anthology deal with a wide variety of colonial and postcolonial fictional and non-fictional sources and texts. Imaginative empathy (to come back to Boehmer's phrase) may not take us far enough, but, along with a recognition of the contradictions and conflicts of diversity, it may be a valid point of departure for an anthology that, wishing to avoid homogenizing, depoliticizing, and neo-orientalizing approaches, would like to welcome a sympathetic scholarly intermingling across borders and disciplines of study.

Stellenbosch, South Africa, July 2007

[14] In *The Chutnification of History: Salman Rushdie, Michael Ondaatje, Bharati Mukherjee and the Postcolonial Debate*, Mita Banerjee has suggested that Almásy, the English patient, is like a "space of oblivion"—"the faceless patient is everything and nothing, everyone and no one at the same time. As an empty space to be filled, he is, like the desert, a void onto which the personality of the watcher is projected, at the same time, however, he evades all attempts on the part of other to contain him, to fix him into language" (152).

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Translation as an Emancipatory Act?

Raoul J Granqvist

Sometimes, but not always, individual group memories can be helpful in laying out perspectives, assisting one in understanding the structures that encapsulate cultural time. The following two anecdotes reflect such moments in history, and my time, with relevance for the arguments about translation in western hegemony that I am going to develop in this essay. In the mid-1960's, I was a young student at Åbo Akademi aspiring to become a teacher of English and French. For this to materialise, as I had not done Latin in school, I would need to spend the whole of my first academic year studying Latin to be able pass a two-directional translation examination, which was the entrance requirement at the time for all M.A. candidates at the Faculty of Arts (in other words also for students of history, arts, ethnology, and not only for future teachers of modern languages). It was a real struggle for all of us, a struggle whose rationale remained a mystery to us. For those who eventually failed in their Latin exams, this moment would forever, I am sure, symbolize denigration and marginalization; for those who succeeded, it was an entrance fee and recognition of a sort. So, I have asked myself many times, what was the real purpose of this segregating screening ceremony, this *rite de passage* in the name of translation, as it, amazingly, had very little to do with the acquisition of general knowledge of Latin grammar and vocabulary, mythology, customs, intertextuality and interculture?

To answer that question, one needs to situate, my view is, this particular time within a post-war Europe traumatized and broken into pieces, and the frantic reconstruction of a humanistic identity lost but to be regained. The post-war generation of students flocking at the European universities was drawn into an appellative imaginary of a restored Europe directed by the master narrative of Sameness and Oneness. To prioritize a classical language was just one variable among many others of this transactional venture. Eurocentric nostalgic vision of the predetermined human subject is one of the most aggressive ideologies on our planet, and at this time in our European lives it was considered more beneficial than ever. The politics of the pedagogic undertaking of making an exam in a dead European language a requirement for the passing of an M.A was a way (one of many) to re-assert a 'common ground' that more than anything else taught me the benefits of exclusion and unequal power relations. Maybe the protocol of such a stan-

dardizing Latin translation exam was to make obvious—not the difference—but the socio-politics of the gap between me and the Gypsy family who used to camp on my father's land at summer time during my vacation periods from university.

To pursue the spatialised reading of my professional bio-history, some two decades later, I taught English literature at Umeå University, having become a migrant or translated academic. Now I found myself inside the 'whale,' experiencing what George Orwell fantasized about as being "in the dark, cushioned space that exactly fits you, with yards of blubber between yourself and reality, able to keep up an attitude of the completest indifference, no matter *what* happens. A storm that would sink all the battleships in the world would hardly reach you as an echo. Even the whale's own movements would probably be imperceptible to you" (Orwell). This is one way of conceptualizing an English department, both in Sweden and elsewhere, in the pre-postcolonial period: an isolated enclave of prescribed modalities, standards, canons, and area-dependent normalcy, down to scrupulous apprehensions about British parliamentary procedures and the distribution of the vowel stress. Language teaching (grammar, literature, and pronunciation) was circumscribed by a centre-periphery dialectic where translation, in the metaphorical sense I am using the term here, functioned as a mode of promoting the "ontological imperialism" that Robert Young discusses in *White Mythologies* (Young 1990: 13). Interestingly, the model of teaching how to pronounce Almighty English words 'correctly' was named "Received Pronunciation," a class-based southern British speech form, favored for long by the BBC and the private elite schools, spoken by relatively few people in the world. This 'pure' variant of speaking-well was the model for the education of the 'masses'—colonized or not. "The attitude of the completest indifference," which Orwell talked about, was upheld through educational policies of bias and bigotry on the basis of class, gender, and ethnicity; echoes from the external of the sanctioned English-speaking world, whether it was India, Australia or Africa, were hard of penetrating the skin of the whale. But in the end they did; the resonances, the "echoes," proved eventually to be autonomous, indigenous voices speaking many dialects, writing many stories, even if, at my department, and at other English departments globally, the decentering did not attain the same level of revolutionary consequence as did the dismantling of the tradition-bound English department at Nairobi University in the early 1970s, when Ngugi wa Thiong'o and his colleagues replaced it with the new Department of African Literature and Languages, where African literature could be discussed and taught for the first time in its own right. But the repositioning that took place at Umeå was conceptually as signifying! So, the whale I had entered in 1980 was losing its privileges. Now, I am happy to announce: it is just one of many fishes in the pond, somewhat hurt, and, in these days, somewhat introvert. Even if the Empire is more monolingual than ever, it is far from monologic. Globalization, it is true, is heteroge-

neous and fragmented. And it is here that translation of difference that is the transmission, blending, and shifting of local experiences comes in.

This review of personal spatial history constitutes the frame for what I am discussing here: translation understood primarily in terms of power relations, figurations of language and difference, and politics of transference. As a research field, translation studies has expanded enormously within the last two or three decades, from being, up to the 1960s, a branch of applied linguistics involving text- and process-oriented, commonly called, 'pure translation studies' and 'applied translation studies', into becoming a heterogeneous subject, drawing on a number of methodological and theoretical viewpoints from an array of disciplines, including psychology, communication theory, literary theory, anthropology, and, above all, cultural studies, feminist, and postcolonial theory. In fact, these areas are now so intertwined that it is difficult to distinguish them. With these fragmentations, the area resembles far more an open interdisciplinary, or a-disciplinary, research profile that transcends academic restraints and specialties, which, indeed, is a welcoming move.

Translation in the conventional sense could be discriminated as 'boy meets girl' (even daringly: 'boy meets boy'), that is 'language meets language,' intersected with its favorite catch-phrases, such as 'source'-'target,' 'origin'-'copy,' 'centre'-'periphery'—dichotomies that presuppose some kind of recognizable, but often very fussy, system of mutuality. Opposing this politics of binary reading, Susan Bassnett, Henri Lefevere, Maria Tymoczko, and Anthony Pym, and others, advocate the idea that translation practitioners need to be far more informed with the text worlds they are communicating with, with their disparities and plural histories, and with their uneven positions in the global market-place of exchange. Translation as a form of interactive communication deals thus with issues that should not be narrowed down to the linguistic or verbal, but, instead, be assessed for what it tells us about the larger pictures involving politics, economy, cultural identity, difference, and similarity.

In his chapter "On Originality" (in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*), Edward Said discusses the relationship between literature (fiction) and theory, an analogy he makes that suits admirably the drive of my argument about conventional translation's concern with oppositions, contradictions and difference. The tension between them, Said explains, is due to West's obsession with the author as quasi-divine, a sacred genius, and the related, uninformed celebration of originality as an 'event'. On author heroism, he says: "A writer-*author* [in the West] suggests the glamor of doing, of bohemia, of originality close to the real matter of life …; a critic/scholar-author suggests the image of drudgery, passivity, impotence, second-order material, and faded monkishness" (Said 128; his emphasis). Said continues:

> Human singularity, and hence any originality associated with human endeavor, is a function of transpersonal laws that make up the patterns (psychological, economic, and intellectual) we call history, which is documented in thousands of written records. Therefore written history is a countermemory, a kind of parody of Platonic recollection that permits the discernment by contemplation of true, first, *original* things. … Thus the best way to consider originality is to look not for first instances of a phenomenon, but rather to see duplication, parallelism, symmetry, parody, repetition, echoes of it—the way, for example, literature has made itself into a topos of writing. (Said 134, 135, his emphasis)

Said's attempt at demoting the conventions regarding the privileges of the source (what or who came first) is not a denial of genealogy and heritage studies and their functions in explicating textual history but a statement about creativity as a process that lacks a centre. The source text is plural right at the beginning; the translation is already translated; the translation is an embedded translation. In other words, following this lead, it is not the *per se* many translations of, say a work such as, *Kalevala* that promote or guarantee its longevity; it is what Said calls its "release of something" that does the job. This means that any new translation is drawn to that "something" conditioned by its social and historic specificity. Accordingly, *James Joyce* releases "something" from *Odyssey* into his narrative about Dublin, as does *Derek Walcott* also from *Odyssey* into his Caribbean poem *Omeros;* the Canadian poet *Janice Kulyk Keefer*, to take a more recent example, transforms Eliot's *The Waste Land* into her *The Waste Zone,* a lament on the human and ecological brutalities committed at the Quebec Summit of the Americas in April 2001. We deal with what Said listed as a metonymics of "duplication, parallelism, symmetry, parody, repetition, echoes." It is translation as metonymy.

So the topic of power and difference is, indeed, crucial in cultural translation studies. The hierarchy that controls any categorization of dualities, whether it comes out of the nationalist homogenization politics of my university years in the 1960s' Finland, or that of neo-colonial exclusivity at an English department in the early 1980s, is deeply implicated by what Gayatri Spivak somewhere has dubbed "clarity fetischism" (cited by Braidotti 27) to define the West's fantasies about consistency, origins, originals, rationality, and so on, and its implications of their structurally contaminated others. And in this context, 'others' could be anything from the 'translator,' the 'copy,' the 'migrant,' and the 'refugee,' to Said's 'theory'.

Faithfulness, another dichotomous concept, has been an honorary term to categorize the translator's attitude towards the object of his/her rewriting. In feminist scholarship, the term is associated with disempowering cultural formations similar to a number of others used in translation theory that reflect patriarchal binary orders, such as 'fidelity,' 'penetration,' and 'conquest'. These have alternatively their reputed or infamous place in colonial

semantics. Preserving the authorial privilege, that is the prerogatives of an original, first, fatherly text phantom, reduces the 'other', here registered as 'woman', colony, and the target text, into a 'second' or inferior position through either demeaning overprotection or brutal sexual violence. John Donne's, the English Renaissance poet and clergyman, famous couplets in "Elegy XIX. To his Mistris Going to Bed" illustrates in its entire condensed poetic erotica the whole spectrum (commercial, juridical, sexual, religious, royal) of translational colonial occupation:

> License my roving hands, and let them go,
> Behind, before, above, between, below.
> O my America! my new-found-land,
> My kingdom, safeliest when with one man man'd,
> My mine of precious stones: my emperie,
> How blest am I in this discovering thee!
> To enter in these bonds, is to be free;
> Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be.

Notice the taken-for-given postulation about the centre-periphery and its mutual but uneven relation; in Donne's translation "my-new-found-land" refers metaphorically to any piece of territory to be colonized by the West for its wealth and, secondly, to, Newfoundland, the Canadian province (from 2001 called Newfoundland and Labrador) off the northeast coast of North America (Whitbourne).[1] His listeners knew what he meant by his witty double-talk about 'discovery'. What is at play here is the translational commonplace of the original and the copy, a relationship founded on subjugation. A seventeenth-century poem such as Donne's shows many similarities with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial texts in their translational masculinist aggression against the Other.

What is interesting here are not the frequencies and ontologies of such concepts, it is their constructiveness as rigid norms or universals, where the other is invited either to become the Same in a grandiose show of benevolence or simply expelled, that is unsettling—to say the least. In translation studies the binarist outlook has been extremely influential. Translating has been seen as building bridges between languages, between related units, cultures, even between nations. Finding the right pairs of equivalences and correspondences (whether linguistic or cultural) has been idealized in almost altruistic terms; equality and mutuality are two other ill-serving concepts in the conformist grammar of translation studies. However, if equivalence relationships are supposed to hold between a source text and a target text, which of them then defines the other? As translation theorists have pointed out,

[1] See Richard Whitbourne's *A Discourse and Discovery of New-found-land* (1620) for its convincing colonial rhetoric in <http://www.mun.ca/rels/hrollmann/relsoc/texts/whitbourne/whit.html>

translation equivalence theory is, by definition, self-repetitive and circular: what one names equivalent *becomes* equivalence. One finds what one looks for; binaries are self-inclusive, not flat. 'Bread,' 'bröd,' 'leipä,' and 'pain' are not, by necessity, equivalences; they may project hierarchies and they are bound to release meanings founded on the ruling out of spatial-cultural or sequential-temporal differences. How can equivalence typologies, one can ask, whether we call them 'pragmatic,' 'textual,' 'functional,' 'referential,' and 'connotative' (they have many names), come to terms with the "incompatibilities between the worlds inhabited by speakers of different languages and … the structural dissimilarities between languages."[2] They simply cannot. The bridge metaphor is a fallacy. The differences on each side of the bridge need to be evaluated for their specifics. But the problem is as Gilles Deleuze explains in *Difference and Repetition:* "pluralism is a more enticing and dangerous thought: fragmentation implies overturning."[3] Let me turn to a few postcolonial texts to situate these comments with some more precision.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad writes as translator on many levels, Polish being his first language. Despite this background, he pursues and celebrates monolinguism or the root of One, the particular European exclusionary and dogmatic subjectivity that, we heard, rouses the imperial London poet John Donne. Kurtz and Marlow both succumb to the Other, in the novella mythologized and figured, alternatively, as African, Woman, or Beast; Kurtz dies, Marlow, the Englishman, barely escapes plagued by his pathetic tall tale, the white lie, a lie whose Nordic consequences could recently (March 2006) be viewed at the exhibition "Traces of the Congo. Scandinavia in the Congo—The Congo in Scandinavia" at the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm.[4] The language of hierarchical dualism is the monitoring language of Conrad's novella: primitive-civilized, Africa-Europe, the Congo-the Thames, man-woman, stasis-movement, are some of the binarisms; the list can be made very long.

The first Swedish translation appeared of the novella appeared in 1949 and a second in 1960, that is, only eleven years later.[5] The latter translation

[2] See the section on "Equivalence" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (London, New York: Routledge, 2005) 79.

[3] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Paton (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 204.

[4] See <http://www.etnografiska.se/smvk/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=122&a=5946> 17 March 2006. See also the catalogue (Peter Tygesen [text] and Espen Waehle [photo]), *Kongospår. Norden i Kongo – Kongo i Norden* (Stockholm: Nordiska Kulturfonden, 2005).

[5] I have discussed elsewhere the peculiar circumstances of 1) why the novella was translated so 'late' into Swedish (it was published in English in 1902) and 2) why a second translation was thought to be necessary only eleven years after the first (in 1949 by Louis Renner and in 1960 by Margaretha Odelberg; the last-mentioned is the standard Swedish edition). See Raoul Granqvist, "Romance and Racism: One Hundred Years with Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' in Sweden." In *Conrad at the Millennium: Modernism, Postmodernism, Postcolonialism* edited by Gail Fincham and Attie de Lange with Wieslaw Krajka (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 467-97.

(by Margaretha Odelberg) recasts Conrad's text carefully to make it suit contemporary ideological writing on Africa (mainly that of Per Wästberg), harmonizing it with pent-up Swedish frustrations about "Congo," both as a region and a concept, and somewhat distancing it from Conrad's Victorian racial or racist rhetoric. In this Swedish translation, Marlow comes out as a more refined and anguished pan-European subject than the more robust sailor-intellectual-British colonial of Conrad's text.

It is also within the translational scheme of banishing spatial and historical meanings that Olof Lagercrantz situated his layered re-reading of Conrad, i.e., another ideological metastatement about Conrad, called *Färd med Mörkrets hjärta. En bok om Joseph Conrads roman (*1987). Africa is here again the invisible and passive part of a structuralist sign system, lending dominance and privilege to its subject-hero, the Swedish critic. His process of maturity both eludes and ignores the signifying other. The opposition between North and South is *the* theme of the book. Lagercrantz's paraphrase is overwritten with European self-centeredness, a statement about the impossibility of mutual recognition and the need for mutual specification. This was what my grammar test discourse had taught me as early as the 1960s. But we were now in the late 1980's, and Lagercrantz should have known better!

Sven Lindqvist's book *Exterminate all the Brutes* attempts at subverting the us/them binary. His narrative-travelogue-report operates on three synchronic discursive levels; as a pamphlet which highlights the links between Europe's imperialist aggression in nineteenth-century Africa, and former and latter-day genocides and contemporary racism; as a passage out of the colonial history that associates Conrad the helmsman of the Roi de Belges of 1890 with Conrad the writer at the Pent farm in Kent of 1898; and, thirdly, as a travelogue that takes the narrator and his computer-loaded library through a 2160 kilometre long bus ride through the Sahara desert. We encounter an agonized Swedish Marlow—but with a difference. Lindqvist's self-appointed role is not to tell the 'truth,' but rather *not to tell a lie* and thereby rehearse Marlow's—and Europe's—and Lagercrants's mistake of speaking in innuendos or not speaking at all. The very first and the very last sentences in his book read: "You already know enough. I do too. It is not knowledge we lack. What we do lack is the courage to face what we know and draw the conclusions from it" (Lindqvist 9; this is rehearsed almost *verbatim* on page 242).

Lindqvist's three-partite novel is an attempt at getting to the core of experiences inscripted in this hermeneutic circle, at addressing it, and thus doing away with it. He promotes the secondary and derivative term 'Africa' into the position of superiority, reversing the hierarchy, deconstructing Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Chinua Achebe's first novel *Things Fall Apart*, one could say, performs the same act of subversion but extends it to confront Western logocentrism and epistemology in a far more radical way. Well-known is the passage to-

wards the end of the novel, after Okonkwo has hanged himself, where the District Commissioner meditates on the role the 'incident' might serve in his future book that he had planned to call, "*The Pacificiation of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*."[6] Achebe's satire ("a negative combating a negative, a form of balancing"[7]) is targeted against the colonialist discourse as represented by texts such as Conrad's with its mute cannibals, or, more particularly, Joyce Cary's novel *Mr. Johnson.* Achebe is re-translating or re-interpreting a whole tradition, the same colonialist writing that Olof Lagercrantz is rehearsing—not re-interpreting. Yet Achebe's polemics in the form of writing-back is one thing (and we remember his diatribes against Conrad as a racist writer in the famous article he wrote in 1975[8]); another is, what I call, his narrative of translation. Let me elucidate some of its main features.

Let us first look at the originations of his novel. Achebe has told his audiences many times that he is a translator, a mediator, a *griot*, a storyteller who was just there at the right place and the right time; somebody else could have written the book, he insists. The work's positionality both as a historical document (conceptualizing the 'first' arrival of the colonials to Igboland in the 1850s) and a contemporary one (critiquing the interface of the colonial and the postcolonial), its resonances with the colonial novel (that I already mentioned), and its interlingual, Igbo-English, translational communication (that I will say a few more words about later), all participate in formulating what Said called, we recollect, a non-Platonic "countermemory" that depended on an open system of "duplication, parallelism, symmetry, parody, repetition, echoes."

What is also a very significant aspect of the postcolonial novel as a genre, and not only of *Things Fall Apart*, is its transcendence of many linguistic codes that work together. Thus it does not make sense to distinguish between a 'source' and a 'target' as it does not make sense to search for a single source or its generic or genial originality. In his novel Achebe operates in a linguistic system inclusive of both Igbo and English, translating between the two, transliterating the Igbo voices making them 'sound' Igbo in English. The openness is also manifested in Achebe's thematic. His use of, for instance, the Igbo concept of 'chi' is polyvalent, plural: the appended glossary translates it as 'a personal god' whereas in the text the term translates itself along the requirements of the context, each time re-configuring itself, recreating itself, recognizing the metonymic process of connection and contiguity. In his translational world-view equivalences have no future; fidelity, another

[6] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1958; London: Heinemann, 1965), 187.
[7] John Clement Ball, "'In All Fairness': Satire and Narrative in the Novels of Chinua Achebe," *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel: V.S. Naipaul, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 88.
[8] Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," in *Heart of Darkness: A Norton Critical Edition*, edited by Robert Kimbrough (New York: Norton, 1988), 251-62.

ideal in traditional translation studies, even less so. Infidelity in this context, I would say, at least connotes cultural resistance.

Does translating an African novel into Swedish mean an automatic improvement of the intercultural relations? It does not; it can be the opposite! Translation-as-substitution (which is the common practice in postcolonial western translation) is the same as inviting you to the table for a chat and then asking you to shut up! This is also what happens in the Swedish translations of two of Achebe's novels, in *Allt går sönder* (*Things Fall Apart*)[9] and *Termitstackarna på savannen* (*Anthills of the Savannah*);[10] in the first, the translator (Ebbe Linde) meticulously demobilizes Achebe's strategy of narration that informs his mediatory project of rejecting dogmas and codes, the monologue and the stationary. The Swedish translation transforms multivocality into a monovocality by suppressing the text's paraliterary devices of the gloss and the italics, rejecting repetitions, parallelisms, and contextual metatranslations, homogenizing and standardizing the language and the novel's complex value systems. Achebe's emancipatory novel is cut short and silenced.[11] The African *is* invited to Sweden, but ceremoniously undressed, cleansed, re-dressed, and then put in custody—to haunt us forever. In the Swedish translation of *Anthills*, to give you another example of translational misconduct, Pidgin-English speaking Elewa, one of the strong feminist iconic protagonists of Achebe's reformatory novel, is transformed into someone speaking the kind of language a migrant would produce after having spent a couple of hassled weeks in the environs of the Central Station in Stockholm. Elewa is reduced and simplified; her wit, stamina, and, indeed, linguistic competence are wiped out. She, too, is silenced.[12]

No, I am not crusading against individual Swedish translators, I am pointing at a pattern in European cultural politics of homogenization, and their

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[9] Chinua Achebe, *Allt går sönder* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag,1967). Trans. Ebbe Linde.

[10] Chinua Achebe, *Termitstackarna på savannen.* Trans. by Hans O. Sjöström (Stockholm: Ordfronts förlag, 1989). Chinua Achebe, *Anthills of the Savannah* (New York: Anchor Press, 1988).

[11] For a more detailed analysis of Achebe as translator in *Things Fall Apart* and the impacts of its Swedish translator, see my essay "A Postcolonial Grammar of Translation. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as a Metonymic Text," in *The Creative Circle: Artist, Critic, Translator* edited by Angelina Overvold, Richard Priebe and Louis Tremaine (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003), 59-71.

[12] Here are a few lines to illustrate Elewa's speech forms in Swedish, followed by the original: "Förklara, vadå? Du inte gör jag blir förbannad … Oj, oj, oj! Hmmm! Kvinnan alla tider äter sand i världen … Oj, oj, oj! Men vi är egen fel. Om jag inte kommer parkerar häcken i din säng, du inte kan sparka mig som är jag fotboll?" (45) ("You explain what? I beg you, no make me vex … Imagine! Hmmm! But woman done chop sand for dis world-o … Imagine! But na we de causam; na we own fault, If no kuku bring my stupid nyarsh come dump for your bedroom you for de kick about like I be football?" 31). In a confusing comment about his stylistical options, the Swedish translator Hans O. Sjöström explains: "Here it [Pidgin English] is translated via a home-made Pidgin Swedish without any intentions to recreate a migrant's language, although it may look like that" (283).

share in converting Them into US; not to recognize the metonymic significance of novels such as Chinua Achebe's is to hamper their interactive anxiety. What a loss, I would say. In fact, the translations of postcolonial novels in a European context, whether they are Estonian, French, German, Spanish, and Swedish, subscribe to more or less the same paradigms of reduction and closure; there are very few that do not. The translations/translators find it *hard* obviously to contend with the multiperspectival, the polysemous, the hybrid, and the absence of canonized centres, and *easy* to seek solutions that assert the primacies of Sameness, Purity, and Oneness. There are many examples of purist and homogenizing tendencies in the book *Writing Back and/in Translation*![13]

One theme in my essay has dealt with the ideological force of translation as a broad discourse substituting and selecting not only words and text in and between languages but also as an activity exchanging normative concepts between one field and another. The academic Latin test and the British whale in my life narration were both illustrative instances of transposition of ideas, or translation, as vehicles for ideological homogenization processes in post- and cold-war Europe. Notions such as 'centre,' 'unity,' 'coherence,' 'nation,' and so on, all well-known conservative discursive value guidelines, saturate traditional translation strategies. I maintain that it is such alienating directives that keep the Other's text from entering the centre and when it does, it is manipulated to become its own enemy. Methodologically, these guidelines work via privileging specific discursive principles; I have discussed at some length the western weakness in translation practices for self-promoting binarism, the source-copy hierarchy, the romance about the faithful female follower-lover, the illusive search for equivalences, and the defeatist desire for the original/the origin. This sign language is an active principle in, we saw, John Donne's love poem from the beginning of the seventeenth-century. To corroborate these views further, I discussed in brief the ambivalences of the Swedish translation history of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, pointing out how it reflects, on one hand, collusion with the colonial discourse (Lagercrantz), and, on the other, discomfort with its latter-day violence (Lindqvist).

The second theme concerned alternative translation practices and strategies signaling openness, contiguity, and contextures; metonymy instead of metaphor. Gilles Deleuze, Edward Said, Rosi Braidotti, Homi K. Bhabha are some of the theorists who have inspired me to look for intralingual features inherent in the postcolonial novel and advocate them, as I do here, as emancipatory. As an example, I discussed Chinua Achebe as translator/writer, emphasizing his nomadic, non-unitary vision of the subject ("The world is a

[13] See the chapters by Ovidi Carbonell i Cortés (Spain), Christina Gullin (Sweden), Ene-Reet Sovik (Estonia), Tina Steiner (Germany), and Kathryn Woodham (France) in *Writing Back in/and Translation* edited by Raoul J. Granqvist (Berlin, etc.: Peter Lang Publishers, 2006).

dancing masquerade. Nothing is permanent") and noting his performative tactic of translating the bi- or multicultural, and his ways of promoting openness (that was clogged in the Swedish translations). One is reminded of Wolfgang Iser's credo about translatability that we are all in-translation, that translation is a fundamental concept of culture itself. Translatability, he says further, implies "translation of otherness without subsuming it under preconceived notions" (Iser 32). This ethics of difference rejects the rhetoric of translation understood as exclusion/inclusion, or as assimilation and reduction of the other to the same. The alleged difference between A and B "suffers from the metaphysics of the pregivenness of the two entities"[14] (*differance*), as Derrida has taught us. In the essay "The Reason of Border or a Border Reason? Translation as a Metaphor of Our Times," António Sousa Ribeiro explains that " translation is something else than a dialogue": "The core … question [is] whether those [translational] processes tend simply towards assimilation and reduction to the identical or, on the contrary, are able to put forward the *non-identical, which can only be done by keeping alive a relation of mutual tension and mutual strangeness*"[15] (Sousa Ribeiro, emphasis added).

Sousa Ribeiro calls this ontology or spatiality a 'border' or 'border reason'; others call it, alternatively, 'the third space,' 'hybridity, 'minority', interspatial, interstitial, and transgressive.[16] I find these readings of translatability radical and emancipatory (we remember Deleuze's comment: "fragmentation implies overturning") in their emphases on the never-ending transgressions of social and cultural limits—their doubts.

I recommend a reading or re-reading also of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses,* or his latest novel *Shalimar the Clown*, not necessarily for *what* they may say about Islam, India, Kashmir, or about religion, politics, Western stereotypes and racism, and so on, but *how* they translate the multiple possibilities there are of comprehending the human subject. Rushdie's and Chinua Achebe's text worlds assist us in decentralizing ourselves to becoming less and many, while keeping "alive," in Sousa Ribeiro's words, "a relation of mutual tension and mutual strangeness."

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[14] Tullio Maranhao, "Introduction," *Translation and Ethnography: The Anthropological Challenge of Intercultural Understanding* edited by Tullio Maranhao and Bernhard Streck in <http://www.uapress.arizona.edu/samples/sam1519.htm, 4>. 19 January 2006.

[15] António Sousa Ribeiro, "The Reason of Borders or a Border Reason? Translation as a Metaphor for Our Times," in <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2004-01-08-ribeiro-en.html 5>19 January 2006.

[16] See Boris Buden, "Public Space as Translation Process" [09-2003] in <http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/artic96/bachmann7_97.html> 30 December 2005; Doris Bachmann-Medick, "Cultural Misunderstanding in Translation: Multicultural Coexistence and Multicutlural Conceptions of World Literature" [EESE 7/1996] in <http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/artic96/bachmann7_97.html> 30 December 2005.

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Excursions into the Literary Territories of the Other

Øyunn Hestetun

> Our analysis of the act of reading leads us to say rather that the practice of narrative lies in a thought experiment by means of which we try to inhabit worlds foreign to us. In this sense, narrative exercises the imagination more than the will, even though it remains a category of action. … But … reading also includes a moment of impetus. This is when reading becomes a provocation to be and to act differently.
> (Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative* 3: 249)

> … in books of fiction, they look not only for more entertainment, but, at bottom, even for more reality, than real life itself can show.… It is with fiction as with religion: it should present another world, and yet one to which we feel the tie.
> (Melville, *The Confidence Man* 190)

For some time now, globalization, cultural exchange, and postcolonialism have been catchwords in literary studies, and ethnic, postcolonial, and "foreign" literatures are promoted in the literary marketplace and university curricula alike. Against this background, I propose to take a closer look at how "traveling" might serve as a trope, not only for how literary texts themselves traverse cultural borders when launched into and promoted in the global marketplace, but also for how this literature is received and read across cultural boundaries. In other words, the "traveling" of my topic does not concern travel writing or other types of narrative accounts of journeys in physical space, but relates to traveling within the imaginary territories opened up in encounters with the literary or textual Other. Accordingly, the territories I will refer to are not the landscapes of foreign lands, but the imaginary worlds—or mindscapes—that a literary text may open up for the reader. While the examples of "literary territories of the Other" that I will refer to are those of Native American literature, the comments and observations I will make should apply equally to excursions into the literary territories of other indigenous, ethnic, postcolonial, or "foreign" literatures.

What I propose to do, then, is to take a closer look at questions related to the encounter with the textual Other: What is the relation between literature

and culture? Should we regard the reader's excursion into the textual territories of the Other as an innocent pastime, or do such adventures into unknown territory present the reader with specific challenges? To what extent might the textual Other constitute an inspection point for our preconceptions, encourage dialogue across cultural boundaries, and open up for new perspectives? Conversely, to what extent could our reading the Other be construed as a (neo-colonialist) project that might ultimately serve to reaffirm and consolidate preconceived ideas? Finally, does it make sense to talk about an ethics of reading the textual Other, just as there are ethical codes guiding our excursions into foreign lands that we visit?

The argument I will put forward rests on three basic tenets which I would like to present at the outset. First, I would like to repeat the obvious notion that, as cultural representations, literary texts bear the stamp of their cultural-historical moment. This stance does not imply sidestepping the author, nor does it imply a call for authorial authenticity, but it is meant as a reminder that as cultural representations, literary texts are historically produced and historically contingent.[1] Second, I would like to submit that literature matters. Precisely as literary texts are culturally produced, they also—in their own way—produce culture. In other words, narrative constitutes in itself a mode in which humans make an effort to understand and interpret the world and the human condition. Third, reading matters, and all reading involves an ethical stance, either implicitly or explicitly. Especially when approaching the textual Other, I would argue, the reader faces special demands regarding a responsive—and *responsible*—reading.

If literary texts are products of culture, bear the stamp of their cultural origin, and are conditioned by time and place, it follows that any study of literature involves at the same time a study of culture. This applies, one might add, even when we concern ourselves with literary aesthetics, since literary conventions are also culturally contingent. More importantly, in reference to the interest among literary scholars over the last couple of decades in literature as a site for the study of culture, it is worth noticing that this kind of interdisciplinarity can also be found within other fields of study. Social anthropologist Michael Fisher, for instance, includes readings of literary texts in an essay entitled "Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory"—a study that in many ways approaches that of a literary scholar who reads literary texts with attention to how ethnic or cultural belonging has a formative influence on, is embedded in, and can be traced in literary texts.

If we apply the perspective of hermeneutic interpretation, we might say that in the process of reading, the text brings into play the cultural horizon of its origin. True, according to hermeneutic interpretation, all reading stages an

[1] That is, rather than focusing on ethnic or cultural identity of the writer, which would feed into what might be called the "authenticity debates," I would emphasize the cultural or ethnic markers embedded in the texts themselves.

encounter with a "textual Other," and this "textual Other" is known to the reader only as it is inserted into the reader's own horizon of interpretation. However, it is precisely the ways in which a text inscribes and brings into play the cultural horizon of its origin that it may open up for new worlds, and for new ways of seeing. Obviously, the culture-specific aspects of a text are most apparent when the reader approaches a text produced at a time, location, or cultural setting different from the reader's own. It is exactly that kind of imprint left by a distinct cultural heritage that Louis Owens points to in his *Mixedblood Messages* when he argues that, "What sets Native American fiction apart … is among other qualities an insistence upon the informing role of the past within the present, a role signified by the presence of Native American myth and history reflected in both form and content" (22). Similarly, Jace Weaver, in *That the People Might Live,* proposes that, "What may distinguish any people's literature from that of any other group is … worldview" (26). When Weaver claims that "worldview" represents the distinctive features of any people's literature, it is, as mentioned above, because narrative in itself constitutes a mode in which humans make sense of the world and the human condition. By the same token, a difference in culture—or worldview—presents what Weaver calls "a barrier to crosscultural understanding" (27). However, while the distinct cultural coding of the textual Other could present a "barrier," as Weaver suggests, it is also possible to take a slightly different, or differing, view, and talk about the challenges that such cultural coding may present. In other words, rather than focusing on obstructing barriers, it should be possible to highlight the potential that these narratives of the Other might hold, in their capacity to make readers see "other-wise" than they are accustomed to, thereby expanding their horizons. In this sense, the "resistance" that a text presents could actually be considered to be conducive to "crosscultural understanding."

If literature holds an informative, and even enriching, potential, it follows that literature, reading, and writing are invested with singular importance. Tony Morrison states in *Playing in the Dark* that, "Writers are among the most sensitive, the most intellectually anarchic, most representative, most probing of artists. The ability of writers to imagine what is not the self, to familiarize the strange and mystify the familiar, is the test of their power" (15). If the writer is endowed with this ability to "familiarize the strange and mystify the familiar," then this power will be ingrained in the text, which in its turn will have the power to affect the reader. Literature has the capacity to generate imaginary worlds—mental landscapes, or mindscapes—that the reader is invited to visit and to explore. To the extent that the vistas that literary texts open up to constitute foreign or unfamiliar territory, literature may have the power to transform the reader, just as our journeys through the external landscapes of foreign lands may have the power to transform the traveler.

Paul Ricœur has written on the significance of narrative in various contexts. In an essay entitled "Life in Quest of Narrative" he repeats Socrates' maxim that, "an unexamined life is not worth living" (20), the implication being that different forms of narrative—fictional as well as autobiographical and historical narratives—serve the task of examining the "life … worth living." In the following I will pursue the idea that narrative presents—and not only re-presents—a *quest* which involves the exploration of "life … worth living," and that such a quest has significance not only for the individual quester, but ultimately for the community and the world we inhabit and share. In this connection, a personal statement made by Native American writer Janice Gould is instructive. She professes that to her "writing is an act of survival," which has significance at the collective as well as the personal level. She states: "I feel that writing is an act of survival. But there is more than my own survival that is at stake. These days I feel a kind of urgency to reconstruct memory, annihilate the slow amnesia of the dominant culture, and reclaim the past as a viable, if painful entity" (52). Accordingly, a study of the kind of stories that Janice Gould writes might take account of how they relate to the world they originate from, and might examine the sense of cultural belonging and communal memories that they convey. That is to say that her stories and the stories of others may offer evidence of the ways in which we—as humans—construct our world through our narratives, our stories, our fictions. Narrative constitutes, in other words, in itself a way in which humans make sense of the world and the human condition.

Ricœur, in turn, talks about the centrality of the concept of "narrative" in an interview entitled "The Creativity of Language." In his response to a question about the significance of a "narrative continuity with the past," he touches on the importance of precisely the kind of connection with a cultural heritage that Janice Gould writes about when referring to the collective memory of her people. Ricœur says:

> A society where narrative is dead is one where men are no longer capable of exchanging their experiences, of sharing a common experience. The contemporary search for some narrative continuity with the past is not just nostalgic escapism …. To give people back a *memory* is also to give them back a *future* …. The past is not *passé*, for our future is guaranteed precisely by our ability to possess a narrative identity, to recollect the past in historical or fictive form. ("The Creativity of Language" 28)

To Ricœur, then, narrative constitutes a fundamental human activity that serves to create existential meaning. But narrative is not generated out of nothing; what might be called the raw materials of narrative consist in the meanings that are already at hand, produced by culture, inscribed and accessible in myths, stories, assumptions, norms, values—in short, what we usually refer to as the cultural tradition, worldview, or ideology. Or, as Ricœur puts it, "The referent of narration, namely human action, is never raw or

immediate reality but an action which has been symbolized and resymbolized over and over again" ("Creativity" 23–24). Hence, the meaning of existence is intimately linked up with what he terms "a shared *imaginaire*, a common symbolic heritage" ("Creativity" 28), or what he in another context refers to as "the *imaginary nucleus* of any culture" ("Myth as the Bearer" 36). "Every society," he says, "possesses, or is part of, a socio-political *imaginaire*, that is, an ensemble of symbolic discourses" ("Creativity" 29). We have no direct access to this "hidden *mytho-poetic nucleus*," but it can be recognized in "what is said (discourse)," "how one lives (praxis)," and "by the distribution between different functional levels of a society" ("Myth as the Bearer" 37).

We may be reminded here of Louis Althusser's redefinition of ideology, which directs attention to unconscious processes in the way humans conceive of their situation in the world. In "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses" Althusser formulates his well-known "thesis," which proclaims that, "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (*Lenin* 162; see also *For Marx* 232–34). A parallel to Ricœur's "socio-political *imaginaire*" or "*mytho-poetic nucleus*" might also be found in Fredric Jameson's *Political Unconscious*, where ideology, redefined as the "political unconscious," is not immediately accessible, but has to be "(re)constructed" through the act of interpretation. Hence, textual interpretation, Jameson says, involves:

> the rewriting or restructuration of a prior historical or ideological *subtext*, it being always understood that "subtext" is not immediately present as such, not some common-sense external reality, nor even the conventional narratives of history manuals, but rather must itself always be (re)constructed after the fact. (81)

With reference to what Weaver says about worldview presenting a potential "barrier to crosscultural understanding," as cited above, one might add that in Jameson's terminology, the reader faces an additional challenge in his or her endeavor to reconstruct the "subtext" embedded in a literary work that inscribes a conceptual horizon radically different from his or her own.

When meaning is created in narrative, then, one might talk about a double mediation—where the narrative is twice removed from life experience or "reality"—and narrative representation constitutes what might be called a second-order representation. Accordingly, narrative represents, in Ricœur's words, "a redefining of what is already defined, a reinterpretation of what is already interpreted." And, he adds, "Thus narration serves to displace anterior symbolizations on to a new plane, integrating or exploding them as the case may be" ("Creativity" 23, 24). When Ricœur suggests that in the process of narrative representation a "common symbolic heritage" may be "integrat[ed]" or "explod[ed]," he points to the way in which narrative in itself

constitutes what Jameson would call "a *symbolic act*" (see 76–83); that is, narrative represents an ideological intervention—as the "political unconscious"—in its own right. A literary text may thus serve to reaffirm or subvert received conceptions, myths or ideology, which is to say that it may serve an oppressive as well as liberating function, and it may open up for new ways of seeing. We may also be reminded of Morrison's assertion that writers have the power in their writings to "familiarize the strange and mystify the familiar." Finally, then, narrative might be said to have a world-making or world-changing function, not only in its capacity to mediate—and meditate on—the world we know and inhabit, and what might be referred to as of collective memory or cultural heritage, but also in its capacity to envision alternative or transformed worlds and possible futures.

This brings us to the third of my tenets, which concerns the questions of why reading matters, and why the literary traveler who ventures on excursions into the literary territories of the Other should be reminded of reader responsibility. While it goes without saying that no reading is innocent, it has not always been taken for granted that reading also entails an ethical moment. In an essay whose title poses the following question: "Aesthetics and Ethics: Incommensurable, Identical or Conflicting?" Lothar Bredella explores the relation between literature and ethics. In his conclusion he warns against conflating the two, but he also stresses the importance of both when we discuss literature: "The tension between ethics and aesthetics can prevent us from becoming complacent. However, such a tension presupposes that we neither reduce one to the other nor erect an unbridgeable gap between them" (51). Bredella's warning is to the point, and I would not propose a model of reading that would make narrative subservient to ethics. What I would like to submit, though, is that reader response—or, rather, reader responsibility—be given prominence when readers enter foreign literary territory in their encounter with texts from cultures different from their own.

Discussing the relation between life and narrative fiction, Ricœur sees the completion of the narrative in the moment of reading. He writes in "Life in Quest of Narrative":

> My thesis is here that the process of composition, of configuration, is not completed in the text but in the reader and, under this condition, makes possible the reconfiguration of life by narrative. I should say, more precisely: the sense of the significance of a narrative stems from the *intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader*. The act of reading thus becomes the critical moment of the entire analysis. (26)

We should note that what is suggested here is not the same as the standard type of reader-response theory. In highlighting the intersection of life and narrative, Ricœur invests the act of reading with an ethical dimension, which

is obvious in the sentence that follows: "On it [the act of reading] rests the narrative's capacity to transfigure the experience of the reader." Ricœur relates this capacity to hermeneutic theory, and, more specifically, to Gadamer's notion of a "fusion of horizons," in suggesting that, "To appropriate a work through reading is to unfold the world horizon implicit in it …" (26). Thus, according to Ricœur, mediation is realized at three distinct levels, all involving an experience of the literary text which reaches beyond the text as such. These levels are: "the mediation between man and the world is what we call *referentiality*; the mediation between men, *communicability*; the mediation between man and himself, *self-understanding*" (27).

As already suggested, the hermeneutic idea of a fusion of horizons in the process of reading takes on an added dimension when our reading takes us across cultural borders. In his *Mixedblood Messages* Owens notes that Native American writers asks of their non-Native readers, "that they venture across a new 'conceptual horizon' and learn to read in new ways" (4). The ethical imperative is obvious here; Owens requests that readers take reading seriously, and that they steer away from what he calls "a kind of literary tourism" (e.g. 42). What a lot of readers want, he says, is "not literature that challenges them to think and feel in new ways but literary works that provide a comfortable, easy tour of colorful Indian Country" (42). Emphasizing the importance of dialogue across cultural boundaries, Owens joins his fellow Native American writers in "insisting that rather than looking to this literature for reflections of what they expect to see—their own constructed Indianness—readers must look past their mirroring consciousness to the other side" (24).

As we may infer from this statement, if Owens requires hard work from his readers, he also becomes prescriptive in asking that Native Americans writers steer away from rehearsing received stereotypes of "Indians" and "Indian Country." In fact, he criticizes a number of fellow Native American writers for being complicit in the fabrication and re-presentation of the kind of stereotypes that he would like to see subverted and challenged: "It is our responsibility," he says, "as writers and teachers, to make sure that our texts and our classrooms are not 'safe' spaces from which a reader or student may return unchanged or unthreatened." And, he adds, "Literary terrorism is preferable to literary tourism" (46). He condemns Native American texts that invite the reader to embark on an easy tour of "'Indian Territory'—a literal and imagined space constructed to contain and neutralize Indians" (42), which offers a "touch of the exotic" (44). As an antidote, he recuperates the trope of the "frontier," which, he says, is "multidirectional, uncontained, unstable, and always plotting return visits" (43), and which might serve well as a counterpoint to what he calls "the kind of essentializing necessary for the subsumption of Indian identity into the national metanarrative" (45). In other words, the optimal site for a literary excursion is a space where the reader is challenged, and is confronted with a different "conceptual horizon"

and with an-Other way of seeing and imagining the world and the human condition. Both literature and reading are thus invested with singular importance. Literature sets the stage for cross-cultural dialogue and exchange—in tune with the humanistic tradition that knowledge engenders greater insight, an insight which in turn has ethical consequences for the reader.[2]

Owens may very well make us feel uncomfortable as an advocate for prescriptive norms and values. We may be reminded, though, of the more familiar categorization of literature into the literary canon and the "great works of art" as opposed to popular literature that delivers sheer entertainment. In the final analysis, what Owens does is to make an appeal to his fellow writers not to contribute to the fabrication of popular literature that repeats and reinforces stereotypes, but to create works of greater literary and aesthetic merit. We might also draw a parallel to the similar hierarchy that rules within the world of travel. While the regular tourists—and in particular those who sign up for packaged tours to the watering places of modern-day mass tourism—are frowned upon by travelers who embark on journeys that take them on less-trodden paths, it is the explorers—headed for the uncharted territories of more distant corners of the worlds—who represent the "nobility" among travelers. When traveling is used as a trope for reading, the implication is that literary tourism has little to offer beyond light entertainment, whereas literary traveling, or, even better, literary explorations that take the readers into unknown territory, holds the potential of opening up for new conceptual worlds.

The notion that literary travel may have a mind-changing potential is also in line with what Ricœur says about narrative and reading, as for instance when he says in *Time and Narrative* that,

> Our analysis of the act of reading leads us to say rather that the practice of narrative lies in a thought experiment by means of which we try to inhabit worlds foreign to us. In this sense, narrative exercises the imagination more than the will, even though it remains a category of action.… But … reading also includes a moment of impetus. This is when reading becomes a provocation to be and to act differently. (*Time and Narrative* 3: 249)

The final point that Ricœur makes here is that the act of reading does not leave the reader unaffected, but functions as a channel for experiences with cognitive and ethical dimensions, which in their turn have consequences

[2] This would be in line with Edward Said's comments on humanism in his Preface to the 25th anniversary edition of *Orientalism*: "I have called what I try to do 'humanism,'" he says, and explains that this is "a word I continue to use stubbornly despite the scornful dismissal of the term by sophisticated postmodern critics. By humanism I mean first of all attempting to dissolve Blake's mind-forg'd manacles so as to be able to use one's mind historically and rationally for the purposes of reflective understanding and genuine disclosure. Moreover, humanism is sustained by a sense of community with other interpreters and other societies and periods …" (xvii).

beyond the reading situation. As he puts it in *Oneself as Another*, "… there is no ethically neutral narrative. Literature is a vast laboratory in which we experiment with estimations, evaluations, and judgments of approval and condemnation through which narrativity serves as a propaedeutic to ethics" (115). A parallel can be found in Bredella's statement when he says that, "Ethics needs art in order to prevent us from becoming imprisoned in rigid and stereotypical concepts of reality and from becoming insensitive to the claims of the other" (51). In other words, literature has the unique potential power to interrogate and contest rather than repeat and reinforce preconceptions and stereotypes, and the reader's attention to these mechanisms has ethical import.

But how do we as literary scholars react to the ethical imperative of Owens, or to the calls of those who with him—like Ricœur and Bredella—would place the burden of ethics on literature? Let me suggest that if literary criticism and theory of the twentieth century lend themselves to be imagined as an arena for quarrels concerning the aesthetics or "literariness" of literature as opposed to the politics of literature, ethics can be imagined as an instance of the return of the repressed, re-emerging towards the end of the twentieth century, and embraced by both parties of the quarrel. However, while some critics choose to remain within the discursive field, others insist that the ethical imperative of narrative and reading directs us beyond the world of textual idealism, into the world of experience, action, and "lived life."[3]

Rather than setting out on a journey through the landscapes of foreign lands, the literary traveler sets out on an excursion into the mindscapes opened up by the texts of the Other. The literary marketplace promoting "global literature" may invite us to take an "easy tour of Indian Country," to again borrow Owens's expression, promising light entertainment and a safe return to our familiar world of liberal pluralism, which will remain intact and secure. When we select our reading from the displays of the literature of the Other, let us instead be prepared to embark on a journey of exploration into literary frontiers and border-countries. Let us risk being challenged by what Owens calls "literary terrorism," let us answer to the calls of what Bredella calls "the claims of the other," and let our excursions into the literatures of the Other take us to what Ricœur calls the "vast laboratory" where "narrativity serves as a propaedeutic to ethics," and where we might be encouraged to do some radical rethinking about the world we inhabit.

[3] In his introduction to a special issue of *Publication of the Modern Language Association* devoted to the ethics of literary study, Lawrence Buell observes that, "as *ethics* has become a more privileged signifier it has also become an increasingly ductile and thereby potentially confusing one" (11). See also Bredella.

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History, Postcolonialism and Postmodernism in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Mariangela Palladino

This paper examines Toni Morrison's fifth novel, *Beloved*, which, together with Jazz and Paradise, constitute Morrison's contribution to the process of re-writing black American history. Postcolonial thought has offered one of the most potent challenges to the notion of the 'end of history' posited by postmodernists of both left and right. Focusing principally on *Beloved* (1987), my paper explores how Toni Morrison insists upon the necessity of a conscious and inevitably painful engagement with the past. Uncovering a dense series of correspondences, drawing upon Christological symbols, numerology, and flower imagery, I argue that the principal character is closely identified with Christ throughout the novel, which in its final part refigures the Passion narrative. As a sacrificed black, female Christ, Beloved becomes a focus for Morrison's concern with redemption through memory.

I wish to briefly explore the debate on history between postmodernism and postcolonialism as it constitutes the framework to Toni Morrison's deployment of Christological imagery in order to engage with history. If the dawn of postmodernism marked the beginning of a 'posthistoric' era which 'stipulated that the segment of human life had ended for which history had claimed to offer explanation and understanding' (Breisach 2003 10), this has been uncompromisingly contested by postcolonialism. The postcolonial claim for the unacknowledged role of the non-Western world in the constitution of modernity is emphasized by Edward Said in Culture and Imperialism (1993) as follows:

> In the West, post-modernism has seized upon the ahistorical weightlessness, consumerism, and spectacle of the new order. To it are affiliated other ideas like post-Marxism and post-structuralism …. Yet in the Arab and Islamic world many artists and intellectuals … are still concerned with modernity itself, still far from exhausted, still a major challenge in a culture dominated by turath (heritage) and orthodoxy. (Said 1993 399)

Said's attack on postmodernity stresses the enormous differences that characterize the first and the third worlds. It focuses mainly on the postmodern

rejection of historicism and on its deconstructive approach to the self-identical subject. Postmodernity neglects the notion of historical objectivity, but since the only history ever written was conceived in Western terms, postcolonialism questions this denial of objectiveness: there is a past that took place and, despite the advent of post-history, it has to be narrated. Edward Said asserts that:

> because the West acquired world dominance, and because it seems to have completed its trajectory by bringing about 'the end of history' as Francis Fukuyama has called it, Westerners have assumed the integrity and the inviolability of their cultural masterpieces, their scholarship, their worlds of discourse; the rest of the world stands petitioning for attention at our window-sill. (Said 1993 313)

The 'othered' identities envisioned the opportunity to have access to their silent pre-colonial pasts as an emancipation. Hence postcolonialism grants a significant role to fiction and to its narrative weight and it re-formulates the old grand narratives that have othered the non-European world: offering a literature that often navigates the past, it amends past histories that had been silenced or manipulated. Postcolonial literature opens a permanent dialogue with the past: the writing back into history becomes its institutionalized feature.

The fragmented nature of the third world history has to be addressed through the re-writing of that history, bringing together smaller historical accounts into a single segment of time. Whilst postmodernism locates the failure of Enlightenment in the Holocaust, postcolonialism identifies the failure of rationality with the institution of slavery in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In fact, Toni Morrison's inscription in Beloved, which reads 'Sixty Million and more', raised a controversial debate as it was accused of competing with the Holocaust.

It is in the light of this debate that I will consider Toni Morrison's writing back into history: insisting upon the necessity of a conscious and inevitably painful engagement with the past, her work attempts to recuperate past memories to sketch a denied history. With *Beloved* Toni Morrison wants to divulge what has fallen into oblivion. In an interview she affirms as follows: 'I thought this has got to be the least read of all the books I'd written because it is about something that the characters don't want to remember, I don't want to remember, black people don't want to remember, white people won't want to remember. I mean, it's national amnesia.' (Angelo 1989 257) This national amnesia is what Morrison targets. Through her fiction she challenges the forgetfulness that Eurocentric history has initiated.

Let us turn to *Beloved*, a Pulitzer Prize winning book set in antebellum America. Usually classified as a neo-slave narrative, it deals with slavery and the myriads of traumas inflicted by such a horrifying institution on the

survivors. The novel, set in the free state of Ohio and the slave state of Kentucky, relates the true story of the infanticide slave Margaret Garner who killed her daughter rather than giving her away to slavery. The sequence of events is non-chronological and it takes the readers repeatedly from freedom to slavery and backwards. *Beloved* revolves mainly around Sethe Suggs, one of the several narrative voices, who, through flashbacks and a non-linear narrative, recounts her painful story.

Sethe runs away from Sweet Home, the slave house, and, once she has gained freedom, gives birth to Denver on her way to Ohio with the help of a fugitive white girl. Traced back by her previous master in her new home, Sethe's maternal love turns into a horrific crime: the killing of her older daughter. Left in 124 Bluestone Road house with her eighteen-year-old daughter Denver, Sethe lives in a real isolation. Her two sons abandoned the house as they were tired of living with the ghost of their sister violently killed by Sethe, and her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, had passed away leaving the house empty and quiet. Sethe, guilty of infanticide, finds herself still enslaved by her sorrowful past and her atrocious crime that intrude in her life through the spiteful spirit of her baby and later, through her return in flesh and blood.

The novel is all about Sethe's recuperation of a past that she has attempted to forget. Memory plays a pivotal role in *Beloved*, not only in that is used as a mode of narration, but in being what the novel is about. Although the reader comes across numerous stories, the key issue of the novel is narrating, recounting and recollecting; dealing with memory is what the characters mainly do. The process of the novel corresponds to Sethe's repossession of her most repressed memory whose recollection will work as a healing ritual. The traumatic experience of slavery and the infanticide had been consciously eradicated by Sethe's will to move on, by a desperate wish to forget something too weighty to be remembered. The presence of the baby ghost in 124 Bluestone Road house is an evident sign of Sethe's past still possessing her present: what the woman refuses to remember chains her and her daughter Denver to an impossible life; isolated from the rest of the community Sethe's and Denver's present is possessed as well as their future.

The narration is dense with powerful eruptions from the past that culminate with the return of the killed baby in the form of a girl called Beloved, after the inscription on her tombstone, whose age corresponds to the one of the baby had she lived. This objectification of the past will slowly induce the characters to recuperate their memories, to narrate their stories. The baby's return is an emblematic example of the past that, triggered by the present, comes to be reworked. As Plasa observes, this re-envisioning of the past is defined in Freudian terms as Nachträglichkeit, literally translated as 'belatedness', the term signifies a 'deferred action' or a 'retroaction' (Plasa 1998 135). Freud formulated this notion in relation to the reworking of traumatic experiences through memory where the act of remembering works not only

as a connection with the past, but also a means to re-possess forgotten experiences. In *Beloved* past memories are often awakened by the present, thus the subject re-experiences past traumas in the light of later events. The advent of present incidents confers to the past its full significance: the subject, although traumatized after the fact, reaches a closer and complete understanding of his/her memories.

The return of Beloved and her role within the novel has been interpreted by criticism in several ways. Otten writes as follows:

> Beloved is both Sethe's doomed infant and one of the "Sixty Million and more," a victim both of Sethe's "rough love" and the manifest cruelty of slavers. What is more, she becomes a demonic force returned to punish and to redeem Sethe, a remarkably ambiguous force able to free Sethe at last from her past, but only by exacting an enormous price; she is on one hand "an evil thing," on the other a Christ figure come to save.' (Otten 1989 84)

This is the only fleeting critical reference to Beloved as Christ figure. My interest is to see to what extent Christological imagery is used and what its significance is. Morrison's text is in fact dense with references to Christ; further, as I intend to demonstrate in this paper, the final part of the novel refigures the Passion of Christ which is represented not only through Christological imagery, but also through significant use of numerology and flower imagery.

Let us begin with an analysis of the title. Morrison's text definitely has a relation to the way God the Father addresses his Son; in Luke the Evangelist we read: 'This is my Son, the Beloved' [Luke 9:36] and in the Gospel according to Matthew: 'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him' [Matthew 3: 16][1], passages where the word 'Beloved' is capitalized signifying the term as a proper noun. Furthermore, Morrison often portrays Beloved through Christ's most vivid emblems, such as the vine: 'vines of hair twisted all over her head. Jesus. Her smile was dazzling' (Morrison 1987 261). In Saint John we read Jesus' words: 'I am the true vine and my father is the vinedresser. … I am the vine, you are the branches' [John 15: 1,5]. It should be noted that Morrison's reference to women's hair is an essential feature to describe their physical and symbolic status. Hair is a main signifier of black identity, and in *Beloved* the author adopts it to assert the character's metaphorical identity: Morrison depicts Beloved as a Jesus through her hair bearing an evident Christological symbolism. At the end of the novel, Beloved, thought to be disappeared, was seen cutting through the woods as 'a naked woman with fish for hair.' (Morrison 1987 267) This reference validates the assumption of Beloved being a re-figuration of Christ, as 'from very early times a fish was a symbol of Christ'; the letters of the Greek word for fish,

[1] Further validations of this biblical reference can be found in The Gospel according to Matthew [17: 6]; Mark [1: 11], [9: 8].

ichtus, 'were ingeniously seen to be the initial letters of the Greek words "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour"' (Newton et al. 1996 31). Therefore the image of fish is largely identified in Christian art as an icon for 'Incarnation, Redemption, Resurrection- the whole scheme of Christian salvation' (Newton et al. 1996 31).

The use of numerology runs throughout the text, something that is evident from the format of the very first sentence since it is written all in capital letters: '124 WAS SPITEFUL.' (Morrison 1987 3) 124 is not only the number of the house where Sethe moved escaping from slavery, but each cipher is pregnant with meaning: this is a sequence of numbers with a missing figure. The number three, defined by Pythagoras as the 'number of completion, expressive of a beginning, a middle, and an end' (Ferguson 1954 276), is missing; its absence is perceived from the very first line implying a dominant incompleteness that governs the entire story. The novel, structured in three sections, is all about the manifestation of the missing figure; it is a celebration of its completeness; therefore Beloved becomes the return of the missing figure, of the ghost, the completion of an unfinished sequence. The sequence 1 2 4 that misses the third figure, signifies the absence of Sethe's third child: Sethe has four children, Howard, Buglar, the little killed baby, and Denver. Beloved has been excluded from the family, from life and from being enumerated among Sethe's children; she has been left out and consciously forgotten for being a heavy and unbearable memory.

The correspondence of Beloved with the number three and its Christian heritage is not accidental: suggesting the Trinity, the number three signifies the idea of Oneness in which more entities perfectly coexist; it is the figure of perfection where the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are One and Three. Hence, as I suggest, Beloved's presence in the novel corresponds to the three parts of the One, the Trinity. Being a Christ, she is one of three and, at the same time, One.

Flower symbolism, occurring throughout the novel, not only further reinstates Beloved's association with Christological symbolism, but it also functions as a presage of The Passion of Christ re-figured in the last sections of the narration. For instance, when Beloved offers Sethe some flowers, "[s]he filled basket after basket with the first things warmer weather let loose in the ground—dandelions, violets, forsythia—presenting them to Sethe, who arranged them, stuck them, wound them all over the house" (Morrison 1987 241). According to Ferguson's Signs and Symbols in Christian Art, the dandelion, 'one of the "bitter herbs," was used as a symbol of the Passion, and as such appears, among other flowers, in paintings of the Madonna and Child, and the Crucifixion' (Ferguson 1954 36)[2]; similarly Levi D'Ancona

[2] The major examples in Renaissance paintings can be found in Raphael's 'Deposition' and Bernardo Parentino's 'Christ carrying the Cross' where a dandelion appears as a symbol of

calls the violet 'a well known symbol of humility because it is a small plant, grows on low places, has a sweet fragrance and has a dull colour. Hence the violet symbolized the Crucifixion of Christ, which was the greatest sign of humility' (Levi D'Ancona 1977 398-9). These flowers, presages of death, appear as anthropomorphic in Morrison's text: they are stuck, pierced and wounded just as a body under flagellation.

In the last section of the novel Beloved, who has turned out to be evil, is finally exorcised; this form of 'clearing', carried out by the women of the community, bears a significant connection with the Passion narrative: in fact unmistakable similarities recall and re-figure the flagellation and the Crucifixion of Christ. 'So thirty women made up that company and walked slowly, slowly toward 124. It was three in the afternoon on a Friday' (Morrison 1987 257). At three in the afternoon, thirty women walked toward 124 to exorcise Beloved. As the reader learns that it is a Friday, this undoubtedly echoes the day Christ was killed: at the age of thirty-three Jesus was condemned to death and crucified, and from the New Testament we learn that he died on a Friday on the ninth hour, which corresponds exactly to three post meridian. Thus the Friday in question is indubitably Good Friday observed by Christians:

> They could have been going to do the laundry at the orphanage or the insane asylum; corn shucking at the mill; or to clean fish, rinse offal, cradle white-babies, sweep stores, scrape hog skin, press lard, case-pack sausage or hide in tavern kitchens so whitepeople didn't have to see them handle their food. But not today. (258)

On Good Friday, the Catholic Church prescribes that one should not bake, cook, eat meat or clean the house; abstention and fast should be observed as a sign of respect and mourning for the death of Jesus.

The scene then shifts to a very minor character, Edward Bodwin, the old white man whose arrival echoes that of slavers. Indeed his presence re-awakens memory for Sethe, who attempts to kill him. On the other hand in this same passage, Bodwin's past is also recalled: 30 years ago, he used to live in 124 Bluestone Road as a child: 'There was a time when he buried things there. Precious things he wanted to protect' … Where, exactly, was the box of tin soldiers? The watch chain with no watch?' … Now he just wanted to know where his soldiers were and his watchless chain' (260).

To Bodwin are connected the main symbols of Christ's Flagellation: chains, even known as fetters, 'are one of the symbols of Passion, referring to the Flagellation of Christ by the soldiers.' (Ferguson 1954 310) Bodwin is also portrayed holding 'a whip in his hand' (Morrison 1987 262); this image can only confirm the previous assumption as the whip, also called scourge, is

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Passion; while in Perugino's 'Crucifixion with S. Jerome and Mary Magdalene' and Signorelli's 'Christ on the Cross' a violet appears.

another symbol of the Passion. (Ferguson 1954 321) As we learn from the New Testament, Jesus, by order of Pilate, is delivered to the soldiers 'to be first scourged and then handed over to be crucified' [Matthew 27:26]; this passage is known as the Flagellation of Christ, a usual prelude to crucifixion. Although Bodwin was never a slaver, here we have a metonymic displacement in Sethe's eyes in which he re-calls the arrival of her slave master to 124 which resulted in Beloved's killing.

When Sethe hears the music sung by the thirty women assembled outside 124 she was 'wringing a cool cloth to put on Beloved's forehead' as the girl was 'sweating profusely' (Morrison 1987 261); this image is, unquestionably, a clear reference to one of the fourteen stations of Christ's journey to Calvary. The Apocryphal Gospels of Nicodemus tell that 'when Jesus was on his way to be crucified' Veronica 'took pity on his sufferings and wiped the sweat from his brow with her veil.' (Ferguson 1954 264) This episode belongs to the legends of Christianity, in fact, the same Evangelium Nichodemi reports a variant of the story where Veronica is in 'possession of a piece of cloth which the Virgin Mary placed upon Christ's face while he was hanging on the cross' (Cross 1996 68-69). No matter what variant of the episode we take into account, its connection with Morrison's text is still evident: Beloved, who in this section becomes the girl Jesus, is on her way to be crucified.

Before being nailed on the cross Christ was stripped of his clothes, Beloved, similarly, is naked: '[Beloved h]ad taken the shape of a pregnant woman, naked and smiling in the heat of the afternoon sun. Thunderblack and glistening she stood on long straight legs, her belly big and tight. Vines of hair twisted all over her head.' (Morrison 1987 261) The adjectives 'thunderblack' and 'straight' deserve further attention as they have significant implications. 'Straight' might in fact allude to the unbroken legs of Christ: the Jews asked Pilate to break the legs of the crucified bodies to hasten their death, but when the soldiers 'came to Jesus they found he was already dead … this happened to fulfil the words of scripture' [John 19: 33-36]. In fact, in the Psalms one can read: 'taking care of every bone, Yahweh will not let one be broken' [Psalms 34: 20] and, similarly, in Exodus 'nor must you break any bone of it' [Exodus 12: 46]. Furthermore, the adjective 'thunderblack' is Morrison's first mention of Beloved's blackness in the novel. Beloved is a black, pregnant-like woman, progenitor of eternal life, 'crucified' by her community.

After Beloved has been exorcised, the community is depicted as 'a pile of people out there. They make a hill. A hill of black people falling' (Morrison 1987 262). The image of a hill is strictly connected to the Passion of Christ as it is the place where he was crucified: it was on the Calvary, the Hebrew Golgotha, a hill, where his cross was erected between those of two thieves who were crucified at the same time.

Once Beloved is gone, 124 Bluestone Road is a realm of silence. Denver goes off to work every day, while Sethe lies in bed indolent, wanting to let herself die. Paul D, who had been Sethe's lover, hears from Denver and the rest of the community about her so he decides to pay her a visit. When he gets to 124 the house looks rather surreal as if Beloved's leaving has left a mark. The description of the house is filled with symbols and allusions to the preceding events. 'Faded newspaper pictures nailed to the outhouse on a tree' (Morrison 1987 270) are like discarded past memories; this unsettling image evokes Christ nailed on the cross. Similarly, the 'dead ivy twines around bean poles and door handles' (270) seem to be embracing the house, like a spider web; it holds it as in a deadly grip. Indeed the ivy 'was symbolic of the Cross of Christ because, like the ivy, it had firm roots and could not be destroyed or uprooted by any persecution' (Levi D'Ancona 1977 191). Although the chrysanthemum blooms in November, Morrison has strangely included it in 'the riot of late-summer flowers' (Morrison 1987 270) in the back of 124 Bluestone Road. This seems to be pregnant with meaning since, in catholic symbolism, the chrysanthemum is 'the flower of the Dead.' All the above denotes an absence, everything signifies that something is over, somebody is gone.

The place is 'stone quiet' (270), and when Paul D wanders around the house visiting each room he realizes that 'something is missing from 124.' (270) It is not only the missing child, it is 'something larger than the people who lived there. Something more than Beloved or the red light' (270). What has changed since the last time Paul D visited 124? 'In the place where once a shaft of sad red light had bathed him, locking him where he stood, is nothing' (270); whatever was locking him is now over. With Beloved the burden of past is gone, the ghost of slavery, Paul D's inability to remember, and his reluctance to tell. He feels that something is missing, but 'he can't put his finger on it' (270); this phrase, whilst idiomatically expressing Paul D's failure to identify what is missing, constitutes an eloquent reminiscence of the legendary biblical episode when Mary of Magdala, visiting Jesus' empty tomb, saw the first Appearance of Christ. When the woman recognized the spirit she attempted to touch it and Jesus spoke the notorious words 'Noli me tangere (touch me not), because I have not yet ascended to the Father' [John 20: 16].

Paul D realizes that it is impossible for him to 'finger' this presence, and later he perceives that 'beyond his knowing is the glare of an outside thing that embraces while it accuses.' (271) I believe that this glare that, at the same time, accuses and embraces, evokes the final dramatic episode of Christian history, the Last Judgment. In this scriptural event the Resurrected Christ rewards or punishes the living and the dead. Northern medieval art and High Renaissance painters[3] portray this event including 'representations

[3] See Michelangelo Buonarroti's 'Last Judgement.'

of Mary and John the Baptist to the right and left respectively of Christ' (Apostolos-Cappadona 1994205-6) who, as the Presiding Judge, separates the sheep from the goats. In *Beloved* we read:

> To the right of him, where the door to the keeping room is ajar, he hears humming. Someone is humming a tune. Something soft and sweet, like a lullaby. Then a few words. Sounds like "high Johnny, wide Johnny. Sweet William bend down low." Of course, he thinks. That's where she is—and she is. Lying under a quilt of merry colors. Her hair[4], like the dark delicate roots of good plants, spread all over on the pillow. Her eyes, fixed on the window, are so expressionless he is not sure she will know who he is. There is too much light here in this room. Things look sold.
>
> "Jackweed raise up high," she sings. "Lambswool over my shoulder, buttercup and clover fly." She is fingering a long clump of her hair.' (Morrison 1987 271)

Just to the right of Paul D, who is the reader/viewer's eye of this final picture, lays Sethe humming a lullaby.[5] In the frame of the Last Judgement, she is on the right, among the safe souls: the lambswool over her shoulder is therefore a signifier of her being safe, among the lambs, the pure souls. Sethe is freed from the slavery of her memories, and she has been redeemed by her guilt of killing her memories. Toni Morrison has placed a matricide among innocents, 'yet in the human drama, Morrison reminds us, innocence is neither possible nor desirable' (Otten 1989 92): here the binary structure upon which western culture is based, the perennial dichotomy of innocence and guilt, has been dismantled.

The homecoming of Beloved as memory is an opportunity for Sethe to work through her past in order to reclaim the present and look at the future. With these premises I would interpret the role of Beloved, the sacrificed black Christ, as a redeemer for the community, for the readers, for white and black people who don't want to remember. *Beloved* becomes a story of redemption based on memory; as Morrison says: 'the characters don't want to remember, I don't want to remember, black people don't want to remember, white people won't want to remember.' (Angelo 1989 257) The ritual of exorcism on the body of Beloved represents an act of awareness of the backkick of history on the part of the community: the Flagellation, the Passion, the Crucifixion is a conscious act of working through the past, in Freudian

[4] Sethe's identity is stressed through hair symbolism (see footnote 2). The reader perceives a positive image of the character.

[5] This representation of Sethe as an innocent maid evokes Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Before dying, the young Ophelia, known to be mad, sings refrains of popular songs of death and love. Indeed Ophelia's song 'For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy' (Shakespeare, [iv, sc. v, 184] seems to be echoed by Sethe's 'high Johnny, wide Johnny. Sweet William bend down low. […] Jackweed raise up high, […] Lambswool over my shoulder, buttercup and clover fly' (Morrison 1987 271). Names of flowers are woven into Sethe's song expanding its multiple allusions; likewise Ophelia's discourse is dense with flower symbolism.

terms, of dealing with it. By positing Beloved as a Christ-figure, Morrison insists upon the enormity of the betrayal of collective memory implicit in the postmodernist isolation of the Holocaust as the single defining moment that horribly illuminates the bankruptcy of the Enlightenment project. Fusing an (inverted) version of the Christian tradition with the narrative of African-American history, Morrison thereby problematizes our notions of postcoloniality.

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Power Transformations of the Gendered Subject in Three Stories from Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*

Karin Möller

Jhumpa Lahiri is a writer of South Asian origin who grew up in the United States, and the stories in her collection *Interpreter of Maladies* all relate to the Indo-American diaspora and/or South Asia. Arguments have been made in favor of reading the collection as a short story cycle, due to Lahiri's conscious reliance on recurring patterns and motifs in the stories (Brada-Williams 13). There is something to be said for this, yet the nine stories in the collection are aligned also by traits that go well beyond narrative structure. Geetha Ganapathy-Doré notes that "Indian people, films, novels, beauty-queens, food and spirituality cross borders easily" in today's globalised society. Significantly, she adds that Lahiri's collection was originally sub-titled 'Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond' (58). Beyond what, we may ask. Reading these sophisticated and subtly connected stories it struck me that the *beyond* is meant to denote not only geographical extension but also the troubled complexity of a particular nexus of space and time in post-colonial, postmodern time. Ketu H. Katrak, for instance, refers to the "remarkable vision" underlying the stories as "ethno-global" (5). How does this seemingly self-contradictory idea relate to Lahiri's stories? What about the mindscapes and physical locations of the contemporary "beyond"?

The three stories which I focus on were chosen because, together, they reflect a wider time span, stretching from the time of post-Partition India to a cross-cultural, globalised present that lies "beyond." Juxtaposing them gives us an idea not only of how cultural traditions in the past shaped and affected the characters' understanding of their subjectivites, but also of how the continuous process of change has influenced individuals more or less radically in different parts of the world. Any critical perspective involving changes over such a long period of time is bound to be a very complex one, well-nigh impossible to chart in a paper of this length. In order to achieve some sort of consistency in my argument, I have narrowed my focus somewhat. "A Real Durwan," "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar," and "This Blessed House" all feature *female* protagonists living in rather different social and historical

circumstances. Two of them lead single lives in India, while we find the third in multi-ethnic, metropolitan America, where she lives with her Indian husband in a traditionally 'arranged' marriage. Representation of female agency (or lack thereof) in these stories provides a basis for how we could understand some of the factors that have been instrumental in clearing the road to an ethno-global "beyond." While the criss-cross patterns of interconnection and change in Lahiri's stories call for more attention than I can give them here, I still wish to point to some of the threads in her intricate story textures.

I will now look at the three texts in a more detailed way. The story "A Real *Durwan*" is the story of Boori Ma, a caretaker-cum-doorwoman in an apartment building in post-independence, post-Partition Calcutta, a city all set to link up with modernity and growing material wealth. Sixty-four-year-old Boori Ma ekes out a living by helping the residents with various chores of the kind that, it is pointed out, is normally "no job for a woman" (73). Yet Boori Ma, who had arrived as an East Bengali refugee in a humble cart, manages to clean and do odd jobs to the satisfaction of the residents and is therefore tolerated by the them despite the somewhat peculiar stories she tells them about her past life as the wife of a well-to-do landowner. Her stories provoke their disbelief due to the glaring disparity between her present existence and what she alleges to be her past, for, alas, "What kind of landowner ended up sweeping stairs?" (72). Still, Boori Ma holds on to her version of truth, repeating her tale of past affluence with the formulaic phrase "Believe me, don't believe me" tagged on to her utterances, thus feeding the doubts of her neighbors by constantly dangling before them the suspicion that she may be embellishing the truth about her previous existence with fancy details. But why would she do so, narrative logic compels us to ask. Her incredulous neighbors speculate that, perhaps, she had once worked for a well-to-do landowner in Bengal. If that is the case, we might look upon this character as an unreliable narrator who succumbs to the vicarious pleasure of day-dreaming of material comfort and social status. However, it might also be the voice of nostalgia that speaks through the Boori Ma character. Perhaps her presence is meant to revoke India's rich and legendary cultural heritage from pre-colonial and colonial times? "Mustard prawns were steamed in banana leaves. Not a delicacy was spared. Not that this was an extravagance for us. At our house, we ate goat twice a week. We had a pond on our property, full of fish" (71). This is how Boori Ma describes a family wedding; the sensuous phrasing in terms of which 'India' achieves its calculated nostalgic effect in the minds of readers. Nevertheless, Boori Ma, with her old woman's broom and her erratic mutterings, is eventually chased off the premises by the tenants on the spurious charge of neglect of residential property.

Either way of reading the Boori Ma character—as an unreliable narrator fibbing about her past, or as an avatar of India's past, indigenous culture—

implies an ironic rift within what we would like to see as a reasonable approximation of historic truth. Instead of this, she invites us to remember also the hierarchical structure of Indian society where a certain class of woman was transfixed in lowly domestic positions. That they may also in some degree have been protected by the system as long as they remained within it, does not fully account for the lack of freedom and choice that went with their position. Interestingly, however, the text itself foregrounds the rhetorical force of Boori Ma's double discourse. In a spirit of light-hearted irony it is suggested that it is in fact quite effective. Boori Ma may have misrepresented historical truth yet "her rants were so persuasive, her fretting so vivid, that it was not so easy to dismiss her" (72). The rhetoric with which she tries to assert herself is so enervating that in the end she *had to* be sent packing. In this way Lahiri makes Boori Ma carry injustice as an allegorical weight, that is, she is of course powerless to alter the sad historical fate of vast numbers of domestically fettered subaltern women, but she *is* allowed to leave her trace in the story in a manner that determines its ironic significance. Boori Ma's unreliable narration marks her role as that of an avatar, or spectral visitor, from India's colonial past. Obviously, she is *not at home* in her own story except for a brief duration of time. As she vanishes from the story into destitution and abject anonymity her voice is heard no more, and the need for 'real' *durwan* is recognized, one who is better equipped to guard the premises and one who matches the residents' eager ambitions to embrace a fashionable modernity and the improved materialist conditions it brings.

How is the dismissal of Boori Ma and the symbolic silencing of her voice encoded textually so as to express the allegorical weight she carries as a disempowered woman belonging to a no longer viable cultural past? Her voice is "brittle with sorrows, as tart as curds, and shrill enough to grate meat from a coconut" (70). Her expostulations, addressed to no one in particular, or perhaps to history itself, alternate with her tendency towards aggrandizement of this same history into almost pure legend. Unashamedly, she glosses over historical facts: "Why demand specifics? Why scrape lime from a betel leaf? Believe me, don't believe me" (72). As a transitional figure she recedes into the shadows, marked by spectrality and myth which both signify the difficulties we experience in trying to establish with exactness historical truth.

The feminist critic Uma Narayan rightly warns us that attempts to diversify between 'Western' and 'non-Western' cultures have often been made on rather shaky grounds. She points out that the differences we think we perceive between Western and non-Western cultures "were *products of these very comparisons and contras*," where defenders of each respective cultural sphere often had vested interests in representing their own culture as unique and singly different from that of the rivaling other (Narayan 16, italics in original). She goes on to say that while standard notions of western-ness suggested openness to progress and change also with regard to the position

of women, Indian traditionalists who adhered to national ideals of womanhood liked to point out that women actually used to be revered and very highly regarded in Indian culture. Thus, they had in some degree achieved a vantage position already, without the support of the Western feminist movement. Now, the problem with this contention is that it overlooks completely the social stratifications of Indian society, something that Narayan also reminds us of. Still, of course, this does not necessarily render invalid all the claims made on behalf of women and their positions in the vast and many-faceted sub-continent of India. This very ambiguity concerning the historical status of Indian women is rendered visible through Boori Ma's story. I will now discuss how the secluded and sheltered existence that (some) women enjoyed is represented rather differently in another story in Lahiri's collection, "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar."

Bibi enacts with noisy bravado her role as a sick, unmarried and therefore undesirable woman in a local Indian community. She is motherless but protected and watched over by her father who relies on cognitive methods in order to determine the nature of her illness. "He created a chart of her symptoms with directions for calming her," yet to no avail. Stern fatality is handled deftly by Lahiri; the little slips of paper with the father's directions do not reach anyone but were eventually "turned into sailboats by our children, or used to calculate grocery budgets on the reverse side" (166), as the anonymous narrator observes. Twenty-nine-year-old Bibi, however, is a victim who actively resists powerlessness by (more or less) unwittingly making it into something of a comic fetish. She complains of her predicament in terms which are ironically inverted in relation to the traditional discourse about marriage: "'I will never dip my feet in milk . . . .My face will never be painted with sandalwood paste,' she whimpered. 'Who will rub me with turmeric? My name will never be printed with scarlet ink on a card'" (160-1). This amusing piece of irrelevance reveals psychological *affect* which resonates among the listeners. It is the local community of women who face the problem of how to address Bibi's needs, something that she seems utterly incapable of doing herself after the death of her father/protector. Her unspecified ailment remains incurable after endless consultations with a humorously long and detailed list of medical doctors and specialists in the indigenous tradition. In the end it dawns on the women in the community that what she really needs is a husband.

Uma Narayan, we know, noted that women of a certain class used to be highly honored by their husbands and enjoyed an enviable social status. Since she is not a marketable commodity, Bibi is hardly likely ever to be successful in that way. Yet since she gives voice to her misery in terms that call attention to the futility of the ritual trappings of the marriage ceremonial as signifiers of empowerment, she undermines the idea of honor and tribute without real power. Thus, through her 'performance,' she manages to cast an

ambiguously mottled shadow on the institution of the traditional Indian marriage.

Bibi communicates the significance of this lack of agency and influence and actually performs it in bodily terms through the convulsions which beset her. There may be more to Bibi's story than what looks like a parodic version of the female hysteric trapped in the rhetoric of an Oedipally induced performance. Interestingly, Jan Campbell adds a dimension to the *psychoanalytical* understanding of hysteria by linking it to *social mimesis*, or "hysteria as a crisis in ontological being" (337). Instead of being enclosed within an *internally* split psyche, the *phenomenological* reading of the hysteric (or what surely resembles one in Lahiri's fictional rendering of some of the characteristic symptoms) stresses the rift between the self and the outside world. On the view Campbell subscribes to, the mother is "an extension of the world" (345), and the difference between the readings is defined thus:

> In Freud's account of Oedipal neurosis as desire, the neurotic cannot accept paternal prohibition and law. But in a phenomenological sense the neurotic is simply trapped in a restricted, repetitive mimesis with the mother/world. /. . ./ Overcoming this rivalry means accepting identifications that are more flexible, and open to change. (345)

Bibi Haldar is helpless to achieve another identification than the one with the idea of the traditionally honored (and in her case rather passive) wife which I have spoken of already ("She wanted to be spoken for, protected, placed on her path in life," Lahiri 160). Notably, her complaints are insistent and vocal, but she has no rapport with her own body; "*we* combed out her hair;" "*we* powdered the down over her lips and throat," etc (166, emphasis added). This could be taken as an ominous sign, for as Campbell observes: "A more embodied performance or mimesis entails a meaningful communication where disassociated selves can find elaboration within a creative transference" (346). However, Lahiri's story gradually leaves an opening. As she is accused of exerting an evil influence on her cousin's baby, Bibi (who now finds herself estranged from the relatives who care provisionally for her after her father's death) decides to set up her own household under the supportive surveillance of local women neighbors. A pregnancy strengthens her in her role as a person who takes responsibility for her own life, despite the difficulty of being officially disgraced by the father of her child. The radical change she undergoes as a character leaves open the question of whether her 'ailment' is to be diagnosed as hysteria in clinical terms, or not. However, the main point of the story may still resides within the ambiguous, ironic meaning of the "treatment" Bibi undergoes. In the course of time, a more confident understanding of the potential for female agency develops from within the semantic root of this irony. The closing of the split in Bibi's psyche prepares her for her return to social life and the responsibilities of par-

enthood. Lahiri achieves this through defining female hysteria through mimesis as dialogue within a collective of sympathetic women.

In "This Blessed House," the last story that I will discuss here, a more cosmopolitan community is the background for a power struggle between a fairly newly married Indian couple who try to adjust to life in postmodern America. Both husband and wife are ethnic Indians, united through an arranged marriage that took place in India. Already their names, Twinkle and Sanjeev, signal their differences. Twinkle is really Tamina, seduced by the freedom in her new existence from culturally enforced Indian traditions. Sanjeev is soon frustrated as he felt that "he was getting nowhere with her, with this woman whom he had known for only four months, this woman with whom he now shared his life" (140). The extent of Sanjeev's bewilderment with "this woman" is apparent when they arrange a housewarming party with his work colleagues as the chief guests. This is where the bewilderment deepens into frustration as he finds his wife engrossed in a treasure hunt involving kitschy objects relating to the Christian religion, apparent leftovers from the house's former owners. While Twinkle admits that she and Sanjeev are "good little Hindus," her carelessly flaunted cultural relativism forces her husband to co-habit also with artifacts that "meant nothing to him" (138). Twinkle, however, basks with happiness at "little things" (142) the significance of which wholly escapes Sanjeev, whose seriousness and abhorrence of what he sees as sacrilege is genuine. A statue of Christ found in this house is "blessed," not in the religious sense but through the haphazard luck which granted them their finding. The incompatibility of the couple is further emphasized when their guests arrive and appear to be delighted by Twinkle's easygoing manner and her enthusiastic pursuit of 'treasures' in the new house in which "everybody followed" (154). Sanjeev can do nothing but look on, his mood increasingly subdued at the thought of his gradual loss of control over where his wife takes him. The climax of the evening is the retrieval of a silver bust of Christ irreverently decked out in a feather hat. In contrast to other objects found this bust has commercial value but Sanjeev is immune also to this: "He did hate it. He hated its immensity, and its flawless, polished surface, and its undeniable value" (156-157). The unruly individualist desire that prompts Twinkle to seek out items related to the Christian faith only to turn them into empty fetishes appears as a parody of universalist, religious values. However, the unabashed delight and greed with which she does this points beyond this, towards a parody of postmodernism *per se*, in that the consumerist drive itself is given no very deep motivation in the story; it is an end in itself, leading nowhere. Even so, Sanjeev's resistance to the society he is seemingly a part of, may be thought of as rather inhibiting to himself.

However, ironic warnings are embedded in several of the situations described in the story. Twinkle's exuberance is praised in jargon that is juvenile and simplistic: "'Your wife's wow,' added Prabal, following behind. He

was an unmarried professor of physics at Yale" (153). A reader who expects a Yale professor to have at his disposal a more nuanced and polysyllabic vocabulary might, like Sanjeev, be bewildered. How *can* respect for ethnically encoded values ever co-habit in harmony with globalised societies' tendency to level them? Possibly, the cultural logic of the story could be explained with the help of Ernesto Laclau's theory of *articulation*[1] as a way of forging a unity of disparate elements of a specific political or ideological discourse. "Articulation," as the cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall also understands it, denotes a connection that can be severed *or* maintained, much as in the idea of articulated vehicles. It is true that we are talking here of culture rather than politics and ideology, yet this paradigm of thought may be generally applicable. In Lahiri's story of Twinkle and Sanjeev, the objects of a previously established religious faith take on a new significance through the way they are deployed. Hall adduces the example of Rastafarians in Jamaica, who altered the meaning of biblical texts to express their experience in their own terms. Hall explains it thus: "This is a cultural transformation. It is not something totally new. It is not something which has a straight, unbroken line of continuity from the past. It is transformation through a reorganization of the elements of a cultural practice, elements which do not in themselves have any necessary political connotations" (143).

My contention here is that Lahiri empowers her female protagonist at the expense of her male one, and the means by which she does so has something to do with Twinkle's ability to transform her mindset so that it might align itself effortlessly to a different, 'western' culture. Does this imply that Sanjeev's eastern-based traditions have little or no hope of surviving? Not necessarily, in view of some innocuous-seeming textual evidence in Lahiri's story. Despite his being very frustrated with the novel situation he is asked to accept, Sanjeev is swept along at the sight of his wife's shoes at the entrance of their bedroom. Emblematic of her restless energy, they remind him of the start of their life together, which changed his own decisively. She, on her part, admits at the close of the evening: "[. . .] my feet are killing me" (157), so maybe she, too, has to modify her heady enthusiasm and pace of life. Whether Sanjeev and Twinkle *will* be able to forge a new union based on more generously shared values is an open-ended question in itself. What Lahiri does seems to expose the irony inherent in the situation.

In conclusion I would like to point to some of the points I have raised about Lahiri's three female characters, and the significance in a postmodern, "ethno-global" context of the changing conditions of their lives. Boori Ma comes close to representing the subaltern position in that she loses whatever links with modernity that she tries to forge. Still, we as readers need to know about her experience to understand the cultural origins of the female struggle

[1] Hall refers to Laclau's book *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism* (1977).

for independence and power in South Asia. The half-allegorical Boori Ma character is made to take on this responsibility. Bibi Haldar comes to terms with tradition by accepting responsibility for her pregnant body and the child she has. Her story also stresses the importance of loyalty among women. Twinkle/Tamina, who appears to flaunt tradition, still makes her conservative husband warm to the prospect of the cross-cultural "beyond" where we are all asked to suspend our beliefs while new associations are formed on the basis of the seemingly fragmented and disparate.

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The Spectre of the Other in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and Nadine Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature*

Rose Bloem

The three novels by Charlotte Brontë, Jean Rhys and Nadine Gordimer under discussion in this paper—*Jane Eyre* (1847), *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), and *A Sport of Nature* (1987)—were produced in different centuries and depict widely divergent cultural, political and social settings. Gordimer's narrative, for example, differs greatly from the earlier novels in that it is a postmodern work, written in the spirit of the picaresque. Whereas the alienated female in the earlier novels was deprived of all possibility to develop her own identity, in Gordimer's narrative the female character's destiny involves an invention of self. However, despite their differences, presentations of childhood, female otherness and aspects concerning selfhood can be compared in the authors' depictions of the threatening female Other.

In these novels, the female Other is perceived as an enigmatic force, in some instances demonic, but in all respects mysteriously threatening. The female Other is depicted as deeply alienated, growing up keenly aware that her actions are the subject of rumour, gossip and conjecture; according to Rhys' character it is "the sound of whispering that I have heard all my life" (Rhys 148), and as Gordimer's character puts it: "… all through childhood the monologue never stops" (Gordimer 25).

In Brontë's text reflections of colonial matters provide examples of what Elleke Boehmer identifies as the Victorian impulse to rely on "stereotyped images of threat or allure" (Boehmer 22). The narrative combines exotic metaphors of a slave or slavery with orientalism and these are compounded in the text, leading finally to the vivid depiction of a demonised and alien female Other who is described as being so cunning that "it is not in mortal discretion to fathom her craft" (Brontë 292).

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the Orient as that "part of the earth's surface situated to the east of some recognized point of reference…" adding that the term is "[n]ow "*poetic* or *literary*." The Orient, in this paper, will thus be regarded as having a *relative* rather than an absolute geographical frame of reference; consequently I argue that it describes a geography of

the imagination, not of actuality. Furthermore, this approach holds that Brontë's depictions of orientalism clearly reflect how this concept was an accepted projection of western imagination at the time. Joyce Zonana also highlights this aspect of Bronte¨s narrative and further argues that the novel is permeated by a "feminist orientalist" discourse (Zonana 59).

Edward Said argues that Orientalism as a discourse reveals the "enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient" (Said 235). Consequently, the Orient as something alien holds a suggestion of that which is threatening at the same time as providing cohesion to the threatened, defining its own identity. For Said such a dialectic relationship, ironically, results in privileging the orient as the site of fantasy, beauty, the exotic and frequently also the feminine (Said 6).

Joyce Zonana's approach is similar to that of Said's in that she, too, focuses on the opposition "West/East," arguing that gender oppression could also be effectively linked to "oriental despotism" (Zonana 59). She argues, for example, that "*Jane Eyre* focuses on a form of oppression that is, from the first, conceived by Westerners in terms of gender" (Zonana 59). She points out how Brontë's various references to a sultan and his female slave can be interpreted as evidence that "not only despotism but bigamy and the oriental trade in women are on Jane's mind" (Zonana 59). There seems to be ample support for this interpretation in, for example, Brontë's depiction of the humiliating excursion when Rochester (who already has a wife) takes his "betrothed" shopping at a silk warehouse and a jeweller's.

In this incident, Jane experiences the situation as intensely degrading: "the more he bought me," she tells the reader, "the more my cheek burned with a sense of annoyance and degradation" (Brontë 267). Their shopping completed, they return to Thornfield and Jane recounts how Rochester smiled at her: "He smiled; and I thought his smile was such as a sultan might, in a blissful and fond moment, bestow on a slave his gold and gems had enriched" (Brontë 267). Zonana's interpretation is directly applicable to the contention of this paper when she argues that

> by calling Rochester a "sultan" and herself a "slave," Jane provides herself and the reader with a culturally acceptable simile by which to understand and combat the patriarchal "despotism" (Brontë 267) central to Rochester's character. Part of a large system of what I term feminist orientalist discourse that permeates *Jane Eyre,* Charlotte Brontë's sultan/slave simile displaces the source of patriarchal oppression onto an "Oriental," Mahometan" [sic] society, enabling British readers to contemplate local problems without questioning their own self-definition as Westerners and Christians. (Zonana 59)

Jane Eyre, with its combination of fantasies and fears of the Other plus its many examples of orientalist discourse is a text that could be regarded as an excellent example of Said's contention that "European culture gained in

strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (Said 236). Elleke Boehmer also points out how "the Empire in its heyday was conceived and maintained in an array of writings" (Boehmer 13). A further example of this is Brontë's narrative from 1847 where the setting is the first decade of the nineteenth century when colonial matters were reflected in much of the writing of the day.

Brontë's novel depicts a time when Englishmen travelled to distant places and wrote prolifically of their experiences. According to Boehmer, Victorian genres such as, for example, the triple-decker and the adventure tale are "infused with imperial ideas of race pride and national prowess" (Boehmer 13). Traces of these elements are clearly discernable in Brontë's text to the extent that it could, at times, be used to illustrate Boehmer's contention that a text becomes the "vehicle of imperial authority" and consequently symbolises "the act of taking possession" (Boehmer 13).

In Brontë's novel, the Englishman, Edward Rochester, keeps the identity of his first wife secret by locking her away in the attic of his estate. When the truth of his first marriage to a Creole from the colonies is revealed, his Jamaican wife is vividly depicted as the demonised Other:

> In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not at first sight tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane hid its head and face. …The maniac bellowed: she parted her shaggy locks from her visage and gazed wildly at her visitors. (Brontë 291)

To echo Boehmer's contention, Brontë's narrative can be regarded as a valid example of how a colonial text can reveal "the ways in which that world system could represent the degradation of other human beings as natural, an innate part of their degenerate or barbarian state" (Boehmer 21).

Brontë's text presents the colonised female as the depraved and demented Other, and, as already suggested, the narrative thus becomes what Boehmer terms the "vehicle of imperial authority" in that it reflects the symbolic "act of possession" through the Englishman's attempts to incarcerate and thus "silence" his mad wife, the colonial Other (Boehmer 13). Boehmer's understanding of the Other signifies what she identifies as "that which is unfamiliar and extraneous to a dominant subjectivity, the opposite or negative against which an authority is defined" (Boehmer 21).

The repressed female is frequently presented in nineteenth-century texts as a silenced and passive Other, incapable of representing itself. As an example of the latter we can take Said's interpretation of Flaubert's depiction of the Oriental female which, according to Said, has engendered a "widely influential model" for rendering, in literature, the female Other (Said 6). Said's analysis holds true even in respect of Brontë's text in that it bears

striking resemblance to her textual depiction of the "silenced" female Other from the West Indies.

In keeping with this, in *Jane Eyre,* the alien female is imprisoned and silenced by the Englishman who tells her story when he is no longer able to keep her presence a secret. We see how in Said's example of Flaubert's depiction, like in Brontë's text, the female Other never "spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence or history. *He* spoke for and represented her"; and as Said points out he was a foreign, comparatively wealthy male; "such were the historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess [her] physically but to speak for her and to tell the reader in what way she was "typically Oriental" (Said 6).

Echoing Said's contention, Gayatri Spivak argues that it "should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English" (Spivak 262). However, with her narrative, Rhys counters a representation which is coloured by, to borrow Veronica Gregg's terms, "ideological presumptions of the metropolitan centre" (Gregg 408). There can be no doubt that Rhys objected to presumptions concerning the colonial "Other," and her comments on what it means to be English can be effectively applied to the behaviour of the Englishman in *Wide Sargasso Sea*:

> You cannot understand it unless you understand the English social system. It is a great crime to feel intensely about anything in England, because if the average Englishman felt intensely about anything, England as it is could not exist; or, certainly the ruling class in England could not continue to exist. Thus you get the full force of a very efficient propaganda machine turned on the average Englishman from the cradle to the grave, warning him that feeling intensely about anything is a quality of the subject peoples. (qtd. in Gregg 408)

Jean Rhys' novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, responds directly to the prejudiced facts provided about the West Indies in Brontë's novel. In Rhys' narrative, the voiceless Creole "Other" speaks, the outskirts become the centre, and the English become the "Other," living somewhere in a place heard of, but never seen:

> 'England,' said Christophine, who was watching me. 'You think there is such a place?' 'How can you ask that? You know there is.' 'I never seen the damn place, how I know?' 'You do not believe that there is a country called England? She blinked and answered quickly, 'I don't say I don't *believe*. I say I don't *know*, I know what I see with my eyes and I never see it. Besides I ask myself is this place like they tell us? Some say one thing, some different, I hear it cold to freeze your bones and they thief your money, clever like the devil. … Why you want to go to this cold thief place? If there is this place at all, I never see it, that is one thing sure.' (Rhys 93)

Moreover, Rhys objected to Brontë's *Jane Eyre,* essentially because of its depiction of the lunatic Creole "Other;" she felt compelled to present the Creole female of Brontë's narrative from a different perspective. Rhys' letter to Selma Vaz Dias, 9 April 1958, explains her stance:

> I've read and re-read *Jane Eyre*.... The Creole in Charlotte Brontë's novel is a lay figure—repulsive which does not matter, and not once alive which does. She's necessary to the plot, but always she shrieks, howls, laughs horribly, attacks all and sundry—off stage. For me… she must be plausible with a past, the reason why Mr Rochester treats her so abominably and feels justified, the reason why he thinks she is mad and why of course she goes mad, even the *reason* why she tries to set everything on fire, and eventually succeeds… (qtd. in Gregg 414)

We see how, in her exploration of female identity, Rhys' narrative focuses on the forces that shape the Creole woman's fate. Deanna Madden, in her analysis of Rhys' narrative, also examines this aspect of the work, drawing the following conclusion: "The novel asks, who is she and who made her like this? In Jean Rhys version, the woman glimpsed by Jane Eyre in Thornfield Hall is a product of place, time and culture, her identity shaped by race, class, gender and the colonial experience" (Madden 162). This paper argues that the Englishman's own thoughts on his wedding day hold the key to the fate of the Creole woman who is kept locked away in the attic of Thornfield Hall:

> It was all very brightly coloured, very strange, but it meant nothing to me. Nor did she, the girl I was to marry. When at last I met her I bowed, smiled, kissed her hand, danced with her. I played the part I was expected to play—she never had anything to do with me at all. Every movement I made was an effort of will and sometimes I wondered that no one noticed this. I would listen to my own voice and marvel at it, calm, correct but toneless, surely. But I must have given a faultless performance. (Rhys 64)

There can be no doubt that Brontë's novel provoked a negative response from the start, prompting Rhys to write the Other's side: "Of course Charlotte Brontë makes her own world, of course she convinces you, and that makes the poor Creole lunatic all the more dreadful. I remember being quite shocked, and when I re-read it rather annoyed. That's only one side—the English side" (qtd. in Gregg 413). Rhys' opinion is echoed in *Wide Sargasso Sea* when the Creole wife reminds her English husband that "there is always the other side, always" (Rhys 106).

Judie Newman argues that Brontë's characterisation of Rochester reveals how a patriarchal system, as represented by his father and older brother, facilitates the manipulation of the younger son into marrying a Creole woman for her dowry although both father and older brother are fully aware that insanity runs in her family (Newman 14). Newman holds that contrary

to Brontë's text which depicts Rochester as a victim, the aim of Rhys's novel, is to highlight the plight of the marginalised, colonial female Other through a presentation of her personal history: "the vital point was that Bertha was West Indian, a white Creole from Jamaica" (Newman 14). According to Newman, Rhys felt that Brontë "had something against the West Indies" and she was "angry about it" (qtd. in Newman 14).

Newman further argues that Rhys' vindication of the madwoman kept hidden in Rochester's attic not only gives voice to the Creole female who is silenced in Brontë's text, but in doing so it reveals "the legacy of imperialism concealed in the heart of every Englishman's castle" (qtd. in Newman 14). For Newman, the private history of Rhys' female character represents the wider history of West Indian society:

> In a society founded upon the buying and selling of human beings, Antoinette's marriage to Rochester is also envisaged as an economic transaction. Acquired for profit, given a more "English" name, transported overseas, economically enslaved and then quite literally a captive with a keeper, treated as an animal and a degenerate, Antoinette experiences some, at least, of the evils of slavery in her own person. It is not surprising that she reacts, much as her father's ex-slaves did, by setting a torch to the Great House. (Newman 15)

Critics have pondered the question of whether *Wide Sargasso Sea* can stand and be judged on its own, and not merely as a response to *Jane Eyre*. Michael Thorpe, for example, quotes Walter Allen who argues that Rhys' narrative is only "a triumph of atmosphere [which] does not exist in its own right, as Mr. Rochester is almost as shadowy as Charlotte Brontë's Bertha Mason" (Thorpe 99). However, Thorpe refers to Rhys' Creole character's words to her English husband: "There is always the other side, always" and he argues that Rhys' narrative presents a "passionate voice to make the other side felt," thus refuting Allen's generalization which suggests that "Rhys expended her whole creative effort upon an act of moral restitution to the stereotyped lunatic Creole heiress in Rochester's attic" (Thorpe 99).

This study agrees with Thorpe who contends that although it might be argued that Rhys' earlier novels between the wars were "more concerned to do fictional justice rather to her women than their men, *Wide Sargasso Sea* stands out as her most balanced novel in its even-handed treatment of the sexes. Her inward presentation, in the second part of the novel, of Rochester's view-point—complex but not 'shadowy'—is unmatched in her earlier work, and its strength is enhanced by our contrasting recollections of *Jane Eyre*" (Thorpe 99). Thorpe's assessment of these narratives is well worth quoting as an apt conclusion to any analysis of the two works:

> An unexpected consequence of re-reading *Jane Eyre* in search of links with *Wide Sargasso Sea* is finding Brontë's novel a more "dated" work, marred by stereotyping and crude imaginings… I do not refer to the crude 'gothic' of

> Bertha's characterisation, which has been often enough deplored since the novel appeared, but the course assumptions about madness, mingled with the racial prejudice inherent in the insistent suggestion that the "the fiery West Indian" place of Bertha's upbringing (Ch. XXVII) and her Creole blood are the essence of her lunacy: "Her mother, the Creole, was both a madwoman and a drunkard" (Ch. XXVI). Later she is "my Indian Messalina" (Ch XXVII), a byword for debauchery, while Rochester's own confessed peccadilloes go under the milder name of "dissipation." (Thorpe 101)

The title of Nadine Gordimer's novel, *A Sport of Nature*, refers directly to the deviant female protagonist whose threatening refusal to conform to the norms of a white racist environment earns her the reputation of the title of the novel: she is a "*Lusus Naturae*--Sport of Nature. A plant, animal, etc., which exhibits abnormal variation or a departure from the parent stock or type ... a spontaneous mutation; a new variety produced this way" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Like the female Others presented in the two earlier novels, Gordimer's female character is regarded as a threatening force and she too is ostracised and rejected by her family because of her individuality; in their eyes and in the eyes of a racist society she personifies the Other.

Similar to Rhys' narrative, Gordimer's novel explores the fates of a mother and her daughter. The mother abandons her child and escapes the stifling control of an orthodox Jewish family in quest of "passion and tragedy, not domesticity" (Gordimer 59). When the woman leaves her husband and child for a *fado* singer, she also escapes the narrowness and constraint of white South Africa. She runs away to a new life in Lourenco Marques, believing that living there would be more cosmopolitan.

Echoes from Rhys' novel resonate in Gordimer's narrative; the young girl, Hillela, never forgets her mother's "scandalous" flight, and although the woman's defection is treated as a carefully guarded family secret it leaves a deep scar. From the start the girl's behaviour is perceived as being as dangerously "different" as that of her mother and as a result of what is perceived as her defiant bent, she is observed with deep suspicion by those around her and in their eyes she, as the deviant and non-conforming Other, becomes a "sport of nature."

Various incidents, including the threat of miscegenation, add to the girl's list of misdemeanours; as a result of an incident involving a "coloured" boy, she is expelled from boarding school. Furthermore, we see how any understanding of the girl, whose behaviour is regarded as "a-moral. …in the sense of the morality of [South Africa]" (Gordimer 56) comes to an abrupt end when it is discovered that she has been having a sexual relationship with her first cousin. Because of this incestuous affair the final rejection of their sister's deviant daughter becomes a fact and as a consequence, Hillela, like her mother, leaves South Africa.

The similarity to the tragic female fate depicted in the earlier novels ends at the point where the young woman in Gordimer's narrative leaves her

country. It must be emphasised that it is the marginality of Gordimer's female character during her childhood and early adolescence and the way in which she is perceived—her deviant and disturbing "Otherness"—that bears a striking resemblance to depictions of the alienated female of the earlier texts.

Unlike the unfortunate girl in Brontë's and Rhys' narrative whose journey away from her home country ends in disaster, the girl in Gordimer's narrative, once free of the confining South African environment, embarks on a picaresque journey of self-invention. André Brink defines the picaresque as follows: "it provides us with the life-story of a person living on the margin of conventional society" (Brink 261). Unlike Antoinette, who is deprived of her identity when she is re-named by the Englishman, the female character in Gordimer's novel deliberately creates a new perception of self when she assumes another name: "Somewhere along the journey the girl shed one name and emerged under the other" (Gordimer 9). Moreover, she displays a remarkable ability to adapt to changing circumstances, what Brink identifies as the ability to act the "chameleon, surviving through adapting perfectly to constantly changing circumstances" (Brink 270).

As we have seen, the female character in Brontë's and Rhys' narratives, because of her circumstances, lacks Hillela's ability to adapt. Moreover, she is deprived of all perception of self when she is locked up in the attic of Thornfield Hall and renamed Bertha by the Englishman:

> Names matter, like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking glass. There's no looking glass here and I don't know what I am like now. … Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I?" (Rhys 147)

Deracinated and marginalized, her doom is sealed when she taken from the West Indies to a cold and foreign England. To use Deanna Madden's words, "she is totally estranged—exiled in a cold and foreign land, friendless, confined and abandoned by her husband, robbed of her name as well as her money and her freedom, stripped of her former identity" (Madden 171).

Jean Rhys' narrative gives voice to the female who is kept silenced and locked away in Brontë's narrative—the dehumanised madwoman in Rochester's attic is thereby transformed into a human being and the betrayal that leads to her insanity is revealed. Bertha/Antoinette symbolically represents all those white Creole heiresses who shared their fate with her and who were victims of the way the Empire defined the Other.

As mentioned previously, Nadine Gordimer's postcolonial depiction of the female Other resembles in many respects that of Rhys' presentation of a deracinated female character. Gordimer's character also leaves her familiar environment to embark on a journey into unknown territory. However,

unlike the Creole heiress who dies a victim of colonial prejudice and greed, for the female protagonist of Gordimer's novel, rootlessness holds the key since it enables her adapt to a new order.

As early as 1959, Gordimer pondered the problem of the role of white people in an Africa after independence:

> For if we're going to fit in at all in the new Africa, it's going to be sideways, where-we-can, wherever-they'll-shift-up-for-us. This will not be comfortable; indeed, it will be hardest of all for those of us (I am one myself) who want to belong in the new Africa as we never could in the old, where our skin-colour labelled us as oppressors to the blacks and our views labelled us as traitors to the whites. (Gordimer, *Essential Gesture* 32)

To conclude, Nadine Gordimer's novel, unlike the two earlier novels, provides a more overt political message. The behaviour of the marginalised female character of the novel, although it is perceived as equally threatening and dangerous to her indigenous environment as that of the female character in Brontë's and Rhys' narratives, is transformed into a positive quality outside its traditional environment. The female Other is redefined and she becomes Gordimer's creation of an idealised vision of the 'new' white person who will be committed to the cause of freedom in South Africa.

Thus, in Gordimer's depiction, the female's dangerous "Otherness," although deeply threatening to a white South African consciousness, is positive outside the narrow context of a racist society. Once she leaves her country, her fate bears no resemblance to the depictions in Brontë's and Rhys' texts of the passive and silenced Other, incapable of representing itself. Otherness becomes a symbol of hope, and as a consequence of the woman's commitment and willingness to adapt and participate in a new order, she truly is, in a positive sense, a departure from the parent stock or type—a spontaneous mutation; a new variety—who will be able to accept an Africa-centered identity.

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The Fantasia and the Post-Apartheid Imagination: History and Narration in André Brink's *Devil's Valley*[1]

Osita Ezeliora

André Brink (1935-), South Africa's novelist of unrivalled energy and imagination, has more than anyone else embraced the fantastical narrative form in recent time in his abiding commitment to re-imagine seemingly self-evident historical realities.[2] Perhaps the most prolific of South Africa's novelists of English expression, Brink has to his credit 18 full-length novels, anthologies of essays that define his artistic philosophy, a critical study of the language of the novel from Cervantes' to Calvino, and innumerable essays on literature, as well as rudimentary statements and socio-political commentaries scattered in books and literary magazines all over the planet. His keen sense of alterity and experimentation is aptly demonstrated in his recourse to the medium of fantasy narratives following the dawn of a 'liberated' South Africa. Brink's deployment in *Devil's Valley* of this narrative mode, a form that has come to be known more popularly in recent scholarship as 'magical realism,' is the focus of this paper. The nature of the magical real as a resistance form attuned to defining the new idiom of a liberated South Africa is one that calls for an investigation, given the embrace of this mode by Brink and a number of South African writers after apartheid. What

[1] This essay is a revised version of one of the papers I presented at the conference, 'From Orientalism to Postcoloniality' held at Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden, in April 2006. It is part of a larger study on the contributions of André Brink in the construction of emergent paradigms in Post-Apartheid South African fiction of English expression. I benefited immensely from comments by a number of participants at the conference, especially from Dr. Karin Möller of Växjö University, Sweden, and Prof. Peter I. Barta of the University of Surrey, UK. I have also continued to gain from the immeasurable support of Prof. Bheki Peterson whose interest in my research clearly surpasses that of 'just a supervisor'; and I am indebted to Prof. Kerstin Shands of the English Department (Södertörn University) and the conference committee for providing me support and opportunity to present aspects of my research in Stockholm, and to the Andrew W. Mellon Scholarships Foundation for generous financial support during the course of my research into new directions in Post-Apartheid South African fiction of English expression at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

[2] The concept of 're-invention' has been frequent in Brink's rudimentary essays. He uses the idioms 're-imagine,' 're-visit,' 're-create,' etc at random. See, for instance, *Reinventing a Continent* or "Stories of History: Reimagining the Past in Post-Apartheid Narrative."

does it consist in, and how has Brink deployed this mode in his post-apartheid fiction?

In a perceptive study, 'Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse,' Stephen Slemon argues persuasively for a wider perception of this aesthetic narrative mode. He sees it as a fundamentally postcolonial imaginative response to the Euro-narratives of the civilizing master with their inevitable and crafty deformations of the sensibilities and verbal intelligibilities of the colonized subjects. "The concept of magic realism," Slemon observes, "threatens to become a monumentalising category for literary practice and to offer to centralizing genre systems a single locus upon which the massive problem of difference in literary expression can be managed into recognizable meaning in one swift pass" (Slemon 408-9). Language becomes the central aesthetic domain for the conflict in narrative modes. Indeed, as Slemon puts it: "In magic realism this battle is represented in the language of narration by the foregrounding of two opposing discursive systems, with neither managing to subordinate or contain the other. This sustained opposition forestalls the possibility of interpretive closure through any act of naturalizing the text to an established system of representation" (Slemon 410).

It is rewarding that Slemon's theorising itemizes three basic issues in the reading of the magic realist text, namely, the recognition of 'transformational regionalism,' in which "the site of the text, though described in familiar and local terms, is metonymic of the postcolonial culture as a whole"; 'the foreshortening of history,' in which "the time scheme of the novel metaphorically contains the long process of colonization and its aftermath"; and 'the thematic foregrounding' of "those gaps, absences and silences produced by the colonial encounter and reflected in the text's disjunctive language of narration." Of course, he adds: "On this third level, the magic realist texts tend to display a preoccupation with images of both borders and centers and to work toward destabilizing their fixity" (Slemon 411-412). In a way, therefore, the perception of the fantastical mode as a post-colonial genre finds support and relevance in much of contemporary narratives of the Other, even from the neo-historicist and late capitalist theorising of Fredric Jameson's persuasion. The politics of content and ideological leanings of this narrative mode continually essentialize the problematic of domination and dispossession. What needs be added are the pattern of the narrative and its processes of dislodging marginal spaces through its creation of what Jameson calls 'actantial locus' (Jameson 1981:128).

The peculiar problematic of South Africa as a post-apartheid post-colony need be noted here. The double colonization seen in the external invasion by the British in the nineteenth century and the later internal 'colonization' by the Afrikaner-instituted apartheid created a special identity of South Africa as one doubly torn to shreds by two invading European colonialist vultures, a situation which has left issues of cultural disintegration and linguistic incoherence as major defining features of black South Africa's socio-cultural

imaginary. Commentators on the magical realist form in African writing have continued to argue for the countless reasons that inform African writers' fascination with revisiting their history as well as their appetite for reinventing that past. Following this mode of argument in her discussion of Syl Cheney-Coker's *The Last Harmattan of Alusine Dunbar* and Haile Gerima's film, 'Sankofa,' Brenda Cooper has noted, like David Coplan, "the terrible history of cruelty and oppression that slaves and their descendants suffered" (Cooper 1996: 176). But in drawing support from Coplan, however, she reaches the shocking conclusion—quoting Coplan—that "the socially harmonious" portrait painted of pre-colonial Africa is "not one in which any non-African American well acquainted with Africa and it's [sic] history is likely to believe" (Cooper 176). While Coplan might have been "categorical," he has not necessarily argued "correctly," as Cooper would want us believe. Actually, the obvious question here is whether there were indeed non-African Americans who were truly "well acquainted with Africa and it's [sic] history." Rather, there is massive evidence that the Africa the many so-called Euro-American experts had held up is, indeed, an Africa that never was.[3]

Elsewhere, however, Cooper raises the question: "If magical realism is as much a set of formal devices and strategies as a way of seeing the world, what can the nature of narrativity itself illustrate about the genre?" (1998: 34-5). It is at this point that we are confronted with a visible departure from the traditional realistic narrative mode with its insistence on empirical verifiability of narrative incidents. The concerns for the Other — the thematics— become immersed in a complex web of narrative structures. The plot development or narrative progression, characters and characterization, authorial views and spatio-temporal manifestations are at once assembled and dislocated, harmonized and contradicted in the author's paradoxical creations of opposite realities. It is in this sense that 'hybridity' or "the celebration of 'mongrelism' as opposed to ethnic certainties" is a fundamental device of the magical realist novelist. Cooper suggests:

[3] A most eloquent statement to this position is Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow's *The Africa That Never Was: Four Centuries of British Writing About Africa* (New York: Twayne, 1970). See also Achebe's "An Image of Africa," *Hopes and Impediments* (London: William Heinemann, 1986); Abiola Irele's interesting essay, "In Praise of Alienation" is another illuminating response to this kind of assumption. Arguing against the kind of romantic nativism that often come from African cultural nationalists, Irele points out that the concept of 'Otherness' as it concerns Europe's image of Africa is not peculiar to Africa alone. The 'Other' as a racial and, consequently, cultural idiom of inferior categorization has always manifested in the global politics of domination through the course of history. "When the fact is remembered that the Romans considered these people (other Europeans) savages and barbarians," Irele argues, "the later pretensions of European ethnocentrism and racism appear in all their hollowness: as the products of a monumental amnesia." See, for instance, Abiola Irele, 'In Praise of Alienation,' in V.Y. Mudimbe (ed), *The Surreptitious Speech: Presence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness, 1947-1987* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 201-224).

> A syncretism between paradoxical dimensions of life and death, historical reality and magic, science and religion, characterizes the plots, themes and narrative structures of magical realist novels. In other words, urban and rural, western and indigenous, black, white and mestizo—this cultural, economic and political cacophony is the amphitheatre in which magical realist fictions are performed. The plots of these fictions deal with issues of borders, change, mixing and syncretizing. And they do so, and this point is critical, in order to expose what they see as a more deep and true reality than conventional realist technique would bring to view. (32)

In achieving this narrative mode, interestingly, the magic realist novelist deploys most of the devices of the postmodernist that subsume "irony, parody, disruption and pastiche." Ethics and aesthetics are united in "tension, danger and ambiguity, threads that often tighten around the novels and produce raw marks on their narrative structures," just as "time and space are potentially transformed within the hybrid, magical realist plot" (Cooper 32). Hybridity and irony thus become markers for the form and authorial positions respectively. Therefore, she concludes, "characters cannot be assumed to hold the opinions of their authors; omniscient narrators are not as trustworthy as was once thought; and the text has even been known to turn tables on the author and have a last word" (Cooper 36). Brenda Cooper, one observes here, consistently talks of 'West African magical realists' (1998:30). But it should be stressed that not all the works of any individual author could be described as falling within the field of 'magical realism'. Like Amaryll Beatrice Chanady, she sees "the mix of authorial reticence with irony," as a defining feature of the magical realist text, and that "magical realists inscribe the chaos of history not by way of unity, but by means of plots that syncretize uneven and contradictory forces" (Cooper 36).

Like Blier and Cooper, a number of African scholars have made great contributions in their recent investigations in the debate on this narrative mode. They have drawn attention not only to the conspicuous presence of the genre in Africa but have also theorized its basic socio-cultural and ideological tenets, as well as its narrative strategies. An illuminating addition to this end upholds that the concern of this aesthetic narrative form is essentially directed towards "a continual re-enchantment of the world." In his 'Explorations in Animist Materialism,' for instance, Harry Garuba (Garuba 271)—borrowing from Raymond Williams' 'Cultural Materialism' and Fredric Jameson's 'Political Unconscious' respectively, tries to distinguish between what he calls 'Animist Materialism' and 'Animist Unconscious'. While the former, for Garuba, is characterized by "its insistence on the materiality of cultural production" based on "a religious consciousness of the material world" (268), the 'animist unconscious' "is a form of collective

subjectivity that structures being and consciousness in predominantly animist societies and cultures" (269)[4].

In echoing Jameson's 'multiple temporality,' Garuba examines the place of 'Time, Secularism' and 'the animist social imaginary' in literary representation and notes that "Animist culture opens up a whole new world of poaching possibilities, prepossessing the future, as it were, by laying claim to what in the present is yet to be invented." It is through this way, he argues, that "continual re-enchantment becomes possible" (271). Given the diverse manifestations of the representational strategies of animism, 'magical realism' is seen to be "too narrow a concept" and, instead, he suggests that "[their] coupling of the realistic and the fantastic are clearly effects of animist materialism rather than magical realism" (275). Garuba's arguments could be summed up in the following way: while animist materialism involves a spiritualization of the material world, the metaphorization of its materiality in aesthetic representations is animist realism, rather than magical realism.

As scholar and artist, Brink is not insensible to the dynamics of re-enchantment which, for him, is implicit in the whole processes of constructing and decoding historical mysteries. If Brink's post-apartheid novels were inspired by a novelist's desire to fashion new modes of fictionalising history—or indeed, historicising fiction—it could be given to him, in his own words, that what emerges is "not solving a mystery, but demonstrating how historical mysteries are constructed" ("Stories of History," 33). His embrace of the fantastical mode in three successive narratives immediately attests to this interest in constructing historical mysteries through his imaginative concatenations of the marvellous. But an understanding of Brink's artistic philosophy, especially an investigation of his numerous essays since the collapse of official apartheid, might help in illuminating what appears to be his love for, or recent obsession with, the 're-invention of history'. This would not only highlight Brink's theory of the novel, but also the sense of commitment necessary for that re-imagining, without suffocating the reader with factualities.

In *The Novel: Language and Narrative From Cervantes to Calvino* (1998), André Brink shows that there is no unidirectional way of writing. He perceives the very act of writing in plural forms in a manner that reminds one of a similar argument in Dorothy Van Ghent's *The English Novel: Forms and Functions*. Brink argues that narrative modes are encoded in "languages," and not in "language" ('Introduction', 1-19). One implication of Brink's explorations of the dynamic nature of language as "the condition of story" is the implicit statement that much of what emerges in contemporary critical practice as the magical narrative mode, which many see as a

[4] See also Achille Mbembe's chapter, 'The Thing and its double,' in his *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: UCP, 2001:142-172).

fundamental manifestation of postmodernism, is neither modern nor postmodern. Indeed, for Brink, postmodernism is "no more than an umbrella term for a staggering variety of forms, styles, experiments and manifestations […]. Postmodernism is—among so many other things—a snake swallowing its own tale, as it turns, playfully, ironically, and with lighthearted seriousness, to what once appeared to be its age of innocence" (1998: 3; 19).

For a writer who has been variously charged with crass opportunism[5] and overt politicality[6] in many of his narratives, it needs to be stated that the seemingly fresh fascination with the experimental and the exploitation and deployment of the immense possibilities of language is not an entirely new development for Andre Brink. If he ever betrayed any such inclination in his narratives, his poetics has always been engaged in the search for the truth. He had written in 'Mapmakers' at the peak of official apartheid and its censorial obsessions that the writer is eternally engaged in the task of "[drawing] the map of his vision of truth. […]. The writer is not concerned only with 'reproducing' the real. What he does is to perceive, below the lines of the map he draws, the contours of another world, somehow a more 'essential' world" (*Mapmakers*, 167-9). Elsewhere, in 'Imagining the Real,' Brink insistently calls for a more imaginative mythologization of reality. In a way, Brink's poetics is enduring in his quest for excavating the 'myth of history, myth and history, and history of myth' ('Making and Unmaking,' 1998: 231-252). While observing, therefore, that "the employment of ancient myths in modern guise has become one of the most characteristic narrative techniques of the twentieth century" (*Mapmakers*, 218), he suggests that it is through the rediscovery of such mythologies that "all important literature" revive "the abiding truths which determine the relationships among men and between man and the world" (*Mapmakers*, 219). The writer should strive, therefore, to "deepen fact into mythical truth," for, it is through this process that "we recognize and acknowledge the existence both of ourselves and the world" (*Mapmakers*, 221).

Brink's theorizing of the novelistic technique of mythopoetic narratives raises a fundamental question in the context of the Post-Apartheid imagination. The cacophony of voices within the intellectual community in South Africa is rather immense and, like the narratives of the new era, falls within what David Attwell has described as "a field of ambiguities." But Brink as a novelist, it does seem, defies this charge of a tendency towards the ambiguous in any negative context. It could indeed be claimed that Brink's mythopoesis and Post-Apartheid narratives transit from a fascination with re-

[5] Notwithstanding his nihilism, Michael Chapman accuses Brink of engaging in creative opportunism. See, for instance, Chapman's assessment of 'The truth of fiction and the fiction of truth' in his influential *Southern African Literatures* (London: Longman, 403).

[6] Sue Kossew appears irritated with what she describes as the "dogmatic quality" and politicality of Brink's artistic philosophy and engagement with social responsibility. See Sue Kossew, *Pen and Power,* (Amsterdam- Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1996, 25).

imagining, and embraces the past in a manner that could at best be described as Brinkian: a quest for an understanding of the present through an imagined recreation of the past—an 'imagining of the real,' of "myth of history, myth and history and history of myth." The challenge for the writer, then, is to engage in an aesthetic manipulation of language for a synthesis—a narrative—borne of the narrational conflict in imagining the real and in realizing the imagined. It is in this respect that his Post-Apartheid novels could be understood within the binary limits of ambiguity and disambiguation.

The project of re-inventing the past, then, given his prolific statements to this effect, is the preoccupation of Andre Brink after apartheid. In an interesting article, 'The Changing Priorities of South African Writers,' he elaborates on the exciting developments and experimentations that range from the nostalgic to the fantastical, and seems particularly happy with what he sees as a "turn towards the imaginary," a recognition of "the fantastical deeply rooted in the real," which is, perhaps, "an authentically African version of magic realism."[7]

In yet another illuminating essay: 'Stories of History: Re-imagining the past in Post-Apartheid Narrative,' Brink proposes "a transgression of the boundaries of an originary sensual perception," with the view of "infusing the ordinary with a sense of the extraordinary, the everyday with a sense of the fantastic, producing a result in which the whole is decidedly more than the sum of its parts" (1998: 31). Brink, in this regard, takes further his long dreamt narratological bent towards historical narratives. The overriding question of essentialism resurfaces in his apprehensiveness over the place of morality and socio-historical relevance should narrativity be confined to 'pure invention,' and by consciously and totally eschewing historical realities. This would, he argues, restrict readership to "the irreducible fact of textuality" even though "textuality does not obviate historicity or morality." If the manifestations in Brink's post-apartheid narratives, particularly works like *Imaginings of Sand, Devil's Valley*, or, indeed *The Other Side of Silence*, or, for that matter, the manifestation of this narrational mode in Mike Nicol's *The Ibis Tapestry* and Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* and *Ways of Dying*, among others, are to sum the embrace of the fantastical mode as evidently found in much of post-apartheid South African fiction of English expression, it might then be argued that these writers have found affirmation in Brink's submission that "the best we can do is to fabricate metaphors—that is, tell stories—in which, not history, but imaginings of history are invented. Myth may have preceded history, but in the long run it may well be the only guarantee for the survival of history" (42). For, indeed, the new fiction is fundamentally a fabricated metaphor of historical memory, of the private and shared experiences of the South African social humanity across race, socio-economic status, gender, repression and domination.

[7] See *The Post Express* (Nigeria), August, 29, 1998: 16.

What emerges as Brinkian aesthetic in the 'new' South Africa, however, is best exemplified in 'Interrogating Silence: New Possibilities Faced by South African Literature'[8]. While he has always called for a re-imagining of the 'real'[9], Brink, here, insists that in the light of the new order, writers should try to revisit narratives of the past because, as he puts it, "[H]istory provides one of the most fertile silences to be revisited by South African writers: not because no voices have traversed it before, but because the dominant discourse of white historiography (as well as temptations to replace it by a new dominant discourse of black historiography) has inevitably silenced, for too long, so many other possibilities" (22). As always, Brink's idiom points to his fascination for a re-fashioning of the factual past. He writes of 're-visiting,' 're-inventing,' and 're-imagining' in the quest for a new literary form that will locate its synthesis in the creative blend of historical realistic narratives and post-modern narrative techniques. "If stories are retold and reimagined," he argues, "the re- is of decisive importance: each new invention happens in the margin of the already-written, or against the background of the already-written" (22).

In terms of its mode of aesthetic realization and the expectations of the reader, Brink considers the reader a major participant in the creative process who must, inevitably, be left with the choice of a moral position only suggested by the re-invented narrative: "[T]he new text does not set itself up as a 'correction' of silence or of other versions of history; but through the processes of intertextuality set in motion by its presentation, it initiates (or resumes) strategies of interrogation which prompt the reader to assume a new (moral) responsibility for his/her own narrative, as well as for the narrative we habitually call the world" (23). In dismantling the many walls of silence, marginal subjectivities should be the major focus of aesthetic investigation, and these subsume the women of South Africa—black and white, and the roles of blacks generally including the so-called 'Coloureds' in the historical evolution of contemporary South Africa. It is interesting that in three successive novels—*Imaginings of Sand*, *Devil's Valley*, and *The Other Side of Silence* Brink shows interest in the representation of the subversive female figures. He explores their contributions to the making of Afrikanerdom (*Imaginings of Sand* and *Devil's Valley*), and equally depicts quite eloquently the psychological liberation of women who suffered various forms of colonialist violation, exploitation and denigration (*The Other Side of Silence*). Brink takes this pursuit as a personal credo in his post-apartheid narratives. He affirms:

[8] See Brink, 'Interrogating Silence'. *Writing South Africa* (1998: 14-28).

[9] In re-imagining the 'real,' Brink's project of the historical narrative transcends mere fascination with socio-political factualities to the formalistic: 'how-ness' in constructing historical mysteries in fictional narratives must be seen to be basic, and should sometimes be given more priority than the 'what-ness' of that mystery. Most of Brink's essays on the developments in post-apartheid narratives return to the need to 're-imagine' or 're-inventing' the past.

> What interests me particularly at the moment is the link between woman and history: woman as a presence largely excluded from official South African discourses; and history as canon. […] And it seems to me that this kind of enterprise may serve as a starting point of a completely reinvented South African history: history, in fact, reimagined as herstory" (23).

In what he calls "the discovery of Africa," Brink addresses what has preoccupied the minds of very perceptive scholars of South Africa on how to resume proper critical dialogues between South Africa and the rest of the continent. In an era of continental integration, literary scholarship and creativity should embrace the singular task of a holistic apprehension of the African cosmology and cosmogony. While Michael Chapman has suggested "rearranged relationships in literary education" in which African literary texts will fruitfully be studied comparatively with Western texts that address issues relevant to Africa's socio-historical and cultural life, Andre Brink in 'Interrogating Silence' (25-27) is more eloquent not only in his calling for some seriousness in the study of black African writers, but more so in his recognition of the resonant magicality in the work of Achebe, Soyinka, Ngugi, Tutuola, Okri and Kunene. He considers this narrative mode a paradigm worthy of investigation in the new South Africa.[10]

Critical responses to the novels of Andre Brink vary in recent scholarship. With the enduring reputation as the South African novelist who "has most blatantly challenged Afrikaner power" (Chapman, 402), Brink is also perceived by Michael Chapman as engaging in "political and literary opportunism." As he puts it, "[H]is usual practice is to grasp outside of his own literary structures, which in their frequent use of writer-narrators hint at their 'art,' and attach his stories to the more sensational events of the times" (403). If account is taken of the fact that Brink's new interest in the representation of the female voice coincides with current trend in global gender politics and the privileging of previously marginalized subjectivities, then Chapman's assessment of Brink's 'emergency' novels remains true of his post-apartheid narratives.

It has been suggested that Brink's "status as a post-colonial writer… is problematical" (Kossew, 1996:5). But if this charge is true of his earlier fiction, it is doubtful whether any such claim would hold for his post-apartheid novels. For, indeed, his reconstruction of colonialist mythologies through a critical re-visitation of history within the dictates of the magical narrative mode places Brink as, perhaps, the most engaging in the new quest for a redefinition of South Africa's literary identity and paradigm shift. Going by Sue Kossew's description of the post-colonial status of South African writing as belonging to that "aspect of the post-colonial (theory) that does not exist after colonialism but in constant engagement with, and resistance to,

[10] It is strange, however, that not a single work of a black African writer appeared in his recent book-length study, *The Novel: Language and Narrative From Cervantes to Calvino*.

the hegemonic oppression of imperial power, whatever form that may take" (7), it could be argued that Brink's post-apartheid novels clearly define him as a counter-hegemonic novelist. And in spite of her accusing Brink of sexism and racial nostalgia in *Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing* (1996), Jane Jolly captures Brink's historical narrative in her post-colonial explication of *A Chain of Voices*. "[T]he form of Brink's novel," argues Jolly, "works against the distinction between 'fact' and fiction: the reader is encouraged not to recognize that the historical is always fictional, that the claim of originality is not a solution but an exercise in appropriation" (53).

Two commentators that draw perceptive attention to the mythopoetic dimensions of Brink's narratives, however, are Sandra Chait and Isidore Diala. While Chait's comparative reading of Brink's *The Cape of Storms* and Mike Nicol's *Horseman* interrogates the novelists' search for answers to whatever could have inspired and sustained the recurrent cycle of human stupidity in form of racial separatism, Diala attempts to locate answers in biblical parallels as part of the monumental structures of white mythologies. Writing in 'Mythology, Magic Realism and White Writing after Apartheid,' Sandra Chait believes that the white South African writer has chosen to return to re-examination of mythology through the magical realistic narrative. This way, the whole question of racism, repression and violence in apartheid South Africa was essentially sustained through a combination of white and biblical mythologies. In evoking the personality of the gods in the sustenance of the evils of racism and violence, however, Chait argues that in *The Cape of Storms*, and *Horseman*, respectively, Brink and Nicol have "unwittingly undercut their own criticism, exposing one evil while concealing society's real evil by making it seem natural" (2000: 17-28).

In his investigations of "Brink's frequent depiction of characteristic Afrikaner reduction of the Bible to a white mythology that complements the materiality of apartheid," Isidore Diala (2000) similarly observes: "Brink's insight (in fact) is that colonial myths harden into metaphysical facts and that their origins are imperceptibly obliterated in the colonizer's consciousness. If imperialism is usually associated with inhuman violence and appropriation, a basic reason is that the colonizer soon forgets that myths of the Other's subhumanity are his own creations taken as truths" (80, 82). As in his counter-hegemonic inscriptions of the apartheid era, Brink's post-apartheid narrative has continued with a reconstruction of Afrikaner hegemonic mythologies. This is as evident in his non-fictional writings as it is in his imaginative work: in *Imaginings of Sand* and in *Devil's Valley*. In fact, in *Devil's Valley*, more than anywhere else, Brink's deployment of the magical narrative form demonstrates this view. If the novel is essentially attuned to a parodic revaluation of the life of an arrogant blindman desperately attempting to retain power and political domination over the so-called subhuman Other, it does so against the background of a strong persuasion that the

dominant certainly needs more redemption than the dominated. Isidore Diala elegantly captures this vision of Andre Brink in his reading of Brink's anti-apartheid narratives when he observes that

> The 1976 Soweto riots led Brink to a clearer discovery of his mission as an artist—a preoccupation with the possibility of the Afrikaner's redemption. With this, too, he found clearer applicability of the virtues of asceticism in the realm of politics. Brink's maturer view of apartheid is that the oppressor, not the oppressed, was in dire need of spiritual purgation, of the cleansing of a guilty conscience, and even of liberation and redemption. Aware that the greater sacrifices demanded of blacks and coloureds enriched their humanity, Brink condemned apartheid basically because he was convinced that it impoverished the humanity of the Afrikaner and moreover was an illogical culmination of centuries of Afrikaner history, characterized by rebellion against tyranny, and an affirmation of human dignity and freedom (85).

Given this drive for a racially harmonious South African society, it is salutary that Brink, like Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetzee, should address himself to a serious consideration, Diala argues in another essay, of the issues of 'Guilt, Expiation and the Reconciliation Process in Post-Apartheid South Africa' (Diala 2001/2002). In his reading of Gordimer's *The House Gun*, J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, and André Brink's *The Rights of Desire* as post-modernist statements that attempt to show the way forward for a nation whose political history resonates with alarming levels of psychological injuries amongst the racial Other, Diala submits: "By their invocation of the past, they strive to exorcise the present of its enduring trauma. In the contexts of the epic drama of national reconstruction rooted in reconciliation, they affirm the substance of the entire transformation process in post-apartheid South Africa: that whites' guilt-consciousness and recrimination be transformed into the acceptance of responsibility and that blacks' recovery of marginalized histories be compassionate and exclude the old orthodoxies and chauvinism" (68).

But while in *Imaginings of Sand* temporality constitutes a significant aspect of Brink's narrative of alterity and the post-apartheid imagination, in *Devil's Valley* the 'time' element is less obvious. Yet, we are aware that a strange set of humanity called 'the blacks' has finally taken over political power in the 'outside world'. The sheer disgust expressed by a number of the citizens of this 'inside world' over the bizarre development is Brink's narrative device of drawing attention to the spatial location of a blind set of humanity who, unfortunately, have continued to live in ignorance, incest, gerontocracy, diffidence, and have, in the process, visited untold injustice against her own people. If *Devil's Valley* is a post-apartheid satire on the primitivism and inadequacies of apartheid as a system of separate development, it is a very eloquent one for the reasons that it portrays the oddities of racial separatism

to include a recycling of human stupidity and frustrates the citizens' rights of desire. Racial separatism is also seen to be arrogantly gerontocratic, just as it is generally unprogressive. It is indeed, by the enormity of hypocrisy prevalent in the community, a valley presided over by devils. More than anywhere else, perhaps, it is in *Devil's Valley* that Brink shows how the dominant certainly are in greater need of salvation than the dominated. But like *Imaginings of Sand* and *The Other Side of Silence, Devil's Valley* is also a narrative of the reconstruction and re-evaluation of the place of marginal subjectivities—the indigenous population, and the roles of the Afrikaner women. It is equally a daring representation of South Africa's era of transition to democratic non-racialism. Unlike other novels that address the theme of political transition, however, Brink's *Devil's Valley* is distinguished by the novelist's adoption of nightmarish realism or the fantastical narrative mode. The entire narrative has an aura of the supernatural and the mythical.

Repetitions, contradictions, reality and fantasy, sympathy and satire, truths and deceptions are all united in a marvellous narrative that originally sets out as a project of excavations of a people's history, by an apparently frustrated crime-journalist who, at 59, is determined to "[make] a contribution to society" (11).

As an 'investigation' by a crime reporter, then, it is little wonder that *Devil's Valley* appears in the first-person narrative, given the personal involvement of the narrator in many of the incidents within the two weeks of his trip to the bizarre, never-never land of 'Devil's Valley'. The motivation is 'the recent appearance' of some citizens of the Valley in the outside world after "the War," which appears to have given credence to what was originally a mere speculation: "a legend took root about a community of physically and mentally handicapped people in the mountains, the sad outcome of generations of inbreeding" (14). Brink, it does seem, is begging the question: if apartheid is such a noble project, why does it lead to self-destruction, including social, economic and spiritual blindness?

The central figure is the journalist, Flip Lochner. The choice of the investigative reporter taking on the role of embracing his life-long dream of becoming a historian of repute appears to be a deliberate narrative ploy of novelist Brink whose interest in the nexus between historical narratives and narratives of history has led to his utilization of the magical narrative form through the mobilization of the many mythologies of the peoples of South Africa. In spite of the many repetitions and contradictions that mark the narration, moreover, it is possible to map the narrative progression: stirred by the bug of life's struggles, of the pleasures and disappointments of a once ambitious young man now gradually approaching the end of his career, Flip Lochner, 59, crime-reporter, is given the privilege of attending a history seminar at South Africa's Stellenbosch University. He arrives at the scene and is immediately reminded that a former classmate of his, Twinkletoes Van Tonder, is now one of the nation's most respected historians and aca-

demics. He contrasts the feeling of Van Tonder's accomplishments with his own experiences. The realization that he has failed as a journalist and, worse still, as a husband and father, rekindles his desire to make a contribution to scholarship—a dream that fuelled his master's degree dissertation. Following his presentation at the seminar, a young man, Little Lukas Lermiet, accosts him, and they soon develop a friendship that ends tragically almost immediately, when Little Lukas is killed in a road accident.

The young man, however, has succeeded in arousing Flip Lochner's curiosity about life and humanity in his homeland, Devil's Valley. Flip Lochner takes a trip to this weird territory, and in ten days, he is able to excavate not just the history of Devil's Valley in its diverse manifestations, but also manages to draw attention to the psychology governing events and customs amongst the inhabitants. These range from a sense of contentment defined by a primitive closure against all kinds of invasions by "outsiders" to the sustenance of their values through beliefs in superstition, violence, and a perverted sense of justice where it is possible to face public execution for stealing a cup of water, and yet escape ordinary trial for offences as severe as murder and incest.

We get an idea of the concept of power, religion, health, gender, education, justice dispensation, class and racial (in)tolerance through the many interactions of this central figure with the inhabitants of the Valley. Central to the understanding of this society are 'names' and 'naming'. Individuals are defined either by their profession, physical attributes, or their mannerisms. The presiding Vicar of the local church, for instance, is called 'Brother Holy'; the agent in charge of invocation of water during draught is 'Jurg Water'; the painter who attempts to keep public memory through his art is 'Gert Brush'; the judge that presides over cases including sentencing convicted persons to death, and who attends to all dead persons is 'Lukas Death'; the lady who has the gift of a fine dancer is 'Talita Lightfoot'. Some of the women are defined by their affiliations to marriage: Dalena-of-Lukas Death, Hanna-of-Jurg-Water, Annie-of-Anwyn, and so on.

Flip Lochner observes these developments, but also tries to participate in the running of the community within the period of his investigation. This angers many privileged male members of the community; some plan for his death, and majority of the inhabitants were persuaded into believing that the 'unholy liaison' of Flip Lochner and the much loathed Emma was responsible for the many tragic incidents at the Devil's Valley. The sequence of incidents that follow Flip Lochner's many attempts to dig up the past are better seen in the series of tragic deaths that follow: in less than two weeks, the small community where everybody knows everybody witnesses the deaths of Anwyn, Ouma Lisbet Prune, Ben Owl, Prickhead, Piet Snot, Jos Joseph, Tall Fransina, Jurg Water, Emma, Lukas Death, among others. Flip Lochner is finally able to return to the outside world, from where he develops his story in a manner reminiscent of a remembered dream.

But *Devil's Valley* is not a simple story. It is a loaded narrative that is at once symbolical, analogical, and parabolical. In almost every respect it is an allegory, and it is in the blending of the real and the fantastical— the believable and the delusional—that the narrative assumes its basic metaphorical function. Whereas the many magical tales that sustain the narrative are drawn variously from the mythologies of the so-called Bushmen, the Hottentots, the Afrikaners, and the Biblical, 'Devil's Valley' could be read as a mythical aggregation of the many Afrikaner settlements in South Africa; and in terms of temporality, the moment is as suggestive of the period immediately following South Africa's successful transition to democracy as it is now or as it was yesterday. What would readily emerge from this reading, then, would include the many centuries of Boer perception of South Africa as 'the promised land' on the one hand, and on the other, the modus operandum of the 'Broederbond'—the unit entrusted with the task of ensuring racial purity— notorious during the apartheid days by the secrecy of its modes of operation and its rightwing ethics.

The very first encounter of the journalist with the 'legendary' or perhaps mythical old man, Lukas (Seer) Lermiet, the founding father of the Devil's Valley, is fraught with suspicion and hostility. It might be immaterial to perceive Lukas Lermiet as a fictional representation of Jan Van Riebeeck; yet, it is interesting that Andre Brink distances the population, or any of South Africa's several ethnic groups from the concern of journalist Lochner. It is possible, however, to decode and place the weird and fictional characters and the population within the linguistic circles and ancestry of the dominant South African languages. The old man, we are certain, at least, spoke with a typical antiquarian 'Dutch accent' (4), just like most of his descendants; and one could easily have located—within the context of blood and belonging in South Africa, his community of whites had he spoken in a typical 'antiquarian British accent.'

As metaphor, therefore, *Devil's Valley* could be read as Brink's fictional aggregation and parodic revaluation of the Afrikaner Broederbond and the 'primitive closure' that was sustained for so long a time through the then fanciful idiom—at least to the initiators—of 'apartheid'. With a legalistic structure that frowned on the 'rights of desire,' contact amongst racial groups was met with brutal punishment, and the 'Immorality Act' was at hand to provide authority to presiding judges. The implication is the condoning of greater immoralities and social aberrations like 'incest,' 'child-abuse,' 'wife-battering,' and murderous engagements. Within this society, the human mind is subjected to irrational fears to the level of outright timidity through the sustaining structures of superstition. It is in the exploration of these larger social aberrations through the efforts of the investigating journalist that the novelist applies himself to an aesthetic reconstruction of the more fundamental issues of marginality and marginal subjectivities in *Devil's Valley.*

With a passionate commitment to ensuring racial purity, the patriarchal oral traditionalists of Devil's Valley are careful not to include the indigenous population in their narratives. This deliberate effacement of the black population runs parallel to the systematic subjugation of the women who, we are told, are not allowed to speak even in the church, except when praying to God. As part of the narrative reversal, Brink does not defend the apparent hypocrisy of the inhabitants of the Valley who are always in a hurry to locate evil/sin in the sub-human *Other*.

In spite of the prevailing incest, adulterous life, and truncated morality very much inconsistent with their Calvinist ethos, dishonesty remains, for them, a function of any illicit association with the outside world. Thus Isac Smous' family "have always been too lazy to do an honest day's work" (242), and the reason given for this is not that as business men/women they are entitled to generating some profit, but that they have "Jewish blood in them" (185). Isak Smous' grandmother, 'Bilah,' is said to be Jewish, even though we later learn from Lukas Death that she was from the indigenous population of the Hottentots. There is, therefore, it does seem, an unwritten constitution among these settlers to phase out the existence of the black population from public memory. History becomes a lie, and the historian, a liar: and what emerges as South African history as narrated by the inhabitants of Devil's Valley is the essentially monumental structures of white mythologies—history as written by white settlers—since the amaZulu, the amaXhosa, the baSotho (singular: moSotho) and the many indigenous black South Africans would have to reconstruct public memory by excavating hidden truths. Part of these truths, the crime reporter tells us, would involve the excavation of the numerous mass graves as evidence of the genocide committed against the indigenous peoples in the settlers' hypocritical ambition to maintain racial purity.

It is through Brink's authorial intrusiveness as a ventriloquist adorning the mask of a journalist, however, that basic questions about the representation of the black humanity, or the place of the indigenous population is narrated in *Devil's Valley*. Myth is deployed, here, to offer a pseudo-scientific explanation for the deformity of Lukas Lermiet who had battled with, and conquered the Devil in an epic and memorable fight that lasted for a period none could remember. Yet, the family relishes his victory since there is a memento—"the black spot on the floor, from deep down where the Devil is still smothering away" (184). And in evoking Biblical mythologies to account for the absence of the black humanity in the narratives of the settler, the journalist prods his interlocutor, Lukas Death, to explain the sudden appearance of Biliah—a black woman—at the Valley. His response:

> Why should that surprise you? The scriptures themselves do not give us every verse and chapter. For example, they don't tell us about other people made by God at the time as Adam and Eve, but when Cain arrived in the land

> of Nod he took himself a wife, so we know there must have been others around (185).

The latent interrogation of Biblical mythologies is to reveal several other historical realities and possibilities: the observation that Adam and Eve were the first human creations, and the fact that one of their sons, Cain, later returns from Nod to take a wife is indicative that there were human inhabitants in other parts of the globe about which the Bible is silent. The parallel, here, is as vocal as the many Afrikaner mythologies that picture South Africa as 'a promised land'. Brink's narrative flash, then, is the selective amnesia that conveniently defaces the existence of the indigenous population at the time of the Boer invasion in the mid-17th century. Flip Lochner, the crime reporter, is able to resolve this conflict in the mass graves at the local church's cemetery, where children of the 'wrong colour' or 'throwbacks' were murdered and buried (185-6; 192; 228-230). *Devil's Valley*, as a tale of marginal subjectivities, is even more assertive in the cultural battlefield of gender and power. As a narrative of the Afrikaner 'closure' and refusal to relate openly with the larger humanity in South Africa's recent history, the novel is a metaphor for a social formation that is perennially sunk in the abyss of its stupidity, and yet celebrates this foolhardiness and primitivism through her inexplicable arrogance. Brink's narrative intention in this allegory, it does seem, is to ridicule through irony and satire: a nation that clings so sentimentally to racial purity tries to sustain this sense of puritanism through a plethora— as noted earlier—of social aberrations that include incest, adultery, high profile hypocrisy, cultural repression of the womenfolk, and a blatant display of gerontocracy: the elder is assumed to be always 'right' in every aspect of the peoples' lives, and the population is psychologically conditioned, through primitive superstition and fear, into believing that a humiliating death awaits any dissenter as punishment. Emma complains bitterly: "The old men have all the say in this place" (161), and to the question regarding their refusal to associate with the rest of humanity, she clarifies:

> They think it'll be the end of the Valley if people start coming and going as they want to. It's a bit easier for the men. From time to time one of them even goes out to get married, and brings his wife back here. The women never, it's out of the question. No outsider may lay a hand on their womenfolk. They are jealous of their possessions…. Can you imagine anyone being jealous in a place like this? (162).

Devil's Valley proceeds from here to become a project of feminist protestations. As latent as it usually appears, there is a flood of resistance emanating from embittered women who try to find expression within a repressive white culture. Again, history is seen as having been appropriated by the chauvinist males, and there is need to locate the place of women's immense achievements both in sustaining life in the Valley in the past and in the present.

Brink adopts an intriguing narrative style and, for a while, there is a distancing of the novelist and the reporter. Flip Lochner's aggressive approach to investigative reporting is submerged, as he achieves little or no success in his attempts to excavate the past in *Devil's Valley*. But the women soon gain confidence in him and decide to take the bull by the horns. Dalena, the wife of Lukas Death, proceeds to narrate aspects of the history with a feminist candour. She reveals to the journalist: "If I hadn't come to you tonight they'd have stopped me again. They take everything. They took our whole history" (232 ff). It is through Dalena's protestations that we are made aware of the many roles women played, and still play, in the stabilization of life in the Valley. The tribute is as compelling as the sheer size of the number of women who try to gain and assert their voice at the Valley: Mina, Sanna, Mooi-Janna—who uses her sexuality as a weapon in the battle for the control of the Valley (226 ff), Dalena, who later kills her husband—Lukas Death—for noble reasons, Maria, Emma, Annie, Talita Lightfoot, the mesmerizing dancer, Tant Poppie (Fullmoon)—the medical consultant—and Katarina Sweetmeat, among others. Protestations from the women equally find expression in their rejection of the responsibility that culture imposes on them, especially the function that defines the woman as a childbearing machine.

It is instructive to note, here, that while a woman might love her children as a natural obligation, she is not necessarily happy to be a mother, *Devil's Valley* seems to suggest. At the death of her husband, Alwyn, Annie becomes hysterical and cannot hide her frustration with and anger at the society's definition of the woman as a daughter, wife and mother. She complains: "It's always others who take the decisions and give the orders in this place. What must be done, who must do it, why, when, where. Who must live, who must die. And all I'm expected to do is to scrape and bow and praise God, my Lord and Master!" (293-5). The constraints against female self-definition are severe within the confines of the Valley's white culture, and progress for the woman is systematically stifled by their denial of educational advancement (296-7; 354-6; 359). There is an intolerable level of child molestation through the enforcement of a patriarchal policy where, we are told: "Women are not allowed to speak in church, except to address the lord in prayer" (256). The sheer display of the women in challenging aspects of these socially constricting values (357- 362) is summarized by Jurg Water's wife's insistence that "The only thing that suffering has taught me is the uselessness of suffering. And now I've had enough" (359).

In the final analysis, however, it is not necessarily Brink's interest in marginal subjectivities that gives *Devil's Valley* its enthralling quality. It is in his marvellous juggling of realism and supernaturalism, of history and story, of truths and deceptions in a united narrative mode of the fantastical. In this form, place and temporality find location in the bizarre, just as character and characterization oscillate between the mundane and the lycan-

thropic. For all its patriarchal arrogance, 'Devil's Valley' is one stupendous mass of a very unnatural environment where there are no birds; adultery is permissible as long as the perpetrators are never caught. For bringing pregnancy from 'outside,' Maria is stoned to death; yet, Jurg Water and the rest of the revered old men often engage in incestuous liaisons with their own daughters; for refusing to comply with the sexual advances of some odd and randy characters like Hans Magic and Ben Owl, and especially for being a child of Maria, Emma is subjected to all kinds of psychological trauma: she is afraid that she, too, like her mother, might be stoned to death. She is said to be cursed, of having "the devil's mark."

The magicality of the narrative, like in *Imaginings of Sand*, finds assertion in the macabre and the incredible. Through the course of the narration, there is an intermingling of the dead amongst the living: Lukas (Seer) Lermiet died over a century ago, yet he constantly participates in most of the important decision-takings in the Valley, especially at the Prayer meetings—the Nagmaal; Ouma Lisbet Prune was buried, but she waits for Flip in the upper chamber of her building where the angels will take her to heaven; Little-Lukas too: Flip Lochner sees him while trying to hand over 'the ash' to his mother, Dalena. As Dalena leaves with the 'ash box,' Flip sees Little Lukas walking by her side. Even as a dead young man, Little Lukas tries to make love to Emma. She leaves Little Lukas' room to join Flip in the larger 'Coffin'. She confides in him: "You don't understand Flip. Little Lukas is in there. He wanted to get into bed with me all the time. He never pestered me like that when he was still alive, but he isn't shy any longer" (371).

The reference to the 'coffin' as a wedding present for the couple, and the revelation that the consummation of every marriage is to be done in a coffin re-echoes this theme as we find in Ouma Kristina's narrative in *Imaginings of Sand*. Tales of this form, it would seem, appear dominant in the narrative, and every character is linked in one way or the other. This sense of magicality and mythopoeia is as explicit in the present with Hans magic invoking his powers over Brother Holy and Ben owl, as it was in the past with Katarina Sweet-Meat, "The one who married Lukas Bigballs and who changed into a white nanny goat when the moon was full" (241), and later gave birth to a baby with "two goat's feet" (243). For a crime reporter who at 59 is already counting his disappointments and failures as a journalist, husband, and father, it is not much of a surprise that the sheer incredibility of Flip Lochner's excavations of the archives of a demented people in an unnatural location would sustain his recourse to the use of gutter language and unnecessary vulgarity—in spite of his sworn determination to "[make] a contribution."

At a moment of multiculturalism and globalism, then, an insistence on segregation, racial separatism, or 'apartheid' in its most known description is an implicit embrace of the kind of primitivism, spiritual blindness, social anomy and psychological deformity that would only take humankind to the spiritual and social abyss of the Devil's abode. In other words, to present an

agenda of segregationalism, as the ideological and pragmatic condition for racial puritanism, is tantamount to constructing an unnatural abode—a 'Valley' presided over by 'Devils'. The architects of apartheid, and the agents deployed to ensure its continuation, therefore, need more spiritual redemption than they might be prepared to concede. For, indeed, only a lunatic of an irremediable order would be comfortable with the social anomy of incestuous mannerisms just to 'protect' its racial belonging. While 'history,' or indeed 'herstory' is a major fascination for Brink at the moment, the allegorical projections of *Devil's Valley* leave statements as germane to the present as they are to future South Africa: namely, the aesthetic proclamation that a white historiography of the past so provenly demonic in its execution, must not be replaced with a black historiography so desperate for vengeance with its new sense of domination.

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Frames of Marginalisation in Mahasweta Devi's *Outcast: Four Stories*

Debasish Chattopadhyay

Despite being 'voiced' in the space of the Western academia by writers like Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, Mahasweta Devi is still not extensively known to academics outside Bengal in her own country. Yet Mahasweta Devi, the most distinguished social activist among the contemporary Bengali literary artists, took up her pen to expose and explode the sham and fraudulence of the democratic set-up in our country and to represent the fates of marginalized women undergoing untold miseries within and without their own communities.

Mahasweta Devi's *Outcast: Four Stories* is a treatise on the pathetic doom of four marginalized women characters—Dhouli, Shanichari, Josmina and Chinta[1]—who are doubly wronged by being marginalized even by those who are usually regarded as marginalized in society. In these stories, Mahasweta Devi actually envisages a three-tier hierarchical structure in the Indian social order composed of the rungs of the non-marginalized or the mainstream, the marginalized or the subordinated, and finally the outcast or the marginalized by the marginalized. I will argue that it is Mahasweta Devi's intention in these stories to excavate and exhibit the gendered causes lying underneath the socio-political and economic exploitation of three women belonging to a backward minority. The writer reveals the virtual slave trade that festers under the facade of the democratic society of India, and clearly indicates the plight of these women who usually have no one to turn to, nothing to look forward to, and have only a few to lend them a voice—women who are regarded as sub-human and treated as commodities both without and within their own communities.

[1] "dhouli," "shanichari," "chinta" are the eponymous titles of Mahasweta Devi's short stories. The title of the other story is "the fairytale of rajabasha." "rajabasha" is the name of a place. It is interesting to note that the initial letters of the titles of all these stories are in lower case, perhaps to imply the insignificance, commonplaceness of the stories of those wretched women to the socially privileged. The writer, however, uses the initial letters of their names in higher case in the text—Dhouli, Shanichari, Chinta—perhaps to suggest the centrality of their role in the stories. More interesting it may seem to be that on the cover page and on the title page, both the author's name and that of the translator have lower case initials. Both are women.

The first of these stories, eponymously titled "dhouli" (note the translator's ironic intent in using the first letter of the title in the lower case), presents the sad plight of a dusad (untouchable, lower caste) young widow who is seduced and impregnated by Misrilal, the son of a wealthy, upper-caste Brahman named Hanumanji Misra. Misrilal gets rid of the responsibility of the newborn child and its mother by marrying another woman belonging to his own caste and by settling in Ranchi, a distant Indian city. When Dhouli begins to sell her body in order to earn bread for her son and for herself, Misrilal returns and becomes instrumental in forcing her to leave her village and move to the city to become a prostitute.

In Mahasweta Devi's second story, "shanichari," an Oraon girl is marginalized like Dhouli in her own society for coming back with a diku's[2] child in her womb. A middle-aged woman, Gohuman, has sold Shanichari to a brick-kiln owner in Barasat, West Bengal, where she faces economic and sexual exploitation leading to pregnancy. Subsequently, Shanichari is sent back to her native village, but only to face ostracism.

Somewhat differently, however, in the story, "the fairytale of rajabasha," a self-imposed ostracism, not from her own society, but from the world, is the consequence of the love of Josmina for her husband Sarjom. Both of them are sold to a landowner in the far-away Indian state of Punjab, where Josmina faces the same treatment as Shanichari, even though she eventually manages to come back home with the prospect of beginning life afresh. But this bright vision of hope turns out to be a hallucination, as she develops the symptoms of motherhood, a condition forced upon her by her master in Punjab. In the end, to save her beloved husband from being ostracized from his own community, Josmina commits suicide.

Dissimilar as these characters and their stories seem to be, what brackets these three characters together is the label of "Otherness" that sticks to their existence. It is interesting to note that this leitmotif of "Otherness" is re-created in the narratival mode of the three stories at different levels. The very opening paragraph of "dhouli," for instance, creates an ambience of an "Other world," the world of the subaltern where no light can ever penetrate:

> The bus left Ranchi in the evening and reached Taharr around eight at night. […] The world beyond and the wide, metalled road ended here. Rohtagi Company's bus was the only link between Taharr and the rest of the world. […] They used poor, rundown buses for poor, rundown places like Taharr, Palani or Burudiha. The service was suspended during the rainy season as buses couldn't ply on unmetalled roads. Taharr would be completely cut off from the rest of the world during the monsoon months.(1)

An ambience of marginalization, which is intensified later on, is suggested by the use of words like "poor, rundown buses for poor, run down people."

[2] A *diku* is a gentleman or a man belonging to the mainstream of the society.

At another level, too, the word "buses," a clear signifier of modern life style and civilisation, fixes the nature and role of the people of the "Other world" as these buses are explicitly defined as rejected vehicles fit only to ply to a world where the "metalled road ends."

In total dissonance from the reference to the civilized world in the opening paragraph, the concluding paragraph of "dhouli" signifies another frame of marginalization. Here Mahasweta Devi delineates the natural world and thereby ironically effects a dissolution of the nature-civilization dichotomy:

> The sun shone brightly. The sky looked blue and the trees as green as always. She realized that nature was unaffected by the upheaval in her life. This painful thought made her weep. Wasn't everything supposed to change from today? Everything? The day Dhouli was to finally enter the market place? Or is it that, for girls like Dhouli, nature accepted such a fate as only natural? The nature, which, after all, was not created by the Misras—or had the sky, the trees and the earth [been] sold out to the Misras as well? (33)

Significantly, the effacement of the nature-civilisation binary leads to a kind of identification between the two apparently dichotomous entities and suggests an ominous absorption and annihilation of nature by a soul-killing civilization. Like the world of civilization represented by the "metalled road" in the opening paragraph, nature at the conclusion of this short story remains apathetic to Dhouli's exclusion from her own subaltern community.

Mahasweta Devi, however, makes it clear through her narrative that the label of "Otherness" is conferred by the politics of power dynamics and the hegemony exercised and enjoyed by a privileged class. In the Panchayat meeting where Dhouli's fate has been decided by the senior Misra, Dhouli is given two options—of being burnt alive, or having to adopt the path of prostitution in an "Other world." Hanumanji announced, "Dhouli cannot practise prostitution in this village. She can go to some town, to Ranchi, and do her whoring there. If not, her house will be set on fire and mother, daughter, child will be burned to death" (31). It is significant and pertinent to note that even the tribal untouchables, the dusads and ganjus, do not make any protest against this verdict. The narrative thus overtly points to direct repression, which is the product of a societal power structure interlinked with the hegemony of a dominant class. An exposure of the outcome of the exploitation of power- the acceptance of the verdict of Hanumanji even by the marginalized- is shown to be the consequence of the created culture of the privileged, which results in the desertion by the marginalized of even one belonging to their own community.

In the story "shanichari," Mahasweta Devi presents the young tribal girl, Shanichari's status in the social hierarchy. Shanichari, along with her grandmother "enjoyed the train ride to Tohri, sitting on the floor of the [train] compartment, chugging along, having a good time picking the lice from each other's hair" (34). This oblique reference to Shanichari and her

grandmother's subaltern state, suggested by the phrase "sitting on the floor of the [train] compartment," is further reinforced through an apparently innocuous folk-tale fragmentarily narrated by the grandmother:

> 'Don't you know the one [story] about the carpenter who carved a girl out of wood and became her father? The weaver who gave her clothes and became her brother? The goldsmiths who gifted her jewellery and became her uncles? Didn't the sindoorwala [the seller of vermilion] bring her to life by giving her sindoor?' (35)

In quintessence, this story is reminiscent of the myth of the birth of Eve. As Eve was brought to life from Adam's rib, so too was this girl carved from wood by a man and brought to life by the sindoor of another man, the Sindoorwala, who eventually possessed her. The implication of this tale inset in the very opening of the short story is that Shanichari will be treated as a commodity and thrown away as soon as her commodified existence becomes useless to the males in her life.

This implication becomes even more unambiguous with the coming of Hiralal, the itinerant folk-song singer who ekes out a living by singing his songs in train compartments. Hiralal, who is endowed by the author with an obvious choric function in the narrative unravels explicitly the woman, Gohuman's wiles in trapping young girls like Shanichari. Employing sometimes an intimate conversational tone and sometimes a direct narratival and descriptive mode, Mahasweta exposes the devious ways in which tribal girls like Shanichari "felt the fangs of Gohuman" (44). The tragic fate of tribal girls like Shanichari is explicitly presented by Mahasweta Devi in this short story. The Indian paramilitary forces sought to subjugate the tribal people by burning their huts, by looting their possessions and killing them, and by gang raping their women. In a tone of cutting irony, Mahasweta Devi discriminates between the civilized mainstream reader, reading a short story about the condition of the exploited tribal sitting in his or her comfortable hearth and home, and the condition of the "Ho-Oraon-Mundra girls":

> The BMP [Bihar Military Police] took the young girls into the forest and raped them. Imagine the scene. Familiar to you, no doubt, from innumerable story books—the lush green forest and a group of Ho-Oraon-Mundra [three Indian tribes] girls who look as if they have been exquisitely carved out of black stone. Only the bestial howls of the BMP would have been left out of such a picture-book scene. (46)

Even more relentlessly ironic is Mahasweta's juxtaposition of a song of the tribal community:

My girl could live on tubers,
Wear leafs and buds in her ears,
Alas, trees can't grow clothes
"Dear Ma" my girl said, "So
To the brick kilns I must go
To the brick kilns I must go." (47)

with the narrator's wry observation-cum-question posed for the consideration of her readers: "Don't some of you buy saris worth thousands of rupees every puja?" (46)

Driven out of her village and compelled to leave the inhospitable forests, Shanichari thus goes to the brick kilns to face a situation worse than her earlier one. There she is provided with clothes by the owner of the brick kiln, but only to be stripped and raped. "Rahamat would dress Shanichari in good clothes and nice jewellery, rub fragrant oil in her hair—and then tear into her ruthlessly"(51). Very soon she is replaced by another tribal girl and she began working as a reja.[3] Underpaid, half-fed, treated at best as sub-human and impregnated by the owner of the brick kiln, Shanichari returns at last to her people only to discover that she is an outcast in her own community. This final marginalization of Shanichari—her marginalization by the marginal—is neatly presented through a dialogue between the brother of her murdered lover, Chand Tirkey, and the naiga, the village head-priest: "We should think about this as a community. There could be more Shanicharis in the future. Should we cast out our own women? Will that benefit our society?" The naiga said, "We'll think about it if it happens again. Not now. This is a new problem" (54).

In "the fairytale of rajabasha," Mahasweta Devi, along with providing a graphic portrayal of the exploitation at all levels of Sarjom and Josmina, a tribal couple, projects certain instinctive reactions of the tribal people living below the poverty line to the minimum that they get, and finally records the behavioral patterns of the affluent people belonging to the mainstream. The story opens with the description of an arrangement of a tribal feast on the occasion of the marriage ceremony of Sarjom and Josmina, and we hear Sura Jonko saying: "Not just turmeric and salt, let's cook it [the meat] with onions, pepper and other spices" and the narrator voices their unuttered sentiment: "Great fun, great food" (57). The narrative voice then goes on to express the feeling of peace and happiness experienced by the couple even in the midst of their deprivation and poverty:

> Josmina collected roots and tubers from the forest. Living off just these and *ghato* made of *makai*, she looked gorgeous. A new mother, the curves of Josmina's body filled out like the gushing Koyena in the months of rain.

[3] A tribal girl who works in brick kiln.

> There was much happiness and peace in this first chapter of the fairytale of Rajabasha (59).[4]

Later, after the cataclysmic upheaval in the lives of the couple caused by their moving to Punjab as slaves and when they come back to their village, Mahasweta Devi's description points to the minimum that a subaltern requires:

> Within no time everything became as it was before. It was so refreshing to bathe in the waters of the Koyena. So peaceful to boil some *makai* at the end of the day and cook *ghato* in the evening. To sprinkle salt on it and eat off leaf plates. So pleasant to sit by the banks of the river, washing pots and pans while chatting to girls you've known all your life (78).

In contrast to the happiness of the couple even in the midst of poverty, Mahasweta Devi's projection of Nandlal Sahu's unhappiness in the midst of affluence is revealing: "He had two fine houses in the districts of Monoharpur and Raikera. And two wives [in contrast to Sarjom's one hut and one wife] in those two houses. Now his first wife, who lived in Rajabasha, was pestering him for a pucca brick house"(59).[5] So to fulfill the desire of his first wife, Nandlal sold Josmina and Sarjom to an "adarsh kisan [an ideal agriculturalist] of Punjab."

Mahasweta Devi shows here that at the very core of the mainstream-marginal issue lies the typical power dynamics of a feudal master-slave relationship in which the former treats the latter sometimes as a commodity and at other times as an instrument of labour, a beast of burden. This is why, while buying the couple, the Punjabi agriculturalist, Niranjan Singh**,** "pinched Sarjom's arm and shoulder muscles," and a little later when Josmina, "gaping open-mouthed at everything around her, put a nipple to the child's mouth," Niranjan mused: "Feed her for a week and these goods will be just right."(66) Throughout the story, Mahasweta suggests that these subaltern people are nothing but "maal," "goods," commodities, "junglee jaanwars," forest animals, to those at the top of the social hierarchy: "To Niranjan, she [Josmina] was just fresh meat; dark, *junglee* [savage] flesh which he had paid for. They bought it all up, everything. Everything that belonged to the Josminas" (72). Consequently, the master treated them as he pleased—subjected them to "16 to 18 hours' labour," stripped and abused the wife in front of her child, and put them under lock and key at night: "It was his [the master's accomplice, Harchand's,] job to keep the buffaloes, cows and bonded labour under lock and key" (68).

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[4] *Ghato* is a watery gruel made by boiling makai, the main food of the underprivileged. *Makai* is a kind of seed generally used by the privileged class as fodder.

[5] A pucca house is a brick-built house.

But "the fairytale of rajabasha" is not merely about the exploitation of the tribal "Other." After winning a reprieve from their slavery, Josmina and Sarjom come back to their tribal village. But their hopes of happiness are shattered when Josmina realizes that she is carrying the child of the Punjabi man who has raped her. Knowing that her own tribal community would never condone this, and that both she and her husband would be socially ostracized, Josmina drowns herself in the Koyena river on the banks of which she and Sarjom spent so many idyllic moments before.

One way to look at these short stories of Mahasweta Devi is to read them as the voiced articulations of the tribal "Others" in contemporary Indian society. Gayatri Spivak's answer to the question as to whether the subaltern can speak has been resoundingly in the negative. Yet, it is important to note that Mahasweta Devi speaks not only about the marginalized, but, far more importantly, about the marginalized within the communities of the marginalized. Her voice does not simply ventriloquise the plight of those at the edges of civilization, but goes deeper to analyse and reflect upon how the power structures that engender marginalisation are replicated in the texture of the society of the marginal. The point is that the author's sympathy unearths the reality of an exploitation concealed within the truth of another and more obvious exploitation. Thus, Mahasweta's true concern is with a subalternity subsumed within a larger parameter of subalternity. In a sense, this is a deeply humanistic perception, one that is as incisive as an insight into human reality, as a deep and penetrating social understanding.

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‘Ungrafting Colonialism’: Fakirmohan’s Pragmatic Vision in *Six Acres and a Third*

Debendra K. Dash and Dipti R. Pattanaik

> Some sixteen to twenty cranes, white and brown, churn the mud like lowly farmhands, from morning till night. This is the third proof that there are fish in the pond. A pair of kingfishers suddenly arrives out of nowhere, dive into the water a couple of times, stuff themselves with food, and swiftly fly away. Sitting on the bank, a lone kingfisher suns itself, wings spread like the gown of a memsahib. Oh, stupid Hindu cranes, look at these English king-fishers, who arrive out of nowhere with empty pockets, fill themselves with all manner of fish from the pond, and then fly away. You nest in the banyan tree near the pond, but after churning the mud and water all day long, all you get are a few miserable small fish. You are living in critical times now; more and more kingfishers will swoop down on the pond and carry off the best fish. You have no hope, no future, unless you go abroad and learn how to swim in the ocean.
>
> The kite is smart and clever; it perches quietly on a branch, like a Brahmin guru, and from there swoops down into the pond to snatch a big fish that lasts it for the whole day. Brahmin gurus perch on their verandahs, descending on their disciples once a year, like the kite.
> (Fakir Mohan Senapati, *Six Acres and a Third* 103-104)

This is an extract from *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* (*Six Acres and a Third*), a classic nineteenth-century novel about colonial India by Fakir Mohan Senapati (Fakirmohan hereafter), the eminent Oriya writer whose literary career began in 1866 and continued up to his death in 1918. In this extract, the narrator of the novel ostensibly describes the public pond of the village, but, mimetic accuracy of representation of rural India apart, the extract recommends itself to us for its much wider range of significance. Following the trail of a trite question, ‘whether there is fish in the pond’, the narrator examines several issues and offers a variety of interpretation about things which apparently have very little connection with the main theme of the novel. Trying to fit it into the kind of model of Victorian Novel which they had in their minds, the early critics of this novel therefore saw this entire chapter as an aberration (Mohanty 1981 76).

Even though he owes a lot to the Victorians for the novel form, Fakirmohan, clearly, was not writing like an eminent Victorian. The "Asura Dighi" chapter which will be under consideration here is integral not only to the scheme of the novel but to the entire oeuvre of Fakirmohan. By drawing upon the resources of empirical science and reason, on deductive method of logic, and on resources of history to point to the existence of fish in a pond, he is clearly lampooning colonial forms of knowledge and historiography; but, more importantly, in a thinly disguised allegory he gestures towards the universal theme of exploitation, colonial or otherwise. If the fish stand for the natural resources of the world, the four types of predatory birds represent four types of human beings in a stratified colonial society. Representing the lowest rung of the exploiters in the society, there are 'Kaduakhumpis' who survive on physical labour alone. They are the lumpens lacking insight into the complex reality that circumscribes them. Like beasts of burden, they complacently allow themselves to be used by others. The cranes represent the calculative comprador class of the petty bourgeois who survive on white-collar jobs. Above them are the hangers-on, who, using their mythically superior status of caste, feed on the labor of others. They use their shrewdness in order to fatten themselves without contributing anything to the process of production. They are compared to the kites. These three groups are all exploiters of the resources of the land no doubt, but due to a lack of proper skills of exploitation and the ability to understand the world around them, they are condemned to a lower level of subsistence. In contrast, the outsiders like kingfishers are a skillful and clever group who can be properly said to live off the fat of the land. They run away with the very best the land can provide, thanks to their superior skill, power and tact. The narrator compares the kingfishers to the English colonisers, whose exploitation is much more acute and pervasive than the exploitation of the local indigenous natives.

From the above description it appears as if the narrator sets up a binary opposition between the coloniser and colonised and that his sympathies are all with the colonised, the disempowered, and the lowly whom he exhorts to raise themselves by honing their skills and raising their awareness about their own disadvantaged status. Several readings of Fakirmohan go along with this simplistic binary of the coloniser and the colonised, the powerful and the disempowered and interpret his art as an attempt to give voice to the voiceless and as a plea for social justice and equity. But a closer reading of the text reveals that the narrator, in fact, does not take sides at all. It is true that the narrator identifies the outsider kingfisher as the most dangerous of all the birds; but the tone of the narrator towards other groups, is equally contemptuous or patronizing. Had the narrator identified himself with any of the groups he would not have remained so detached from all of them. The narrator ostensibly remains outside the action and fails to identify with any of the groups. Being a colonial subject himself, why does Fakirmohan create a narrator who is so ubiquitous within the narrative yet so elusive when one

tries to locate his real sympathies? We would suggest that the sympathy or the lack of it of the narrative voice towards the colonial world that is represented *in Six Acres and a Third* in fact corresponds to Fakirmohan's own complex response to the colonial structures of power and culture.

Colonialism generated a wide range of responses and subject positions in various colonised societies. This was due both to the attitude of the colonisers and to the social, cultural, political and economic condition of the subject population. Some colonised people welcomed their subject position with a hope of economic advancement. This hope was often based on the assumption that, as in case of Europe, economic advancement would take place in a symmetrical manner without undermining the dignity and self-respect of the colonised, who visualised colonisation as the agent of modernity in the absence of which their own would become moribund. A section of the emergent Hindu middle class in India to which Fakirmohan belonged harboured such illusions. However, while they interacted with colonial structures of power they were often assailed by misgivings and suffered occasional disillusionment. They were in a kind of mental see-saw game between despair and hope—despair at the perception of threat that colonisation posed to their traditions and hope that the traditions would be able to withstand the threat. Sometimes the despair also led them to a reactionary quest for utopias formulated in the past. Several contemporaries of Fakirmohan sought refuge in such utopias. Fakirmohan rarely perceived the phenomenon of colonisation in such simplistic categories. He seems to have seen colonisation despite its so-called modernizing agenda as a grafting. In order to understand the complexity of Fakirmohan's response, we need to analyze his position as an individual and social subject within colonial structures.

British occupation of the coastal districts of Orissa was almost forty years old by the time Fakirmohan was born January 13, 1843, in Balasore, one of the coastal districts. The political condition of Orissa at the time of British occupation was extremely unstable. For long, Orissa was a hotbed of conflict between different Muslim rulers on the one hand and the indigenous power-elite on the other. Immediately before the British occupation Orissa had come under the hegemony of a Maratha chieftain ruling from Nagpur. Since Marathas were not interested in establishing a State or the rule of the law, they used the area only for extortion. The British East India Company took advantage of this fluid political condition in order to occupy the area quite easily. The British justified their imperialism in the name of establishing the rule of law and providing "order" in a "failed state." They also constructed a befitting historiography which claimed that only fifty East India Company soldiers marched into the Barabati Fort (the seat of power of these districts) and established the company rule without almost any resistance from local militia. But, the so-called rule of law or order was so elusive and the economic exploitation so harsh that there were popular uprisings against the

British occupation within months. However, it took almost a decade for these uprisings to consolidate into a major revolt in the form of the Paika Rebellion of 1817. Although the colonial administration and historiography has tried to designate this as an insurgency mounted by the remnants of the traditional feudal class, it was actually a mass movement involving people from all sections of Oriya society. The revolt was inevitably mauled by the company forces armed with superior weapons. The local militia lacked training badly and was using very archaic weapons.

The quelling of the revolt demoralised the Oriya community completely, even as it somewhat tempered the British maraudery. The company subsequently made some constructive gestures and tried to establish a semblance of rule of law, but this was done in order to further its own imperialistic designs. It ushered in institutions of 'modernisation' like the school, the judiciary and land reforms. Under its aegis the missionaries of various Christian denominations established schools, a health-care system, and printing presses to start publication of books in the vernacular language of Oriya. However, many Oriyas could not participate in the 'civilising mission' of the British at that time because of their lack of will, economic impoverishment, and state of demoralisation. The inaction of Oriyas at a time when imperialism was bringing about massive changes in social structures both by its coercive and ideological state apparatuses created a vacuum in the social space. In the meantime, due to their early exposure to the British administration and the forces of "modernisation" which it unleashed, the neighboring Bengalis had consolidated themselves into a sizable comprador class. The British had become increasingly dependent on this comprador class for the smooth functioning of the administration. This Bengali comprador class started manning most of the government jobs in Orissa. They spread their subcolonizing tentacles by appropriating the Zamindari estates in Orissa, especially after the promulgation of the Sunset Law.[1] In order to perpetuate their hold over property, jobs, and hence, access to power, the Bengali elite wanted to valorise the Bengali language and marginalise the local language Oriya. (Dash & Pattanaik 2004). Writing about the sorry state of the Oriyas at that time

[1] There was no such law of this nomenclature in British India. The term came into popular usage as a result of the widespread practice of auctioning of the estates of zamindars who defaulted on the payment of rent. The rate of the rent was somewhat stabilised in places like Bengal after Lord Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement Act in 1793. However, this Act was never implemented comprehensively in places like Orissa and such other areas newly acquired by the East India Company. In Orissa, the rent was fixed for a period that varied between one and three years. Often, the East India Company authorities raised the rent arbitrarily without properly informing the landlords. When the landlords defaulted in payment their zamindaris were auctioned off in far away Fort William in Calcutta, again, without properly informing them. Since the auction was held at the time of sunset, the term "sunset law" got currency in popular parlance. Fifty-two percent of Oriya landlords were disinherited between 1804 and 1816 due to the faulty implementation of the land revenue system by the Company and the comprador class assisting it. The widespread disaffection caused by this disinheritance paved the way for the Paika Rebellion of Orissa in 1817.

Natabara Samantaray cites the following opinion of Mr. Nolan, the Collector of Cuttack in 1879: "It may be doubted whether the Oriya is holding his own in the struggle for existence. The Bengali is ousting him from the land and from service; the Bengali, the Marwaris and the Europeans, from trade; the Telugu from the rougher kinds of labour" (Samantaray 1963 55).

Fakirmohan's literary activism was a response to this complex scenario. On the one hand, by providing governance, democratic law and the fruits of modernisation and protecting the people from years of Pathan, Mughal and Maratha misrule, colonialism had provided a semblance of order to a chaotic society, but, on the other hand, it had grafted an alien culture upon an unsuspecting majority. It had leveled down traditional oppressive hierarchies at the same time as it had created a new oppressive comprador class who were not loathe to exploit the disempowered majority by taking advantage of the loopholes of the systems of law and governance and the instruments of modernisation.

Penned long after he was established as a writer, Fakirmohan's autobiography (Dash 2002) bears testimony to the fact that his career as a writer was an offshoot and a part of a grander design of political struggle. Initially, the struggle was directed against the hegemony of the comprador class of Bengali subcolonialists who had manipulated the structures of colonial power to their advantage and were trying to marginalise the already disempowered Oriyas further. The very survival of Oriyas as a community depended on a tactical collaboration with colonial structures of power. Fakirmohan was aware of the dangers the British posed to the Oriyas who had to align with them in order to stave off the immediate prospect of losing their identities as Oriyas due to the machinations of the Bengali subcolonialists. He was also quick to see that the source of Bengali power was their proximity to the British and the forces of so-called modernisation such as British schools, print technology and literary culture.

Commenting on *Six Acres and a Third,* Paul Sawyer remarks that "[i]n a world governed by official and unofficial duplicity, those who are 'below' survive, not by subtle disputation, but by reading the signs, catching hints, forming quick conclusions based on long experience—what is often called 'peasant wit'" (Sawyer 2006). Fakirmohan's reading of the world around him was acute. He read the signs well and spent a large part of his early life developing education, establishing printing presses, writing text-books for children and in spreading the literary culture by producing literature and disseminating it through the periodicals, newspapers and journals he helped in publishing. Through all these means, Fakirmohan was trying to create a civil society strong enough to resist the onslaughts of the people of other linguistic groups on the lives and livelihood of the native Oriyas.

Fakirmohan's own life had adequately prepared him to be a 'reader of signs' of the colonial society of his times. His resources for 'catching the hints' were much more than that of a 'peasant wit' in the sense Paul Sawyer

uses the expression, and his views in *Six Acres and a Third* were not always from the "below" as Satya P. Mohanty (2005) has suggested, points we will take up later. Suffice it to say here that Fakirmohan was a typical colonial subject whom Ashis Nandy designates as both civil and sly at the same time, a bricoleur who took advantage of the colonial structures in his personal as well as communitarian struggles. Coming from a landowning warrior caste, he alternately worked as a trader, school teacher, administrator, Zamindar, editor of newspapers and journals and an author working intimately with various sections of the society, the British overlords, the Bengali subcolonialists manning official positions of power, the local feudal class and the nobility, and the common public. His survival and rise in the social hierarchy often depended on playing one against the other in a series of shifting allegiances. Though firm in his egalitarian ideology, he allowed himself the compromises that pragmatism entails. His art is a demonstration of the tension that ensues when a man of vision and contemplation doubles with his antithesis, the pragmatic man of action in a challenging social situation.

Acutely conscious of his subject position as a petty bourgeois British comprador, he struggled to declass himself for the sake of his ideals and vision. In his literary ventures, too, he had to tactically appropriate in a calibanesque manner the aesthetic principles and modes of expression from the colonisers and the subcolonisers with whom he had an adversarial relationship ideologically.

He had to take recourse to the models already set in motion by the Bengalis in the literary ventures he undertook and in the institutions and establishments he helped to shape. For, the Bengalis had already developed the institutions of Press, the School, the newspaper and even a form of the modern novel. For a long time, even the language he used replicated the diction of Bengali language and that of Sanskrit. Moreover, a larger part of the so-called civil society was either Bengali babus or an Oriya elite group aping the cultural taste of the colonisers and sub colonisers. After trying his hands at translating scriptures and epics, writing essays, poems and short stories, Fakirmohan turned at a late age to writing novels, the popular genre of the then elite reading public. In a speech delivered at Alochana Sabha of Ravenshaw Collegiate School, Cuttack, in 1912 (Dash 2008, volume III FM), Fakirmohan demonstrates his awareness of the growing popularity of literary culture in general and the genre of novel in particular. He sees in serialised novel an instrument with which the journals and periodicals could be sustained and popularised. Since journal publication was crucial to the formation of civil society, the primary goal of Fakirmohan, the activist, the writing of serialised novels became almost mandatory. *Six Acres and a Third* was conceived as an answer to a social need and the needs of a specific mode of production. Fakirmohan was actively involved in the publication of the journal *Utkala Sahitya*, and, partly in order to sustain its publication, he serialised his first and oft-discussed and oft-translated novel, *Six Acres and a*

Third. Not only *Six Acres and a Third*, but even *Lachhama* was also serialised in this journal. Our intention here is to show how his four novels and especially *Six Acres and a Third* encode the ideology of Fakirmohan the visionary, even as they grew out of his aspirations as an activist deeply involved in his community's struggle to safeguard its linguistic autonomy and identity.

The nationalist search for the identity of a community is often preceded by a construction of knowledge and consciousness of that identity. Towards the latter part of his career as an author, Fakirmohan was busy constructing this knowledge and consciousness especially in his short stories and novels. Such an effort inevitably led him to an engagement with the history of his land and community. Natabar Samantaray rightly observes that Fakirmohan's four novels represent two hundred years of Orissan history (Samantaray 1972: 45) from pre-colonial times to various phases of colonial rule. He used the novel form to develop a discourse of history which, apart from recording the political, social and economic changes that obtained in the society, tried to register the impact of the change in the lives of the common man. Moreover, his novels were not mere representations of historical or contemporary reality; they were diagnostic insights into the causes of the advent of colonialism, its perpetuation and meditation upon the possible methods of overcoming the traumas of subjugation.

The four novels construct a discourse of history according to which colonialism is not a mere event, but an inevitable consequence of a process. The political and economic process was already active in Orissa for a long time facilitating its transition into a colonial state. While Fakirmohan, trying to locate the ultimate cause of such a process, transcends history and time to speculate on human nature and the workings of fate (something we will return to), his immediate interest concerned the fifty years of political instability before the advent of the British on the scene. His second novel *Lachchama*, mapped the decline of Oriya feudal society during the eighteenth century due to the conflict between Alibardi Khan, the Muslim ruler of Murshidabad and the Maratha chieftains. Siding with one or the other the Oriya feudal lords fought among each other and ultimately ruined themselves. The relative autonomy these feudal lords enjoyed was ultimately surrendered when Alibardi to protect the rest of his kingdom, ceded Orissa to the Marathas. These conflicts and the subsequent Maratha oppression brought a great deal of suffering to the common people, uprooting them from their traditional vocations and undermining their self-respect.

Fakirmohan's first novel, *Six Acres and a Third*, records the political and economic situation immediately after the occupation of the coastal districts of Orissa by the British East India Company. It highlights the consequences of the greed of the British rulers and their attempt to impose an alien economic and land revenue system. On the one hand the British saved the com-

mon people from the violence and extortion of Maratha marauders, but, on the other, they ruined the traditional society in such a manner that the common people were disinherited from all their traditional occupations and professions. They were tied down to just one profession, i.e., agriculture. Soon, they were even disinherited from their lands by the Bengali sub-colonisers and were reduced to the status of farmhands. While the people in common were losing the moorings in their own land, a new privileged class was getting consolidated. This new feudal class consisted of the Bengali officers of the Company, the landlords from Bengal and the few manipulative Oriyas who used their access to British education and their proximity to power to rise economically and socially. This neo-feudals were aping their colonial masters and were much more oppressive towards the common people, at whose cost they had risen socially. Fakirmohan's third novel, *Mamu*, dramatises this scenario of the latter half of the colonial rule. The last novel, *Prayaschita*, maps the breakdown of the traditional social fabric and cultural norms under the impact of the grafting of colonialism. It demonstrates the process of commodification of education, fragmentation of family and rigidification of caste divide due to various British administrative policies and alien cultural habits. We will try to analyse the process by looking at his most popular novel *Six Acres and a Third*.

To some extent, Fakirmohan's analysis in his novels of the processes of history matches the historiography of the British historians, administrators and facts recorded in government minutes. But the importance of the novels is not so much due to the fidelity as to historical facts to the critique it provides of the colonial rule. Sudipta Kaviraj designates the Indian artistic and aesthetic reactions to colonialism as the expression of an "unhappy consciousness." Citing the examples of the writers such as Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, he demonstrates how the consciousness of the sensitive artist in India was divided and at war with itself due to its double allegiance, the allegiance to the autonomy of a self formed by tradition and the modes of expression of that self conditioned by the colonial institutions of education, civil service, and literature, especially the genre of novel (1998:164). In this regard, Fakirmohan shared with writers like Bankim a sense of a double inheritance and allegiance, having personally been a recipient of British munificence and privilege and having encountered his ideals within an indigenous tradition. The distinctive achievement of Fakirmohan, however, was that, compared to Bankim, he was able to problematise a much more complex version of colonial mechanism and provide a much more nuanced critique of the same. The circumstances under which colonialism came to Orissa were peculiar. The British did not grab power from the hands of the indigenous rulers of Orissa. For a long time, the centre of power that ruled Orissa was outside Orissa, either at Nagpur or at Murshidabad, and in many circles the coming of the British was perceived as a deliverance from misrule. The insidiousness of the colonial structures of power and culture could

not be perceived by the common folk who had already been reeling under oppressive and exploitative systems of rule for quite some time. The apathetic reaction of a native in *Six Acres and a Third* sums up the mood of the people: "Oh, horse, what difference does it make to you if you are stolen by a thief? You do not get much to eat here; you will not get much to eat there. No matter who becomes the next master, we will remain his slaves. We must look after our own interests" (205-206). The greatness of Fakirmohan as an artist is that, unlike many other contemporary Indian authors, he could identify the insidiousness of the workings of the colonial regime and provide a critique that superseded the simple binary of coloniser and colonised.

The dehumanizing effect of colonialism can be seen in the figures of Ramachandra Mangaraj, the protagonist *of Six Acres and a Third*. Mangaraj's rise and fall can only be visualised in a colonial set up. By leveling traditional hierarchies and discrediting social norms, colonialism had spawned unnatural ambitions and easy means of fulfilling them. In the absence of the social safety valves that are available in a traditional society, Mangaraj spends his childhood in a state of uncertainty and deprivation. In the absence of traditional social and moral reprimands he uninhibitedly pursues his design of upward mobility through unworthy means.

In a real-life world where moral and ethical interdictions had been replaced by legal checks and balances, the unscrupulous could amass wealth and power by hoodwinking the arbiters of law who were ill-equipped to understand the ruled. Writing about the condition prevailing in British courts, G. Toynbee remarks:

> Bribery, corruption, peculation and forgery, were rife in all the courts and public offices notably,—in the Judge's. The Collector in 1816 stated that it was a regular and well-known practice for zamindars to bribe the amala to get petitions, settlement papers and other documents passed through the office with the orders wished for duly recorded on them. In the same way forged sanadas and other deeds were passed into the office and brought before the collector as genuine. (2005:95)

In Fakirmohan's novel, Mangaraj manipulates the loopholes in the colonial legal system quite easily and establishes himself within a new feudal order where wealth and proximity to the rulers were the only qualification for prominence. Mangaraj pays for his unnatural ambition and upward mobility through his dehumanisation and alienation from the community. The signs of his dehumanisation can be seen in the ruination of his family and the way he has turned his house into a virtual brothel: "Like birds of different feathers seeking shelter in a large tree, [women] had flocked to Mangaraj's house. They kept arriving and leaving; it was impossible to keep track of their movements" (54).

Alienated from his pious wife and from his derelict children, Managaraj's life is centred around cash and property. It is symptomatic that even though

Fakirmohan begins the novel as Mangaraja Carita (*Six Acres* 37) in the manner of Caritas belonging to the tradition of epics and puranas,[2] he entitles the work *Six Acres and a Third*. It is as if the monomania for property has turned a human being into a thing, his search for commodities leading to his own commoditisation. In a colonised world exercise of power tends to be justified with the assumption that savagery is being tamed by the so-called civilizing forces; but the very act of subjugation reduces all parties into a state of savagery. Mangaraj's downfall at the end of the novel is a grim reminder of the possible consequences not only of the instruments of colonisation, of which Mangaraj obviously was one, but of the entire project of colonisation.

Mangaraj's monomania for property not only transforms him into a commodity, it also dehumanises the entire world around him. Fakirmohan seems to demonstrate that not only greed and the pursuit of wealth, but acute deprivation, too, could cause dehumanisation. The colonial economic instrument is in this sense doubly corrosive: while allowing a few to arrogate power unto them and to enrich themselves disproportionately, it plunges the majority into a state of penury and disempowerment. Extreme poverty and disempowerment, Fakirmohan rightly visualised, could be a source of moral degeneration and dehumanisation. In an essay on the past and future of Oriya language and in several speeches Fakirmohan has reiterated that decadence of all kinds comes with economic instability (Dash, *Fakirmohan Complete Works III*). In this sense, he was extremely radical, because traditional Hindu thought associated moral superiority with poverty and disempowerment.

In Saria and Bhagia, the weaver couple in *Six Acres and a Third*, we see an example of such dehumanisation brought about by extreme poverty. First of all, they are uprooted from their traditional profession as weavers because of colonial economic policies. Subsequently, they are disinherited from their land and their cow, Neta, by Mangaraj. Saria dies of starvation and Bhagia turns mad and has to be confined in jail. It is not only the lives of this couple that are affected, *Six Acres and a Third* as a whole is a picture of chaos all around where Brahmin widows like Marua resort to prostitution, unscrupulous women like Champa rise to positions of power, and where Gobara Jena, the lumpen associate of Mangaraj, is beaten to death. *Six Acres and a Third* delineates a vast landscape of waste and death where both the oppressor and the oppressed succumb in their own contradictions. Even the moral voice of

[2] Fakirmohan's play on the genre of Carita reveals his awareness of the evolution of this kind of literature in Indian tradition. In the heterodox Jaina tradition Carita is one of the 'Katha' or narrative forms which is close to biography of a historical person as opposed to the purely imaginative account of a character. In the subsequent Vaishnava tradition after 16th century this form assumed the nomenclature of 'Caritamrita' which was a hagiographic account of a historical person. It was meant to elevate the character to a mythical and puranic status. Fakirmohan uses the term in a subversive manner thereby simultaneously establishing Mangaraj as a real character in history and undermine his historicity.

Santani is stifled into death. The contradictions spawned by the colonial world are so irresolvable that ultimately, they leave no survivors.

Fakirmohan's representation of colonial reality and its critique is rooted in his engagement with a sense of history and a peculiar notion of time. Traditional Indian thought held a cyclic view of time in which history is a terrestrial reworking of a metaphysical Fate. Of course fate is mentioned quite often in Fakirmohan's works (including *Six Acres*), but unlike traditional Indian notions of fate, it does not transcend the social reality and the historical process. Fakirmohan's notions of history as a process and time as progression could have been imbibed from the Western episteme. It is fruitful to remember here that Fakirmohan started his career as a literatteur with the translation of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar's Bengali text *Jivan Carita* and a history text book for schools entitled *Bharatbarshar Itihas* Vol. I & II. The *Jivan Carita*, in fact, was a collection of short biographical sketches of a few major western scientists. The translation and the text book are indicators of the fact that although Fakirmohan ideologically was a staunch opponent of colonialism and its knowledge systems he admired the radical possibilities he saw in Western Science and in Renaissance humanism. In many of his writings he celebrates modern modes of communication and the general mobility of individuals and civilisations. His peculiar notion of time, too, could have been the result of his attempt to synthesise Indian notions of fate with Western notions of time as a linear progression. On the one hand, Fakirmohan sees the progression of time as irreversible, and on the other, time is seen as the unfolding of a divine will. The contradiction tempers his world view so that he sees colonialism both as fate accompli and as part of a process which can be shaped by conscious social action.

In the beginning of this paper we argued that the narrative persona of *Six Acres* does not identify with any of the social and political groups represented in the "Asuradighi" chapter. This non-identification, we argue, is the stance of a radical sceptic in the manner of a Shankara or Nagarjuna[3] who keep examining all the phenomenal facts and rejecting them through a process of 'neti', 'neti', not this, not this, until they attain the Brahman, the non-dual eternal reality beyond speech and thought. We further argue that the radical skepticism demonstrated in *Six Acres* in general and the "Asuradighi" chapter in particular is the result of a mindset informed by the long tradition of Indian metaphysics and tradition of Bhakti. It is fruitful to remember here that throughout his literary career Fakirmohan was an avid reader of Indian

[3] Nagarjuna (2nd Century A.D) and Shankara (788-820 A.D) belonged to two opposing philosophical systems of India, the former to heterodox and the latter to orthodox tradition. Nagarjuna was a leading philosopher of the Mahayana Buddhism while Shankara was the champion of Advaita Vedanta. However, their thinking converged in the issue of negative dialectic—a method of philosophizing which pursues truth by systematically rejecting the appearances in the phenomenal world which to them is either Sunya (void) or Maya (illusion).

philosophy, Puranas and literature and that he translated the epics like *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata* and he theological texts like the *Gita* and the *Upanisadas*. Although his subjectivity was formed within a colonial reality and he admired some of the universally applicable values emanating from the west, he had a deep veneration for the indigenous knowledge and value systems. He realised that since the western values were mediated through colonial hegemony, they could not be synthesised with the indigenous values of the colonised subjects. Further, he was pragmatic enough to visualise that it was necessary to make tactical adjustments to the changed world order fashioned by the forces of history. The tragedy in *Six Acres* is the tragedy of a failure to make this tactical adjustment. Some characters like Santani succumb to their tragedy by an uncritical clinging to the values of the past, others (like Bhagia and Saria) are unable to face up to the challenges at hand, and yet others (like Mangaraj and Champa) jump enthusiastically onto the bandwagon of change.

Like most of the visionary writers of his times Fakirmohan had a definite vision of an ideal society, but unlike them, he never sought the easy recourse of nostalgia à la Bankim, though his ideals were rooted deep in the Indian knowledge systems. We do not encounter the ideal in *Six Acres* because, at that stage, Fakirmohan himself had probably not overcome the contradictions his subject position in a colonial world had generated. Santani, his ideal character in *Six Acres*, is at best silent, amidst the ruins of moral values. However, in subsequent novels, essays and poems, Fakirmohan is more vocal about his vision of an ideal society. Fakirmohan's moral order and the creative resolution he arrives at in these writings is extremely conservative, but, like the conservativeness of Gandhi, it is a kind of tactical conservatism that adopts what is usable from the tradition of the modern progressive thought. His was an eclectic world view deeply rooted in the indigenous tradition.

After publishing *Six Acres* and much before Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*, Fakirmohan spelt out the modalities of a new world order in his essays, poems and the novels. Issues like women's employment, empowerment and education, the necessity to develop cottage industry as a bulwark of economic regeneration, the end of discrimination along caste lines and the trusteeship for smooth economic management that Gandhi later adopted in his political agenda were all addressed by Fakirmohan in his numerous speeches, in poems such as 'Dhoba' ('Washerman'), 'Bada Sana' ('The Powerful and the Disempowered'), essays like 'Arata' ('Spinning Wheel'), and in novels like *Prayaschita.*

Thus Fakirmohan's conservatism was not in conflict with what was beneficial in modernity. It was somewhat like the conservatism of Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya, a leading contemporary Bengali intellectual who believed that "India should learn from Europe nothing but her 'practical skills' and absorb these into her inherited culture in a gradual, organic fashion" (Raychaudhuri

92). Fakirmohan echoed this kind of tactical conservatism which had a strong radical edge. Both believed that true modernity cannot be mediated under a hegemonic dispensation. However, since Bhudev operated throughout his life within an elite circle he did not have the scope to experience the oppressiveness of colonial structures from the position of a disempowered subject. Fakirmohan had experienced the colonial hegemony from various subject positions due to the peculiarity of his circumstances as narrated earlier. Therefore, he was in a position to provide a plan of action through which his vision could be actualised. The novel was a part of that plan of action, for through the novel he tried to create "active readers" (Sawyer) who could be instruments in the act of ungrafting colonialism and establishing the "Swarajya" or autonomy of consciousness. Fakirmohan sincerely believed that reading the novel was one of the means of reading colonialism and the active reader can make the transition from the text to the world through the act of interpretation, the kind of which we had a glimpse in the *Six Acres and a Third* mentioned in the beginning of the essay.

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‘Indianness’ and Contemporary Cosmopolitan Fictions: Of Bookers and ‘Spice’ and Everything Nice

Amit Ray

Established in 1968, the Booker Prize has rapidly become one of the most prestigious literary prizes in the English-speaking world.[1] Not only does the prize result in an immediate boost in sales for that year’s winner (by three to five-fold, as well as increasing back catalog sales and insuring lucrative advances), but it has also resulted in an almost immediate canonization for a number of writers. And, indeed, it is this literary canonization that is intriguing for postcolonial cultural critics. For despite the fact that the Booker prize bears the name of a European multinational that owes its existence to colonial domination and is, arguably, still guilty of neo-imperial practices, a large proportion of the novels that emerge victorious (as well as of those that simply appear on the short-list) offer alternative perspectives to dominant histories and, quite often, explicit critiques of British imperialism. As Graham Huggan notes in his 1997 study of the Booker, “More than half of the prize-winning novels to date investigate aspects of –primarily colonial— history, or present a ‘counter-memory’ to the official historical confirmation.”[2]

Considering the history of the original business that bore the name Booker, such celebrations of literary postcoloniality may seem rather ironic. After all, the Booker Prize is named for the British brothers who, in the mid nineteenth-century, controlled 80 percent of the sugar business in the British colonial possession of Guyana (then known as Demerara). Over the past century and a half, the Booker name has become a brand name that bears the twists and turns of a convoluted transnational history. Diversifying into an array of (mostly) food related industries, the company went public in 1920. The Guyanese struggle for political autonomy and subsequent statehood in

[1] The prize was initially named The Booker-McConnell Prize, after the company’s full corporate name at the time. In 2002, Booker’s new owners, The Icelandic Group, transferred administration of the prize to the Booker Prize Foundation. The Foundation sought out corporate sponsorship and received it from the investment group Man. Currently the official name of the prize is the Man Booker, though colloquially it is still referred to as the Booker Prize.

[2] Graham Huggan, “Prizing ‘otherness’: A short history of the Booker,” *Studies in the Novel* 29.3 (1997): 419.

1953 resulted in further diversification in the company's holdings. In the late fifties they acquired the UK food-chain Budgens and by the early 1960's the Booker-McConnell Corporation had, according to their Year 2000 corporate website, "established an author's division to take advantage of a tax loophole."[3] In the summer of 2000, the Icelandic Group acquired Booker LTD and thus the corporation no longer exists under that name. The acquisition of Booker Cash and Carry by Icelandic led to company's renaming as The Big Food Group. In 2005, The Big Food Group was acquired by The Bauger Group. The Booker brand name lives on in the chain of cash and carry stores that bear its name, and through the prestigious literary prize.

The prize itself was conceived as a way to promote Booker's publishing ventures. The publishing firm Jonathan Cape approached Booker about establishing a literary prize that might resemble the French Prix Goncourt. In 1969 the first Booker Prize was conferred. Two years later, V.S. Naipaul, the Indian Trinidadian writing about displaced ethnic Indians won for *In a Free State*. In the following seven years, three of the winning novels were about the Anglo-Indian colonial experience (all authored by non-Indians): *The Siege of Krishnapur* by J.G. Farrell (1973), Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* (1975), and Paul Scott's *Staying On* (1978). This disproportionate emphasis on India (three out of a total of nine prizes) can be interpreted in a number of ways. Certainly the burgeoning Raj nostalgia, which later reached its peak in Great Britain in the early eighties, can be seen as part and parcel of Booker's early emphasis on Anglo-Indian life. The revisionist historical perspectives that inform these three novels by non-Indians can certainly be criticized for their hermetic views of Indian history—generally narrated as an internal failure within the culture of the colonizer, and, as such, reiterating the denial of Indian historical agency. My aim here is not to draw attention to the complicity between early Booker fiction and Raj nostalgia.[4] I simply note the emphasis on India in order to consider how 'otherness' in general, and 'Indianness' in particular, has achieved such a prominent place during the Booker's brief history.

In the past twenty-five years the prize has been awarded to three Indians, Rushdie in 1981, Arundhati Roy in 1997 and most recently in 2006 to Kiran Desai for her novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. In addition, diasporic Indian authors regularly appear on the short list (of six to seven novels) that comes out several months before the prize is actually awarded, and which leads to rampant speculation and odds-making in the weeks and days before the winner is announced. Anita Desai (three times) and Rohinton Mistry (twice) have appeared on the short-list while, in addition to his 1981 Booker, Rush-

[3] Booker McConnell PLC, *A History of the Booker Prize*, 2000. <http://www.bookermcconnellplc.co.uk>, March 24, 2000.

[4] Salman Rushdie's 1984 essay, "Outside the Whale" is an excellent analysis of the phenomenon of Raj nostalgia.

die has been short-listed four times. In 1993, Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* caused a stir by not being nominated for the Booker, despite numerous predictions that it would be the odds on favorite to win. My emphasis is on two things here: first, the prominent place of India as a setting and subject for fictions celebrated by the Booker; second, the number of (primarily diasporic) Indians who have authored works that draw the Prize Committee's attention. Obviously, one cannot chart a single line of reasoning or interest that might adequately track this passage of 'Indianness' through the history of what has become Great Britain's, and arguably the English-speaking world's, foremost literary prize. Yet, the prominence of India in Booker fiction does bring to mind the early history of the Nobel Prize.

In 1907 and 1912 respectively, Kipling and Tagore were awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. This confluence of events put an emphasis on India within European literary circles. As I argue in my book, *Negotiating the Modern* (Routledge 2007), such emphasis bore the characteristic marks of Orientalism.[5] Kipling's prize came closely on the heels of his patronage by and support for Cecil Rhodes during the Boer War. Tagore, on the other hand, was virtually unknown in Europe and became a literary sensation due to his small volume of pastoral and mystical poetry, *Gitanjali*. Both authors regularly trafficked in the characteristic cultural and geographical essentialisms of the time: the East as the provenance of spirituality, the West of science and reason. European and American readers were far less enthusiastic about Tagore's Post-Nobel writings, which were generally more historically and politically engaged. While the historical circumstances between the early Booker and early Nobel are incommensurate, it is worth pointing out this interesting pattern of first endorsing the exoticist representations of an Indian landscape as fictionalized by a "European" authorial perspective, then rewarding an ensuing Indian author's representation via the same Western cultural institution. Nearly seventy years later, a novel about India by an ethnic Indian, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, won the 1981 Booker Prize.

At present the Booker brand name exists primarily through the literary prize, the company itself being nowhere more broadly recognized than during the annual clamor over who won, who should have won, and who wasn't even nominated that occurs at a disturbingly ubiquitous (and highly choreographed) level of public discourse in Great Britain. My aim here is not to attack the colonial roots of contemporary culture—that would be an unproductive (and ceaseless) task. Rather, I seek to position myself against a number of critics who find it highly suspicious that a former and current imperialist endeavor has established one of the world's foremost 'trademarks' ("Booker Prize-Winning") for assigning 'literary excellence'; and has done so by ascribing the seal of 'literary excellence' to these English-language

[5] I develop this argument at length in Chapter Four, "Colonial Divides and Shared Orientalisms: Kipling and Tagore in the World," 81-104.

narratives of 'counter-memory' produced as part and parcel of the legacy of imperialism.

I want to approach a specific charge leveled at the Booker's penchant for rewarding postcolonial fictions. Arguing that the Booker replicates older historical forms of cultural imperialism, Graham Huggan suggests, "post-coloniality implies a condition of contradiction between anti-colonial ideologies and neo-colonial market schemes" (412). The title of his 2001 book, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, neatly encapsulates this primary claim: that institutions such as the Booker have led "to the marketing of exotic writings to the Western world, rather than to the development of a body of postcolonial literature" (412). Of course postcolonial critics have long been concerned with just such facets of metropolitan cultural consumption. Gayatri Spivak and others have warned of precisely such dangers. Aijaz Ahmad, on the other hand, has constructed his attacks on metropolitan practitioners of post-colonial theory in a similar vein as Huggan, suggesting that commercial viability inevitably undermines the force of anti-colonial critiques offered by postcolonial fiction and criticism.

Yet, why should the circulation of postcolonial fiction via the Booker Prize mark such literature as being more 'complicit' than other literary works? Do literary awards change the dynamics of reading? Pointing out the difficulties in determining stability and cohesion in reader response, Huggan none-the-less takes the cynical view that Booker fictions, though often criticizing the legacy of imperialism, are still pulled into the vortex of a metropolitan 'alterity industry,' a present day exotics trade. But it should be clear by now that the post-industrial capitalist marketplace is often defined by precisely such contradictions. It is quite clear that Anglophone fiction arising outside of the Anglo-American world must always contend with the possibility of naïve, de-contextualized consumption. Is this not the state of culture more broadly, in an era when such media has become more globally dispersed? Given all of this, one must wonder how a 'naïve' reader might consume a five hundred page novel steeped in modern Indian history and come away uninformed?

Probably the most celebrated of all Booker Prize winners, *Midnight's Children* has become central to the study of postcoloniality. The novel has proven to be remarkably prescient in anticipating many of the exigencies of postcolonial theoretical and critical thought and remains highly relevant, some twenty-five years later, to the body of literary and cultural criticism whose existence was catalyzed by its appearance. In 1993 *Midnight's Children* was awarded the 'Booker of Bookers,' as the most influential novel to receive the literary prize in the first twenty-five years of its existence. This labyrinthine narrative about India's inception as a sovereign nation, which relies heavily on a complex mythology and history that is generally unfamiliar to metropolitan readers, has become one of the most celebrated works in English during the last quarter of a century.

Deemed 'historiographic metafiction' by Linda Hutcheon, *Midnight's Children* places history and historiography at the center of its formal and thematic concerns. We are all by now versed in the narrator (and novel's) tortured relationship with modern Indian history, with the deliberate feints and lunges at articulation that mark the narrator as unreliable, capable of errata. Rushdie himself has commented on how the emphasis on history in *Midnight's Children* has mistakenly led some readers to read the novel as history. These concerns are apparent from the first words, "I was born in the city of Bombay...once upon a time. No, that won't do there's no getting away from the date …And the time, the time matters too" (3). This opening passage is the beginning of a long characterization of protagonist Saleem Sinai's obsession with historical time and its dependence on the narrative sequencing of events. The novel's tortuous relationship to history is the subject of numerous debates and I shall not recount them here. I emphasize this beginning in order to highlight the immediacy with which the novel's central concerns are put forth. Indeed, in light of the argument that metropolitan consumption occludes critiques of imperialism, I would like to point out the immediacy with which both *Midnight's Children* and 1997 winner, *The God of Small Things*, establish the basis for their respective thematic and formal concerns.

The opening pages of Arundhati Roy's novel are replete with a turgid and exotic lyricism. Ayemenem is a "hot and brooding" place, where "red bananas ripen" and "[ja]ckfruits burst" (3). Yet, Roy's lyrical exoticism, which fulfils metropolitan readerly expectations of the 'exotic,' also establishes an awareness of the stereotypical constructions that often mark representations of India in twentieth-century Anglophone literature: the laziness, passivity, and quietism of undisturbed village life; essential, unchanging, timeless. The novel enacts this critique of readerly expectation by conforming to just such expectations in its first few paragraphs, drawing the reader in through precisely those features of landscape and life that have long characterized India in English language fiction. A rhythm of monsoon rains, pepper vines, rat snakes, still green ponds, and mongooses establishes a familiar pattern of imagery—these features of the lush landscape are, however, soon joined with the less familiar features of modern life that have long been excluded from literary representations of India—PWD potholes, a sky-blue Plymouth and a young Syrian-Christian Indian with an Elvis Presley puff.

Of course, this ironic relationship with the market forces that induce exoticism is not new. Certainly Rushdie has playfully exploited such readerly expectations, proffering snake charmers and stammering saddhus, characters and descriptions of exoticism that offer sly gibes at those who might simply consume his fiction for its 'otherness.' Other novels of contemporary Indian life, such as Vikram Seth's expansive exploration of Indian middle class family life, *A Suitable Boy*, have eschewed such exoticism altogether.

Yet Roy does heighten her critique of exoticism by placing the metropolitan reader in an ironic relationship with not only the exoticism that has been characteristic of Western representations of India, but also of a reversed exoticism, an exoticism of the displaced Americana that litters the novel. The first chapter carefully establishes this series of disjunctures—both cultural and geographical—between the exotic landscape and the inhabitants of that landscape. American culture—music, movies and cars—begins to punctuate the novel, offering ostensibly 'familiar' semiotic markers within a cadence of exoticism. My reading of this runs in two very contrary directions. My initial response is to wonder if this does not heighten the exoticism of the novel: whether the existence of metropolitan familiarity further seduces the reader to participate in older patterns of consumption. Yet, I find that my initial resistance erodes in light of the juxtaposition taking place—the novel places familiarity in an exotic locale. As such, I would like to think the novel is defamiliarizing the reader from their assumptions about that which they perceive to be their own—displaying that familiarity as 'elsewhere' and pointing out how, in turn, those very same markers of familiarity are themselves subject to similar exoticist manipulation.

The God of Small Things fits into that mold of Booker Prize 'postcoloniality' that might trouble some of us in the academy. We must all be concerned, as part of our own critical projects, with the fact that celebrations of postcolonial writing and, one might add, theorization and critique, risk being subsumed within larger (and older) currents of consumption. Understanding factors such as Primitivism, Exoticism and Orientalism as forces in European cultural production during the twentieth century does not make such forces go away.

Is it possible that modes of Orientalism actually generate 'Western' critiques of imperialist practices? Elsewhere I have argued that even though Orientalism produces uneven modes of power and exchange, these exchanges can still facilitate the critique of Eurocentrism and of First World Imperialist practice. Even though systems of production and exchange quite often occlude their conditions for existence—particularly when we are talking about Literature and Reading—Booker fictions often provide a sustained and generative critique of 'Center' practices, even as they are circulated by just such practices.

Both postcolonial critics (Ashcroft *et al*) and mainstream media commentators (Pico Iyer) have argued that the traditional relationship between the imperial center and margin, and the language and culture that once radiated outwards, has simply reversed polarities, thus providing a heightened sensibility to both the past, as well as the future of the English language—The Empire Writes Back argument. The current institutions responsible for 'producing' the annual literary event that is the Booker, often overtly cater to a desire to consume the 'exotic' that is part and parcel of first world literary consumption.

However, we must keep in mind that the category of 'Literature,' and perhaps any cultural institution with a vested interest in producing new products, provides for a sustained analysis of how late capital Cultural production contends with 'otherness.' I believe that it is this ironical relationship between the center and margin that is the commodity here, not the 'exoticness' of the literature itself. I would argue that we are within a paradigmatic historical shift in both the analysis, as well as the consumption, of Enlightenment spawned, modern categories such as Literature. Roy's ironic lyricism, like Rushdie's ironic postmodernity, is not simply the case of a new set of circumstances plugged into old forms. Rather, Indianness, both from the perspective of authorial identity, as well the stylistic, thematic and formal criteria for Booker award-winning fiction, allows for a sustained social and cultural analysis of the constitutive relationship between past colony and empire, current semi-peripheral experience and core consumption."

Postcolonial studies of Orientalism have focused on the representation of 'otherness' in Western literature, science and the arts. Despite the tremendous distortions produced by the disparity of power in this lopsided and monolithic binary, Orientalism has always involved the production of a space for trafficking in 'otherness.' If we read the act of consuming 'otherness' in literature as a venture in Western narcissism, we risk negating the materiality of those representations—the very fact that 'otherness' was (and often continues to be) a process by which non-Europeaness enters into a cultural field where the very idea of 'Western' or 'European' is being built up as historical fact: the moments when 'otherness' comes to the fore in the established metropolitan institutions of Literary production provide the textual artifacts that can allow for an increasingly nuanced historiography of the consolidating, centralizing, conflicted and impossible project of rationally ordering and narrating a human life-world—the Sisyphean task we are compelled to reproduce, over and over, without end.

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Identity Crisis in V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*

Kumar Parag

Fragmentation, alienation, and exile are common terms associated with post-colonial literature. Needless to say, imperialism played a key role in bringing a sense of alienation and disorder to the countries where imperialists ruled.

One of the best-known writers in English today is Vidyadhar Suraj Prasad Naipaul, himself a product of post-imperialist society. To some, he might be better known for the controversial material in his travelogues than for his novels. But this does not undermine his acclaim as a novelist. Naipaul is an expatriate from Trinidad whose primary business as a novelist is to project carefully the complex fate of individuals in a cross-cultural society. He has written extensively about different aspects of post-colonial society, but knowingly or unknowingly, whether he is writing a travelogue or a novel, he tends to end up dealing with the identity crisis of an individual. In an interview with Roland Bryden in 1973, Naipaul remarked, "all my works are really one. I am really writing one big book. I come to the conclusion that, considering the nature of the society I came from, considering the nature of the world I have stepped into and the world I have to look at, I could not be a professional novelist in the old sense" (367-70).

V.S. Naipaul's magnum opus, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, can rightly be called a work of art that deals with the problems of isolation, frustration and negation of an individual. *A House for Mr. Biswas* tells the story of its protagonist, Mr. Biswas from birth to death, each section dealing with different phases of Mr. Biswas's life. Here, Naipaul has a more subjective approach towards the problems of identity crisis than the objective one a reader finds in his travelogues, especially on India.

Partly autobiographical, *A House for Mr. Biswas* delineates the traumas of a tainted and troubled past and the attempts to find a purpose in life, beautifully analysing the sense of alienation and the pangs of exile experienced by the characters. Speaking about the writings of Afro- Caribbean women in the US, Carol Boyce Davis identifies the urge among migratory writers particularly writers like V.S. Naipaul:

> Migration creates desire for home, which in turn produces the rewriting of home. Homesickness or homelessness, the rejection of home or longing for home become motivating factors in this rewriting. Home can only have meaning once on experience a level of displacement from it (113).

The image of the house is a central, unifying and integrating metaphor around which the life of Mr. Biswas revolves. Delineated in compassionate tones, for Mr. Biswas the house represents a search for emancipation from dependence. The novel paints a poignant picture of Mr. Biswas as he struggles to preserve his own identity in an alien environment and tries to forge an authentic selfhood. Besides focusing on his dark world, the novel introduces brief glimpses of ethnic and social history of the marginalized East Indian community in Trinidad. The narrative tries to maintain an equilibrium between Mr. Biswas's inner self and the disinterested outer view.

The life of Mr. Biswas resembles the life of Naipaul himself, whose series of experiences of exile and alienation while living in Trinidad seem to be portrayed through the character of his protagonist, Mr. Biswas. Yet, the tone is not negative, nor does the reader find a pessimistic approach on the part of the novelist in his dealing with the problem of identity crisis, a theme found also in Naipaul's other novels. Instead, Naipaul addresses the problem of alienation, exile and displacement with a positive approach. He presents Mr. Biswas' relentless struggle against the forces that try to subdue his individuality. His struggle is long and tiresome, but in the end he is successful in having a space he can call his own. Naipaul describes *A House for Mr. Biswas* in his non-fiction book, *Finding the Center*, saying that it was "very much my father's book. It was written out of his journalism and stories, out of his knowledge he had got from the way of looking MacGowen had trained him in. It was written out of his writing" (Naipaul, *A House for Mr. Biswas* xiii). Similarly, in his Nobel Award ceremony acceptance speech, Naipaul alludes to *A House for Mr. Biswas*, saying that "intuition led me to a large book about our family life."

Even though Naipaul is revisiting his own past imaginatively throughout *A House for Mr. Biswas*, his novel cannot be seen a family biography, however, and the novelist keeps reasonable distance to the protagonist despite his personal attachment to the book. From the very beginning, Mohun Biswas is depicted as a marginalized individual who is constantly on the move to identify his place in the limited world of Trinidad. In fact, the character of Mr. Biswas is carved out of alienated experience as he tries to find his own roots in the socio-cultural environment around him. In the search of his own identity, Mohun Biswas shifts from village to town and from joint family to nuclear family but fails to find his own roots amidst socio-cultural change. While countless other novelists have depicted identity crises in established

societies, Naipaul has depicted a protagonist in a society that is pandemonic and lacking in ideas and creativity.

"Pastorals," the first section of the novel, describes the birth and early childhood of Mr. Biswas. In this section, Hindu way of life with its customs, traditions, rituals, and philosophy of the people receives full expression in the small Indian world created by indentured Indian labourers in an artificially created colonial society of Trinidad. But here, too, it is the superstitious beliefs, the faith and reliance on pundits which cover the initial pages of the novel. Mr. Biswas has six fingers, a symbol of bad luck for his father and family, and this plays a decisive role in Mohun's life. Mohun is an alien even in his own family as from the very beginning he is declared unlucky in his horoscope, too, something that makes him an outsider in his own Indian world. He becomes a lonely individual who is trying to get a new social role but fails to find it. Naipaul portrays the complexity of the relationship between a man and his origins and his inability to escape from it. Aware of his loneliness and dilemma, Mr. Biswas tells his son, "I am just somebody. Nobody at all" (279). Unlike his father and brothers who have inherited the social identity of labourers, this cannot be claimed by Mr. Biswas. Mr. Biswas is looking after his uncle's shop while his brothers are working as labourers. After leaving his uncle's store, he takes up a job as sign-painter where he meets Shama, a daughter of the Tulsis (an affluent family of the island), whom he later marries. His marriage makes him realize that life, even after a love-marriage, is not romance, but an act of responsibility. Without money and without a dowry from the Tulsis, Mr. Biswas has no choice but to move in at Hanuman House. He develops a mental complex due to the disagreeable family atmosphere. To Mr. Biswas, it is a typical joint family which functions on the same pattern as the British empire in West Indies. Hanuman House provides shelter to Mr. Biswas but wants total dilution of his identity in return. In a novel dominated by the house metaphor, Hanuman House is described as follows:

> an alien white fortress. The concrete walls looked as thick as they were and when the narrow doors of the Tulsi Store on the ground floor were closed the House became bulky, impregnable and blank. The side walls were windowless and on the upper floors the windows were mere slits in the facade. The balustrade which hedged the flat roof was crowned with a concrete statue of the benevolent Monkey God Hanuman. (80-81)

When Mr. Biswas finds out that men are only needed as husbands and labourers or that they are non-existent in the Tulsi family, his inner self rebels. He finds himself unwanted in Hanuman House which he sees as a communal organization where "he was treated with indifference rather than hostility" (188). Although he tries to win acceptance in the family—he "held his tongue and tried to win favour" (188), this does not mean that he is willing

to lose his freedom and independence. When Govind, one of Tulsi sons-in-law, suggests that he leave sign-painting and become a driver for the Tulsi estate, Mr. Biswas immediately voices his dissent: "Give up sign-painting? And my independence? No, boy. My motto is: paddle your own canoe?" (107). It seems that for Mr. Biswas, sign-painting, taken up by him voluntarily, has become a part of his identity. He refuses to adopt a profession which is associated with the Tulsis, and he is not ready to merge himself to insignificance like other son-in-laws, some of whose names are even forgotten in the Tulsi family.

To assert his freedom in Hanuman House, Mr. Biswas joins the Aryans, a group of 'protestant' Hindu missionaries from India, and starts advocating the acceptance of conversion and women's education, on the one hand, and the abolition of the caste system, child marriage, and idol worship, on the other, knowing that these doctrines will anger the Tulsis. Similarly, in order to assert his individuality and to get acknowledged, Mr. Biswas takes up means that are as absurd as they are comic, such as his revenge on Bhandat (spitting in his rum) or giving various nicknames to the Tulsis such as "the old queen," "the old hen," "the old cow" for Mrs.Tulsi, "the big boss" for Seth, the "constipated holy man" and "holy ghost" for Hari, or "the two Gods" for Tulsi's sons. His attitude makes him "troublesome and disloyal and he could not be trusted" (102). Even when Mr. Biswas's daughter is born, it is Seth and Hari who chose the name Savi for his daughter, not Mr. Biswas himself. To register his protest, Mr. Biswas writes on the birth certificate: "Real calling name: Lakshmi. Signed by Mohun Biswas, father. Below that was the date" (163).

In the section entitled 'The Chase' Mr. Biswas begins his independent life with Shama. From the beginning, however, Mr. Biswas has the feeling that in Chase he is an unnecessary and unwanted man and that "real life was to begin for them soon and elsewhere"(147). To Mr. Biswas "Chase was a pause, a preparation" (147). Here, Naipaul, identifies the desire of Mr. Biswas to have a house of his own while also acknowledging the problem of alienation among displaced people. Interestingly, after coming to Chase, Mr. Biswas's attitude towards Hanuman House changes. Whereas he has used to think that Hanuman House is not ordered, he discovers that "the House was the world, more real than the Chase, and less exposed; everything beyond its gates was foreign and unimportant" (188). Mr. Biswas thinks that life in Chase will help him discover his own identity, but it is the sense of isolation that looms large and he fails to find his authentic selfhood. He also discovers that he wants to have his own identity among East Indians. Mr. Biswas now feels that despite hostility, he is recognized as a mimic man in Hanuman House. At Chase he feels alienated. What Naipaul seeks to convey, I think, is that a person's social identity depends on the society to which he belongs, and that the family is sustaining and stabilizing experience for marginalized individuals like Mr. Biswas. For Mr. Biswas, life is meaningless without

Shama, his children and even the Tulsis. This makes Mr. Biswas' visits to Hanuman House more frequent.

Life at Green Vale is a more distressing experience. After the spacious accommodation in Chase, the single room into which he moves with family and furniture leaves him feeling suffocated. Although Green Vale gives him a sense of freedom and importance (specially on Saturdays when wages were distributed), his actions in Green Vale are motivated by excessive insecurity both physically and mentally. Here, his dream to build a house begins to shape into reality. It is not that he wants a spacious place for himself, but he wants to be recognized as the father of his children, specially by his son, Anand. For Mr. Biswas, "Anand belonged completely to Tulsis" (216). Mr Biswas' first attempt to claim a portion of the earth fails. This dream to build a house meets the same result as the doll's house had given to Savi, daughter of Mr. Biswas, on her birthday. Shama, his wife, had to break the house in order to quell the anger of the Tulsis and to satisfy their egos. Somehow, he starts building his house in Green Vale, but it is nowhere near the house of his dreams. Mr. Biswas moves into the finished rooms of his house thinking that the house is going to bring a changed state of mind, but the intensity of alienation and displacement continues and here, too, he fails to gain acceptance as an individual.

The second part of the novel focuses on Port of Spain, a place that opens new avenues for Mr. Biswas. The city provides him with opportunities to establish himself professionally, something he has long searched for. He becomes a reporter for the *Trinidad Sentinel*, with a salary of fifteen dollars a month, a job that helps him earn some respect from the Tulsis, too. Now he is not a troublemaker anymore to Mrs. Tulsi. When she offers him two rooms in her house in Port of Spain, he readily accepts. He is not a non-entity anymore. Shama, on her visits to Hanuman House, is able to assert proudly that the "children are afraid of him" (340). Mr. Biswas, too, never feels what he used to feel when Shama is pregnant for the fourth time, "one child claimed; one still hostile, one unknown. And now another" (227). His relations with Mrs. Tulsi gradually improve. There is no hostility from either side. For the time being, he forgets his wish to have a space of his own and enjoys his success and family life. His happiness, however, is short-lived. The takeover of the *Trinidad Sentinel* by new authorities, Seth's break-up with Tulsis, and Mrs. Tulsi's decision to live in Shorthills, all come as a blow upsetting the family hierarchy upon which the Tulsi family has used to run.

Through the family hierarchy of the Tulsis, Naipaul, in my view, tries to portray the typical Indian joint families where the authority of senior members are absolute. The absence of this authority means disintegration of the family. Here, too, in the Tulsi family, the disturbance of this hierarchy (due to the absence of Seth and Mrs. Tulsi) leads to dissension and disunity in the family. Instead of co-operation, a competition between Mr. Biswas's son,

Anand, and Govind's son, Vidiyadhar, follows. Mr. Biswas'ambition to have a house re-surfaces after his shift to Shorthills. He has exhausted all his savings to build the house there. But the house is not conveniently situated. Shama has to walk a mile daily for shopping and there is also a problem of transportation. The children, too, want to return to Port of Spain. Even though the house is not the house of his dreams, it helps him realise his responsibility as a father and husband. The house for Mr. Biswas is more of a prison as it is situated far from the city. For Mr. Biswas "could not simply leave the house in Shorthills. He had to be released from it" (432). Thus, when Mrs. Tulsi offers him two rooms in Port of Spain he readily accepts the offer knowing that he has to share the house with Govind and Tuttle. After coming back to Port of Spain he finds people in a better economic position. Their money is shown in Tuttle and Govind's suite, for example. But for Mr. Biswas, his fortune remains the same. The domestic situation also improves after the return of Owad, a calm that remains short-lived. Owad slaps Anand for answering him back and in humiliation Anand urges his father that "[they] must move. [He] cannot bear to live here another day" (551). Mr. Biswas, who has himself faced such humiliation innumerable times during his childhood, is deeply moved by his son's appeal. He tells Shama that he is going to vacate the house very soon.

The reader may find a change in Mr. Biswas' attitude towards having a house. Earlier the house was expected to lead to a discovery of his authentic selfhood and a proclamation of his identity. This time, owning a house comes out of the humiliation inflicted on his son and Mr. Biswas's helplessness to protect his family. At that point, the house will be on a piece of land where he and his family can live with self-respect and dignity. Even his wife, Shama, agrees to leave the house although she earlier advocated living with the Tulsi family, saying, "I do not want anything bigger. This is just right for me. Something small and nice" (580).

Mr. Biswas manages to get a loan from Ajodha and buys a house in Port of Spain. He describes his house thus: "The sun came through the open window on the ground floor and struck the kitchen wall. Wood work and frosted glass were hot to the touch. The inside brick wall was warm. The Sun went through the home and laid dazzling strips on the exposed staircase" (572). Naipaul uses words like "sun" and "dazzling" in his description of the house, words that clearly reveal Mr. Biswas's happiness and sense of fulfillment. Later, Mr. Biswas discovers many flaws in the house, but the sense of satisfaction that he owns a house is there.

To conclude, Naipaul seems to suggest that for displaced people like Mr. Biswas, owning a house is not just a matter getting a shelter from heat, cold or rain. In fact, it is both an imposition of order and a carving-out of authentic selfhood within the heterogeneous and fragmented society of Trinidad. The novel portrays Mr. Biswas as a man who stays put, struggling against the hostile environment instead of running away from it.

The theme of cultural disintegration receives detailed treatment in *A House for Mr. Biswas*, a novel describing three generations of East Indians. Naipaul's novel succeeds in transcending the individual self by universalizing the issue of alienation. Unlike Naipaul's earlier novels, this novel is not light-hearted, perhaps because the hero is engaged in a serious battle against the forces of oppression. The novel even grows gloomier as Biswas's struggle with the Tulsis becomes more complex. Nevertheless, as it does not end on a tragic note, this is not a novel of despair. Ultimately, Mr. Biswas succeeds. In the end, he finally has a house of his own. The meaning of *A House for Mr. Biswas* is made richly clear in the Prologue:

> How terrible it would have been, at this time, to be without it; to have died among the Tulsis; amid of the squalor of that large, disintegrating and indifferent family; to have left Shama and the children among them, in one room; worse, to have lived without even attempting to lay claim to one's portion of the earth; to have lived and died as one had been born, unnecessary and unaccommodated. (14)

The choice of the protagonist's name in *A House for Mr. Biswas* is also interesting. Naipaul seems to have carefully chosen this name. His aim, I would argue, is not only to depict the Hindu background but also to relate it to the circumstances in which he is living. For instance, the protagonist's first name is Mohun, which means 'beloved' (according to the novel), even though he is depicted as an individual who is branded as unlucky and who experiences hostility and humiliation from society. Similarly, his surname, Biswas, means trust. While writing the novel, Naipaul seems to have decided to give the novel a happy ending, which is why he created a determined protagonist who, despite his unsuccessful attempts in the early stages, finally gains a piece of space which he can call his own. That may be the main reason why Naipaul instead of using the first name, Mohun, addresses the protagonist 'Mr. Biswas,' adding 'Mr.' to the surname to make his character dignified. According to Gordon Rohlehr, Naipaul is able to present a hero who is "in all his littleness, and still preserve a sense of man's inner dignity" (Rohlehr 190). The language of the novel is simple and unaffected by literary fashion. The novel is part of Naipaul's early phase as a novelist when he, through his novel *A House for Mr. Biswas,* seems to search for his own identity so that he can understand his own place in the world. In Naipaul's own words, "Most imaginative writers discover themselves, and their word, through their work" (Naipaul, *Return* 211).

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Globalization, Muslims, and the Indian Media

Mirza Asmer Beg

It was Marshall McLuhan who in his celebrated book *Understanding Media* brought to our notice the strong presence of the media as a principal element in any cultural definition. The only message, he informed us, was the medium (McLuhan 7). In our age the medium is the master—but sometimes it is a demon master. Yesterday, Saddam was the moderate Arab par excellence, the next day he was the greatest threat to the 'civilized world'. The nature and influence of the media as central to the understanding of power and domination are accepted widely today.[1] Images broadcast on television can be as devastating to a country as a volley of missiles falling on it. Not only can the opposing position be triumphed over in the media but also, by denying it access, it can be more or less eliminated. Journalists, news agencies, and networks make conscious decisions about what is to be portrayed, and how. As Akbar S. Ahmed puts it in *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise*:

> The powerful media offensive is compounded for Muslims: they appear not to have the capacity to defend themselves. Worse, they appear unable to even comprehend the nature and objections of the onslaught. The empty bluster of the leaders and the narrow-minded whining of the scholars make them appear pitiful, like pygmies arguing amongst themselves while a powerful giant of an enemy is at the gate. It is the ordinary Muslim . . . who senses the immensity of the danger. He is conscious of the potential scale of the battle and the forces arranged against him; his tension is made worse because he has so little faith in his own leaders. (Ahmed 1992 223)

In the Indian media, which will be in focus in this paper, no serious effort is made to understand Islam and its real meaning. The word Islam which is derived from '*silm'*, meaning peace. Islam has no place for violence. Islam believes that one who kills a human being has killed all of humanity. Whereas the right approach would be to judge Muslims in the light of the real teachings of Islam, the media generally tend to judge Islam in the light

[1] The media referred to here is the section of the mass media that focuses on presenting news to the public with the objective of information, education, and entertainment. The media include television, radio, pamphlets, newspapers, and film. They create and distribute news to a mass audience and engage in political communication. One of their key characteristics is that their messages are directed towards a large and relatively undifferentiated audience.

of the behavior and actions of some Muslims even though the same logic is not applied when the actions of those professing other faiths are judged. So when the Taliban regime in Afghanistan destroyed the Buddha statues in Bamiyan, the world's media were quick to link it to fundamentalist Islam and its dangerous teachings, whereas when the U.S. forces in Iraq presided over the plunder of thousands of priceless artifacts, transcripts, and archaeological material from the National Museum in Baghdad, the media did not attempt to cast aspersions on their religion or the Western civilization.

Interestingly, the media never examine critically those tenets of other religions which in the media violate basic human rights or that defy rationality; rather, they tend to glorify and create a positive image of other religions. The approach, however, is very uncharitable when it comes to Islam. It is projected as anti-democracy, anti-Western and anti-modernity. Calls are made for reform and review of different tenets of Islam.

Such calls are rarely sincere and sometimes negative, seemingly suggesting that the ancient teachings of Islam have no place in the modern world. Those who make this kind of calculated assault are aware that Muslims will react against such suggestions. Sometimes the reactions turn violent, something that, in turn, strengthens the argument of the media-created experts that Muslims are intolerant and that they do not want to change with the times.

With globalization we have seen what T. Huff in an article on "Globalization and the Internet" has called the "restructuring of the communicative space" (Huff 440). The media explosion can be seen to be contributing to the propagating of ideas and representing them in unqualified, categorical, and generic terms, and it empowers the individual to obtain and interpret such readily available information. With the universalization of ideas as a consequence of globalization, the image of Islam at the global level is transferred to national and local levels. Again, it is not a matter of interpretation in the genuine sense, but an assertion of power.

The dream of a global Islamic unity is forbidden, while the nightmare of global economic integration is seen as unavoidable. The emergence of a particular militant Islam is a reaction to the Western, aggressively secular ideologies and to the junking of all alternatives to the reconstruction of a western imperial order (Seabrook). No effort is made, however, to analyze these developments dispassionately.

Confronted with the power and aggressiveness of the media, Muslims appear to have lost the capacity to represent themselves, even to express what they see and know as the reality of their lives. Muslim reality for the world has become the images on television and the countless hostile words in the papers. Muslims in the media have no voice, no platform, so they cannot object or explain. Muslim expressions of cultural identity are dismissed as fanaticism and Muslim demands for basic rights are seen as fundamentalism. In this media game Muslims—weak and impotent—cannot win. Their frustration, therefore, at times finds expression in anger and in violence.

The Image of Islam

The mass media provide a particular picture of Islam reflecting powerful interests in the society served by the media. Along with the picture, which is not merely a picture but also a communicable set of feelings about the picture, goes what we may call its overall context. Context here means the picture's setting, its place in reality, the values implicit in it and not least, the kind of attitude it promotes in the beholder. The media follow certain codes and conventions to get things across intelligibly, and it is these codes more often than the reality being conveyed that shape the material conveyed by the media. Since these tacitly agreed upon rules efficiently reduce an unmanageable reality into "news" or "stories" and since the media strive to reach the same audience which they believe is ruled by a uniform set of assumptions, the picture of Islam is likely to be quite uniform (Said 44-45).

The present coverage of Islam canonizes certain notions, texts, and authorities. The idea that Islam is medieval and dangerous has acquired a well defined place both in the culture and the polity. Authorities can be cited for it, references can be made, arguments about particular instances of Islam can be adduced from it. And, in turn, these ideas and concepts furnish basic theoretical reasoning to be taken account of by anyone wishing to discuss or say anything about Islam. From being something out there, Islam is turned into an orthodoxy of this society. It enters the cultural canon, and this makes the task of changing it very difficult (Said 149).

Stereotypes and Caricatures

Vulgar stereotypes and caricatures are circulated by the media. The Indian media have reserved the tag of 'terrorist' for Muslims, who are alleged to be involved in acts amounting to terrorism. Thus, a non-Muslim involved in such activities can be anything but a terrorist. The media seldom question the authenticity of government reports on terrorist incidents. The national English dailies routinely carry articles with titles like "unidentified Lashkar-e-Toeba terrorist killed" without pausing to wonder how did the police knew that the alleged terrorist belonged to a particular terrorist organization if he was indeed unidentified. Often those killed are so imprudent that they carry their names and addresses as well as those of their accomplices in their pockets for the convenience of the security forces.

Whenever terrorism is being discussed on the TV or in the press, the picture of a terrorist is shown as a person with a typical Muslim beard and stereotypical appearance. Long after the discussion or the writeup have been forgotten, the picture remains etched in the memory of the viewers/readers so that whenever they hear or read the term "terrorist," the picture in their memory gets refreshed. The criticism of terrorists' actions has been painted with such a broad brush that a distinction between the majority of peace-

loving Muslims and the extremely small minority whose criminal approach includes killing civilians cannot be made.

An Islamphobic climate as regards the issue of terrorism has been created. Islam has been vilified as an intrinsically intolerant religion prone to extremism. In this picture every Muslim in India figures as Pakistan's fifth column and his religion as the fount of 'global terrorism'. He needs to put in extra effort to prove his patriotism, but thanks to the media created image he is still viewed with suspicion. Thus, if the television pictures regularly show chanting 'Islamic' mobs or 'Islamic' terrorists arrested or killed by the police, the distance, unfamiliarity and threatening quality of the spectacle to those characteristics onto Islam as a whole, something that gives rise to an ominous feeling that something fundamentally abhorrent and negative is confronting us.

This has led to the social and political discourse in India getting so badly vitiated that large numbers of urban-middle class people, especially the young, now spout a rabid inflammatory anti-terrorism (read anti-Muslim) rhetoric. Middle class audiences on talk shows reflect this. In the 'Movers and Shakers' show on Sony TV, for example, Shiv Sena Supremo and Bal Thackrey won applause for demanding that Indian Muslims be sent to Pakistan as Hindustan belonged to the Hindus only.

As I have suggested thus far, then, the media's attacks on Muslim extremists is easily converted into an attack on the entire body of Muslims. It becomes difficult to distinguish between the two types of Muslims created in the minds by the media. For non-Muslims, there seems to be a mad Mullah struggling to emerge from behind the quiet facade of every ordinary Muslim, and the sooner and more effectively he is put down the better (Ahmed 1992 39).

In popular cinema, the shady character is usually a Muslim. A butcher is necessarily a Muslim who is depicted as capable of cutting the necks of animals and humans with equal excitement. Needless to say, he has countless children. A Muslim family typically, is usually shown as living in medieval times, bereft of education and out of sync with the modern world. Like the sensational stereotypes, pictures meant to be provocative, to attract the reader, feed into our ignorance, and reinforce a myopic vision of reality. The image of a typical Muslim which takes shape in the minds of an ordinary non-Muslim is that of an illiterate man with four wives and many children, running a small trade, sympathizing or colluding with terrorists and cheering for Pakistan in cricket matches against India. This is not to suggest that no Muslim comes true to this image or at least some features of it, but so do some non-Muslims. The problem, rather, is that in a ruthless and deliberate sweep an entire community has been given this image. One Muslim is, therefore, as representative of all Muslims and of Islam in general.

Islam and Jihad

The term 'fundamentalist,' in and of itself a harmless word, has been given negative connotations and has been reserved for Muslims only in the media's equation of *Jihad* with terrorism. They have been able to make people believe that *Jihad*, which is one of the basic tenets of Islam, as a religious war of aggression for the purpose of proselytizing or exacting tribute and exterminating the idolaters. In reality, *Jihad* does not classically or literally signify war, warfare or hostility, and is never used in such a sense in the *Qur'an*.

The Arabic terms for warfare and fighting are *Harb* and *Qital*. (For a detailed analysis of the defensive nature of Jihad in Islam, see Moulvi Chirag Ali's *A Critical Exposition of the Popular Jihad*). The *Quran* does not call for wars of aggression, but it has allowed wars of defense. Clearly setting forth the grounds in its justification and strictly prohibiting offensive measures, it states: "Fight for the sake of Allah those that fight against you but do not attack them first. Allah does not love the aggressors" (The *Qur'an*, II: 190).

The term 'militants' and *'Jihadis'* are used interchangeably by the media. However, these two terms are contradictory. While militancy is aggressive, *jihad* is defensive. This irresponsible linkage of an Islamic concept with militancy has led to the representation of Islam as a violent religion. Although some misguided Muslims in order to justify their inhuman actions hide under the cover of Islam, the media have been all too willing to accept their explanation as the truth. The media are fond of using terms such as 'Islamic terrorists' and 'Islamic Jihadis,' making the link between Islam and terrorism appear too obvious to all. Media reports usually suggest that terrorism is a Muslim monopoly. The facts, however, are quite different. In India, the militants in Kashmir are Muslims, but they are only one of several militant groups. The Punjab militants led by Bhirandanwale were Sikhs. The United Liberation Front of Assam is a Hindu terrorist group that targets Muslims rather than the other way around. Tripura has witnessed the rise and fall of several terrorist groups, and so have Bodo strongholds in Assam. Christian Mizos mounted an insurrection for decades and Christian Nagas are still heading militant groups (Aiyar 12). Secular terrorists in India (anarchists, Maoists) have been the worst killers. Still, the media focus overwhelmingly on Muslim terrorist.

Islam and Women

The media have presented a wholly incorrect and negative stereotype of women in Islam as inanimate objects, submissively attending to the needs of their lords and masters, locked away in darkened homes. In reality, the potential of women in Islam is far superior to anything offered in Hindu and other civilizations. From domestic decision-making to outside matters, Mus-

lim women are central to family affairs. Where their lot is miserable it is to be attributed to Muslim male tyranny, not Islamic advice.

However, an isolated incident like the marriage of a minor Muslim girl in Hyderabad to a Saudi Sheikh is converted into a general attack on women in Islam. The media give extensive coverage and the whole story is discussed threadbare. It is true that child marriage is a norm in some parts of India among non-Muslims, but this does not interest the media. This is not to justify that the marriage of a Muslim minor is right but to illustrate the media's 'great concern' for Muslim women, which actually leads to a strengthening of the negative stereotype of women in Islam. It ought to go without saying that media are profit-seeking corporations and therefore, quite understandably, have an interest in promoting certain images of reality before others.

The media never stops to ponder the rights given to women in Islam. No other major religion has given as many rights to women. Whenever this issue comes up for discussion, however, a very grim picture of women in Islam is presented. The veil which Muslim women use to cover their bodies decently and protect their modesty is seen as a symbol of physical and mental enslavement, forced upon women by men. They cannot accept that behind the veil there might be an enlightened woman who has decided to use the veil voluntarily. For the media, exposure of the female body has somehow come to be construed as a form of women's empowerment. As Islam does not subscribe to this simplistic logic, its approach is said to be antithetical to modernist tendencies. Increasingly politically active, educated women are consciously choosing to wear the veil as a source of their Islamic identity. For many of these women the veil has facilitated rather than inhibited a wider social and economic participation in bestowing respectability and modesty on female public appearance.

The media are adept at creating a controversy where none exists. The very natural and positive concept of divorce *(Talaaq)* in Islam has also been dragged in a needless debate. The controversy over 'triple divorce' has come in handy to demonize Islam. Learned editorials and researched papers are written on this subject without understanding its real meaning and context. Divorce is allowed in Islam, but not the way it is presented in the media. The irreducible basis of what the media have to say on this subject is that in Islam a married woman is like a pawn in the hands of her husband who can get rid of her by simply uttering the word *'Talaaq'* thrice in one go. This is an extremely ignorant and damaging distortion. Instead of recognizing the positive concept of divorce in Islam where the contract of marriage allows an honourable exit for both the parties after they have explored all means of living together and failed. Divorce is the last option, and not the first. This certainly is more natural and human than the irrevocable marriage in some religions where both spouses have to live together, come what may, till death, the result of which may be clandestine illegitimate affairs, secret second marriages, and, in rare cases, murder when no other option seems viable.

Instead of applauding the provision for divorce in Islam, the media have decided to concentrate upon the technicalities of its operationalization without trying to understand it properly. The irony is that a positive feature of Islam has been used as a stick to beat it.

Charge of Intolerance

One is tired of pleas in the media for 'moderate' Muslims to 'speak up'. The last thing any well-wisher of India should do is to taunt and isolate moderates, especially Muslims moderates, who form the community's bulk. The demand that they "speak up" (Sanghvi) presumes that Muslims support extremism—a shameful prejudice (Bidwai).

The media's charge of intolerance derives from protests in 2006 against the Danish newspaper cartoons depicting the prophet in appallingly bad light; big demonstrations against Bush's visit and Minister in the State Government,Yaqoob Qureshi's offer of Rs. 51 crore to anyone who kills the Danish Cartoonists. The media, however, found no fault with Yaqoob Qureshi when he campaigned for Narendra Modi after the Gujarat pogrom.

Those who accuse Muslims of intolerance because they question the right of some people to offend them through the cartoons are forgetting something. In a democracy those offended have an equal right to protest peacefully. Gary Young, columnist with *The Guardian*, put the difficult situation in which Muslims find themselves very succinctly when he said that "Muslims were being vilified twice—once through the cartoons, and again, for exercising their democratic right to protest Muslims alone it seems have forfeited the democratic right to protest" (Suroor 10).

Again, to see the opposition to the Visit of President Bush in terms of religious affiliation is irrational. People across religious lines and several national political parties were in the forefront of this opposition. Those who hold that opponents of the Indian government's foreign policy are trying to communalize it are prisoners of a stereotype, which holds that Muslims can only relate to issues which concern their identity as Muslims, and not to issues of national concern.

Quereshi's statement to the media has been strongly condemned by countless Muslim leaders and organizations. Their condemnation, however, does not have the same news value as Qureshi's disgraceful offer, nor does it seem to be enough. If Qureshi was not been sacked then, it was not because of Muslims. But if Narendra Modi continued to be Chief Minister of Gujarat, it was because a substantial section of the majority community voted for him, despite his all too evident involvement in the Gujarat pogrom. This does not lead the media to draw any conclusions about the majority community of Hindus. However, one action of an Indian Muslim like Yaqoob Qureshi is seen as typical of all Muslims and of Islam in general.

Muslims in the Army

So much hue and cry was created by the media over the government's harmless and routine exercise of collecting data on the status of Muslims in the armed forces in India that it was forced to drop the move. The Bhartiya Janta Party called it a 'misguided' survey armed at 'communalizing' the armed forces, and the media happily bought this line of argument. Voices questioning the veracity of the argument were few and far between. The media renamed the Prime Minister's High Level Committee (PMHC) on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim Community headed by Justice Rajinder Sachar as the Sachar Committee, seemingly implying that it was guided by the whims of one person. Under intense pressure of the media the Prime Minister's Office quickly distanced itself from the Committee.

However, the fact remains that Muslims are one of the most underrepresented groups in the armed forces in India. A note sent to the defence ministry by the army on January 9, 2006, stated that in 2004, there were only 29093 Muslims in the army out of a total of 1.1 million personnel. Among the Officers this may be explained by educational backwardness among Muslims, but this cannot explain the Muslim community's low representation in other ranks.

The PMHC was not wrong in asking for information about the number and status of Muslims in the army. Such information is essential to know if some groups are under-represented and why. The US army, for example, regularly compiles data on Muslims and other ethnic groups, and this data is publicly available. It is not the media's concern to highlight that certain Indian security and intelligence-related agencies simply don't recruit Muslims. These include the Research and Analysis Wing, the Intelligence Bureau and the National Security Guard.

The Case of Madaris

It is often alleged that *Madaris*, the schools where young minds are brainwashed to carry forward the messianic spirit of Islam and where the dogmatic approach and intolerance of other points of view produce fanatics are tolerated by the Governments to prove their democratic credentials despite the allegation that the Madaris are "breeding grounds of terrorists" (Bandyopahyay 1483). However, there are no solid grounds for believing what is generally alleged about *Madaris*. In India, Muslim *Madaris* are no different from theological seminaries of Hindus.

It is also suggested that in the *Madaris* students are taught about the *Quran*, and since the *Quran* is supposedly dogmatic, with intermittent calls for violence, their alumi must be the ideal proponents of *Jihad.* In fact, such an understanding comes from decontextualised readings of the verses of the *Quran*. The *Quran* possesses both universal and particular values. Confusion erupts when we try to mix particularity with universality. Such confusion is

what one finds in most of the recent writings about Islam, which end up quoting verses from the *Quran* meant for particular people and particular events while ignoring the universal message (Neyazi 53). If such decontextualized interpretations were attempted as regards the *Bhagwad Gita*, a similar result would follow. Would that be sufficient to conclude that Hinduism is intolerant or that Hindu religious seminaries are the breeding grounds of fanatics? Muslims are advised to revise the courses taught in their *Madaris.* The media, however, are not alarmed at what is taught in schools run by the Sangh-controlled Vidya Bharti institutions which specialize in the suppression, distortion and invention of historical facts.

For historical reasons, the personal laws of the religious minorities were not touched, but the Constitution of India prescribed in the Directive Principles of state policy that in due course the government would move towards a Uniform Civil Code. The leadership in the post-independence period hoped that people would in time transcend their religious affiliation and come to view themselves first and foremost as citizens of India. The creation of an autonomous public sphere, where people would act as citizens unencumbered by the political and moral weight of their community affiliations was to be the key to modern India (Chandhoke 53). For different historical and political reasons, this was not to be, however. We could never reach to such an ideal situation.

Another noteworthy myth about the alleged appeasement of Muslims which the media never tries to dispel concerns the demand of the rightist forces for a Uniform Civil Code in India, which they say is not being enforced for fear of annoying Muslims. The issue dates back to 1985 when a Supreme Court judgment, strengthening the rights of divorced Muslim women to maintenance from their former husbands, opened up a debate about the position of Muslim women. Questioning the system which allows for separate civil laws for various religious communities, the verdict argued for a Uniform Civil Code. Muslims all over the country took to the streets against this interference with their personal laws. In keeping with the popular Muslim mood, the Government introduced a new law which restored the special family laws for Muslims. The Hindu nationalists were very critical of the Government and accused it of Muslim appeasement. They have since then tried to create an impression, ably assisted by the media, that the whole country, but for the Muslims, is in favour of a Uniform Civil Code.

However, the results of the National Election Survey in 2004 conducted by the Centre for Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi, tell a different story. The survey revealed that a majority of respondents across castes and religion support the position that every community should have separate personal laws. 56 percent people said that there should be a legal ban on inter-religious marriages and 53 percent approved of a ban on inter-caste marriages (National Election Survey, 2004). But the Sangh Parivar, as also

the media, continues to give the impression that only Muslims are opposed to the Uniform Civil Code.

Muslim Population Growth

The census has been used always as a tool by Hindu communal forces, ably assisted by the media, to compare the Hindu community with other religious communities, especially Muslims. In 1979, the Hindu Mahasabha brought out a publication called "They count their gains, we calculate our losses," a publication that, by using distorted census data, raised fears of a growing Muslim population. In 1925, Swami Shraddhanand Gupta had declared that he had been seized by the problem of 'the dying out' of 'the Hindu race.' As early as in 1912, moreover, a pamphlet was published in Calcutta by U.N. Mukherjee, entitled "Hindus—a Dying Race," whose view were to become a part of Hindu communal 'common sense.' Population fears have been especially used by communal discourses to construct myths of 'Dying Hindus' and perceptions of declining Hindu numbers. In fact, the British colonizers used such constructed fears effectively for their policy of divide and rule. On the basis of slower population growth rates of Hindus relative to Muslims, O'Donnell, the Census Commissioner for 1891, leapfrogged across simple statistical logic to deduce the number of years it would take for the Hindus to disappear altogether (Gupta). A recent book published under the auspices of the Indian Council of Social Science Research has made a negative forecast that within six decades Indian religionists would become a minority in India (Joshi).

The data from the 2001 census show that the Muslim population has grown at an average annual rate of 2.59 percent during 1991-2001, and that the Hindu population has grown at a rate of 1.82 percent during the same period. It shows a growth difference of 0.8 percent per annum. The general reasons for this minor population growth difference are poverty and educational backwardness. According to the population growth projection of the coming two decades, the annual growth rates of Muslims would remain the same, but it would start diminishing after 2021. Despite the higher growth rate, because of their lower base, Muslims will add substantially less population to their fold than Hindus. The net addition to the population during the next hundred years is estimated to be 180 million for Muslims and a whopping 440 millions for Hindus, or an addition more than twice that of Muslims. Thus, the fear that Muslims would outnumber Hindus in India is totally unfounded.

Another myth spread mainly by the vernacular press is that Muslims do not practice family planning and that the Government does not pay any attention to this issue. The figures, however, tell a different story. According to the official survey of IIPS (1995) and IIPS (2000), the current use of any method of family planning was observed to be 37 percent in 1989-99 among

Muslims, as compared to 49 percent among Hindus. Similarly, the use of any modern methods varied from 30 percent among Muslims to 44 percent among Hindus during the same period. However, the increase in the use of any methods, as well as modern methods was much faster among Muslims during 1992-93 to 1998-99 as compared to Hindus. Female sterilization constituted 65 percent of any modern contraceptives used by currently married Muslim women, compared to nearly 82 percent among Hindus. Also, Muslims use a higher level of spacing methods like pills, the IUD as well as traditional methods such as periodic abstinence, as compared to Hindus.

Another widespread belief which has become a part of national 'common sense,' is that polygamy is rampant among Muslims and this is the main reason for the growth in the Muslim population. In reality, its evidence is quite low among Muslims, and official figures have shown that an almost equal percentage of Muslims and Non-Muslims practice it. Interestingly, according to Union Ministry of Welfare's figures, 5.8 percent of Hindus practice polygamy as against 4.3 percent of Muslims.

Islam is News

The vernacular press is forthright and brazen in pursuing an anti-Islam and anti-Muslim line. Their consistency on this count has been successful in poisoning the minds of ordinary folks. Concocted stories and canards against Muslims have been responsible for many a riot in independent India. The English press, however, is more circumspect in this regard. However, it often wittingly or unwittingly contributes to the maligning of Muslims and hence is not immune to communal prejudice and stereotyping. The case in point is the result of a seven-city survey of Indian Muslims published in the *Hindustan Times* on September, 11, 2005. Crossing all limits of fair play, journalistic ethics and social responsibility, it renders Indian Muslims vulnerable to continued hate campaigns. The survey based on interviews with 813 Muslims in seven major cities of India uncovered that 'only' 42 percent of Indian Muslims supported Osama bin Laden. It is clear from the survey's findings that Indian Muslims are fanatics. The impression which an ordinary reader gets from this 'scientific survey' is that the next time he meets an Indian Muslim there is 50-50 chance that he adores a terrorist. The media's affiliation with power gives its coverage of Islam more potency, resilience and authority.

The media dutifully report what Hindu hardliners such as Advani, Togadia and Singhal have to say. Ordinary people accept what they read and hear and take to be 'the truth'. Issues and controversies about Islam and Muslims are reported or invented and that becomes News, be it triple *talaq*, alimony to divorced Muslim women, minor incidents at the Muslim University, or Muslim opposition to some blasphemous publication. These Islamic topics are picked out of a huge mass of Islamic details and for the media,

these topics define Islam so as to exclude everything not fitting in. The issue is then blown out of proportion and learned editorials are written suggesting that these are the real issues confronting Muslims. For the non-Muslims the image coming out of such coverage is that of a people who are still living in the past and are not comfortable with the present. Even their religiosity is primitivized.

While the press routinely writes about the medieval attributes of Islamic punishment, jurisprudence and the status of women, no one mentions that some orthodox Israeli rabbis have remarkably similar views on women or that some Hindu clerics are just as venomous and medieval in their outlook. Widespread outrage is expressed at the absence of freedom of press in Saudi Arabia, but no outrage is shown at the Israeli rules against Arab newspapers, schools and Universities on the West bank.

Global Islamic Fundamentalism

The creation of an imagined monolithic Islam characterized by a growing trend towards fundamentalism leads to religious reductionism that views political conflicts in purely religious terms. However, although the fact remains that Muslims everywhere may be using the cultural language of Islam to carry out their distinctive struggles in local, regional, or national contexts, this has more to do with socio-economic issues and political issues (e.g., ethnic nationalism, autonomy, and independence) than with religion (Esposito 181).

The emphasis placed on the 'Muslim World' is telling and often gives the impression of a unified, homogenous threat that simply does not exist. There is hardly any mention in the West about the 'Christian World' or, in India, about the 'Hindu world'.

Such discriminating analyses are not made in the media, and the result is a tendency to see Muslim fundamentalism as a universal and unified phenomenon. This is coupled with apprehension that all Muslims are being sucked into its grip. Much worse, the very word 'Muslim fundamentalism' gets simplified. Anyone wearing a long beard and dressed in traditional Muslim attire is viewed as a fundamentalist. The ideology and outlook that constitute Islamic and Muslim fundamentalism are commonly ignored. In this simplified mode of construction, the distinction between a traditional-conservative who abides by Islamic tradition as it came to be defined long ago, which makes it impervious to changing times, on the one hand, and the fundamentalist, who seeks to come to terms with contemporary times by drawing upon Islamic resources and reinterpreting them to suit his purposes, on the other hand, is completely ignored (Ahmad 12).

Conclusion

Of course, there are not only negative images of Islam are present in the media. The problem, rather, is that negative images of Islam are very much more prevalent than positive ones, and that such images correspond not to what Islam 'is', but to what some sections of media take it to be. These sections have the power to propagate a particular image of Islam, which therefore becomes more prevalent.

The negative images discussed stem partly from a lack of understanding of Islam among non-Muslims and partly from the failure by Muslims to explain themselves. For Muslims, therefore, it is high time to pause to reflect and to attempt to re-locate the main features of Islam. The sheer range of approaches and biases and consequent confusion should encourage Muslims to attempt clarification. The problem is not that there are too few answers but that there are too many (Ahmed 1988 1). The path ahead is difficult, but that must not deter us from trying to present the whole truth in its proper context. Instead of taking offense and getting provoked, Muslims need to engage others in a battle of ideas.

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Is the Islamist Voice Subaltern?

David Thurfjell

In her well-known essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), Gayatri Spivak makes two key arguments. Firstly, she argues that postcolonial studies, although its aim is to help the oppressed, risks perpetuating a neo-colonial exploitation of the economically and politically dispossessed. Postcolonial studies, Spivak argues, ironically risks reinscribing colonial imperatives of political domination and cultural exploitation. The post-colonial scholar wants to help the oppressed, but ends up doing the opposite. This happens because the postcolonial scholar attempts to improve the subalterns' condition from the outside by granting them collective speech. This attempt creates a situation where the subaltern depends upon western intellectuals to "speak for" them. Instead of being allowed to speak for themselves, they are spoken for. Furthermore, they are treated as a group with a collective cultural identity: the identity of being dispossessed. This situation, Spivak argues, will in fact re-inscribe their subordinate position in society. Because if they were not subordinate, there would be no need to speak as a collective group or to be spoken for in the first place.

Spivak sees this academic understanding of the subaltern, as a unified group that needs to be spoken for, as a form of epistemic violence that continues the ethnocentric western imperialist domination of the world, or, in Spivak's words, "an extension of the Western logos" that does not take into account the heterogeneity of the colonized body politic. Spivak concludes that postcolonial intellectuals must understand that their privilege is their loss. That is, as soon as one has gained the platform to speak for the oppressed**,** one does not represent them anymore (Spivak 1988).

This would of course be true for someone such as myself. As a male, rich, healthy, white, heterosexual, academic in my mid-thirties, I am a prime example of an absolute non-subaltern. So why do I address these issues? The same question could of course be posed to the theoretical giants whose names are imbued with subaltern auras, such as Gayatri Spivak herself, Homi Bhabha, and Edward Said, all of whom have had an enormous impact on the way scholars think of these matters. One of their critics, Martin Kramer, writes ironically about Said: "positioned within taxi distance of the media's Manhattan epicenter … Said [complained] that Palestinians were

systematically denied 'permission to narrate' their own story" (Kramer 1992).

Thus, speaking for the dispossessed, one risks reinscribing their maginalisation. This takes me to the second argument that Spivak puts forth in her article, namely, that the subaltern simply cannot speak. Because if you are subaltern, she argues, no one will listen to you, and if they do, you are not subaltern anymore. If the two arguments are brought together, it seems as though there is no way whatsoever that the subaltern can be heard. Subalterns can neither speak for themselves nor can anyone else speak for them without reinscribing their marginalization.

I believe that Spivak is right. It is by definition impossible to speak and be heard from the margins of a discourse. The subaltern cannot speak. Maybe, however, this is only true as long as we are discussing speech within a chosen discourse. If we mean that one will not be heard on a certain arena as long as one speaks from the margins of that very same arena. But what happens if one completely ignores the arena? If one builds another one and refuses to adjust to the language, rules, and codes of the first arena? What happens if the realization of one's subalternity results, not in striving for a position in the centre from which one is excluded, but in the establishment of a new**,** alternative centre?

This is the main question of this paper, and it is connected to another query: how do we as predominantly western scholars interested in postcolonial perspectives react to the establishment of such alternative centres? I will argue that we often react to it with indignation because of its seeming unawareness or disregard of what we see as our central position. I will exemplify this with the case of Islamism.

By the term "Islamism" I refer to the religious and political movement that strives for the establishment of modern states built on the principles of Islamic revealed law. A product of the twentieth century, Islamism is one of many responses to the colonial and post-colonial situations in the so-called Muslim world.

It could be argued that Islamism represents a conscious attempt to establish an alternative arena for politics and culture as well as for academic discussion. Islamism is an attempt to provincialize Europe and thereby make its adherents able to speak. A closer look at the Islamist movement on both elite and popular levels seems to support such an interpretation.

On the elite level, the formulations of Islamist ideologists are interesting. Seyyed Qutb is one prominent example. He was one of the early leaders of the Muslim brotherhood and has since his execution in 1966 remained an immensely influential Islamist ideologist. An important notion in his work is that everything positive that has come from "the West" is already to be found in Islam. Muslims, he argues, need not make the detour through Europe to find the tools to build a good society. Hence human rights, social

justice, and care for the environment, are brought forth as originally Islamic ideals (See, for instance, Qutb 1974).

Ruhollah Khomeini is another example. He was the founder of the Islamic republic of Iran and an outspoken critic of western imperialism and secularist ideologies. In many of his speeches he also criticized the domination of the imperialist western discourse on a meta-level. "The trouble with arguments against the use of familiar and time-honoured vocabulary," he said on one occasion "is that it is expected to be phrased in that very vocabulary" (qtd. In Sayyid 1997:114). What Khomeini called for, in this quote and elsewhere, is an abandonment of the view that the western discourse, or vocabulary as he calls it, is the language one should use in one's critique of "the West." Khomeini seemed to argue that one can never defeat a discourse by using its own vocabulary. Western imperialism will not be conquered by a Western-style criticism but by an Islamic one, he argued, as he led the revolutionary Iranian movement in shouts for "independence, freedom and Islam."

On a popular level, the establishment of an independent Islamist arena can be seen in the refusal of Islamist activists to recognize the rules of the hegemonic western discourse. The Mohammed caricature incident in January, 2006, is a case in point. In this controversy, Islamist groups held the Danish government to be responsible for the publications of an independent Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*. To do this is, so to speak, against the rules of a modern western democratic system. Because**,** in such a system, different public institutions in society are independent of each other**,** and prime ministers, hence, cannot, by definition, be held responsible for the publications of independent newspapers.

Muslim activists' inability to understand this basic principle has been a source of great frustration among people in Scandinavia and elsewhere. Journalists and participants in TV debates were annoyed by the fact that Muslims did not follow the rules. Muslims may criticize *Jyllands-Posten*, but they cannot blame the Danish prime minister for its publications, the argument went. In other words: Muslims have to take the fight on our arena.

The interesting thing is that both the Islamists and the defenders of *Jyllands-Posten* know that the Islamists can never win such a fight. Muslims did not make the rules of the compartmentalized modern society and, if they are to follow such rules in their own struggle, they are bound to fail.

The history of the twentieth century gives many examples of Muslims who try to formulate their subalternity in the terminology of different European ideologies. But socialist, nationalist or democratic struggle to "catch up" with "the West" have all failed. Muslim societies are all still lagging behind. Islamism, however, although it is also dependent of these ideologies, is based on something that is truly its own, namely the religion of Islam. As such, it is a discourse that provincializes "the West" while creating a center of its own.

The core of postcoloniality is the ambition to decentralize "the West," or western modernity. Islamism has successfully managed to provide an alternative center of moral, political and ontological focus among its adherents. This, arguably, makes it one of the most obvious examples of a subaltern postcolonial voice today.

As to the western responses to the challenge of Islamism, it is no exaggeration to say that there is a consensus about it. Everyone seems to be negative: rightwing and leftwing politicians, publicists, churches and NGOs, all unite in a condemnation of this movement which is regarded as anti-democratic, male chauvinist**,** and downright dangerous.

This response would seem to prove Spivak's point. The hegemonic discourse is, as always, colonial in its attitude. The subaltern cannot speak, and those in the center will not or cannot listen. The center of the western discourse will also produce arguments that legitimate its disregard of the Islamist voice. For instance, Islamists will be labeled as undemocratic and therefore not worth negotiating with. If an Islamist organisation turns out to be democratically elected (as was the case in Algeria), it will be labeled as potentially undemocratic and for this reason excluded from the discussions.

On a theoretical or academic level, it can be argued that a sociologistic paradigm legitimates disregard of the Islamist voice. By "sociologistic paradigm" I am referring not to a particular scholarly research method but to an ontological understanding of the human condition, which is often, but need not be, entailed in that methodology. The sociologistic paradigm conceives of reality as well as our notions of what is morally right and wrong as social constructions created by humans or in human societies. It emphasizes social factors to the exclusion of other aspects. Religious world views are here spoken of as symptoms of social relations and power only. Since they are expressions of the social, moreover, they need not be taken at face value as valid expressions of, often subaltern, human experiences.

The examples of the sociologistic paradigm in studies of Islamism are innumerable. Akbar Ahmed, to take just one example, argues that Islamic "fundamentalism" is one response to the doubts that postmodernity gives rise to. Muslims who cannot cope with reality retreat back to old myths and hierarchies to strengthen their identity. Islamism is a social strategy (Ahmed 1992: 28-42).

Let us return to Spivak's first argument and see if the sociological explanation of religiosity could be regarded as an example of the epistemic violence that she speaks of. Should we regard the sociologistic paradigm as the theoretical counterpart of the more concrete forms of violence that we find in the spheres of politics and military force?

Personally, I hold such an understanding to be reasonable. Foucault's notion of the relation between research and power finds a clear illustration in this instance. Sociologistical explanations of Islamist beliefs and practices must be seen as a part of a deauthorisation process through which the Other

is silenced since, whether we want to or not, it provides arguments for why we need not listen to them.

Nowadays, many sociologically or anthropologically oriented scholars of islamology (such as myself) tend to think of ourselves as friends of the Muslims whom we study. We do everything not to be like the orientalist scholars criticized by Edward Said. We try not to homogenize or romanticize the Muslim world. In a sense, we see ourselves as the spokespeople for our marginalized informants. But since most of us at the same time explain the experiences of our informants in sociological terms only, we provide arguments for not listening to their own voices, whereby we continue to reinscribe their marginalization—a stance that is similar to the deauthorisation of the colonized world carried out by the much-criticized orientalist scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Recently, it has become fashionable to have a postcolonial approach in the academic study of religion. There is an outspoken ambition to listen to unheard voices and to counteract the domination of modern European thought. Postcolonial studies is both a description and a manifesto. When we declare that "the subaltern cannot speak" we also make an ethical statement, namely, that it is morally wrong that the subaltern cannot speak and that s/he *should* be allowed to speak. If the analysis offered in this paper is correct there seems to be a certain degree of hypocrisy in the postcolonial trend. Because if we really want the subaltern to speak, it seems inconsistent to say that s/he should do so only when s/he says what we want to hear.

Islamism is a subaltern voice. Perhaps the strongest in the world today. Our reactions to its independent agenda clearly reveals the limits of our stated ambition to let the subaltern speak.

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Minority Concerns: Female Scholars at the Cultural Intersection

Saad A. Albazei

I still remember my surprise when many years ago I heard women being referred to as a minority. Obviously, it was the statistics that made me wonder: how could half the population in any given country, and sometimes even more than half, be considered a minority, or a marginal group, as they were also sometimes called? I was in the US when I heard on the news that they were talking about minorities "such as blacks and women." Blacks, OK, given their number, but women? Later on, I understood how misleading and idiotically empty of significance statistics can be, but at the time, I was busy pondering what it meant to be part of what is known as the Third World. Larger in statistics, the Third World was, and continues to be, smaller in power and effectiveness. It came out clearly as a "third world."

In the US, where I spent a number of years studying in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I found myself surrounded by my "third world minority" status while gradually discovering the cultural and academic importance of another minority: women. As a student of the formation of Orientalist thinking in Western literary discourse, I had a great deal of help from female scholars who, to my surprise, had done a lot to alleviate my "thirdworldliness" by exposing the Western indebtedness to the Orient, that ancient part of what is now known as the third world. What was it that motivated a scholar such as Dorothee Metlitzki in the mid-twentieth century to study Arabic and produce a magisterial study of what she termed "the matter of Araby in Medieval England"? Why, before that, was she drawn to analyzing the interest of an American writer such as Herman Melville in the Orient in her book *Melville's Orienda*?[1]

Along with Metlitzki, I came to know the work of another scholar, also female, who wrote another impressive study of the *Arabic Role in Medieval History*.[2] That book, beside others published by the same author, drove the

[1] The two books published by Metlitzki are not under identical names: *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1977); and *Melville's Orienda* by Dorothee Metlitsky Finkelstein (New Haven: Yale UP, 1961).

[2] Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Arabic Role In Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten Heritage*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987. Professor Menocal wrote other works

point home: here were two fine scholars sharing a similar motive to highlight the Arabo-Islamic role in the formation of Western civilization. What appeared particularly impressive, and heartening to me, was the manifest sympathy characterizing the work of both scholars, a sympathy not always shared in Western studies of Islam which is largely dominated by male scholars.[3]

It was certainly that sympathy with or admiration for Arabo-Islamic culture that caught my attention in an Orientalist context that, according to Edward Said, was either characterized by bias or marked by politics and colonialist objectives. It was no wonder then that it was female scholars who would immediately question Said's argument. Menocal was among a number of Western Arabists and Islamists who were unhappy with what they considered Said's generalized and sometimes unfair contentions.[4] When I came to discover more names and works moving along similar lines as those followed by Metlitzki and Menocal, and when the names of the Germans Sigrid Hunke, Katharina Mommsen, Annmarie Schimmel, and the Americans Barbara Harlow, Barbara Parmenter, Karen Riley, among others, started filling my increasingly impressed book reviews, questions and gasps of wonder were the natural responses. They were the same questions over and over, the same as those raised upon encountering Metlitzki and Menocal.

We all know that the number of female scholars, not only in the field I am referring to but in most fields of research, is still far from equaling those of males. My encounter with the female scholars specializing in Arab or Islamic culture, however, showed that in no way could the male scholars match the female scholars in sympathy and fairness. What lies behind such a remarkable phenomenon is what this paper will try to address. But before addressing that question I should add another and no less significant side to the issue. The phenomenon I am referring to is not limited to Western female scholars; it also applies to the other side as well, that is, to female scholars from Arab and Muslim countries. Those scholars, on the other side of the coin, looked not at themselves and their own culture, but at the West from an angle reminiscent of the one adopted in the West vis à vis the East. By looking at those two sides of the coin a more provocative picture is likely to emerge. Naturally, that picture is too large for the limited space I have here,

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in the same line, including: *The Ornament Of The World: How Muslims, Jews, And Christians Created A Culture Of Tolerance In Medieval Spain* (Boston: Little Brown, 2002).

[3] I met Professor Menocal in 1979, as far as I recall, at the MLA convention in New York. I was a student then working towards my doctorate and developing an interest in Orientalism. Prof. Menocal told me how she felt about Said's study which was, she said, quite unjust in its assessment as it ignored the great Orientalism of Spain and Germany. She articulates the same views in some of her publications.

[4] See the article by John Irwin in the British magazine *Prospect* (February, 2006) where he argues that Said's book had an adverse effect on the growth of Orientalist studies in the UK.

59; an article in Arabic: شتيفان فايدنر: "نظرة جديدة إلى الاستشراق: آنا ماري شيمل والتواصل الثقافي بين ألمانيا والعالم الإسلامي"، مجلة "فكر وفن"، ع78 (2003

so my only option is to draw the map and hope that a larger exploration of this hitherto little studied territory will follow.

The group of Western female scholars mentioned so far can be divided into two groups. The first includes pioneers such as Metlitzki, Hunke, Schimmel, and Mommsen whose focus is on Oriental contributions to Western civilization. Besides age and generation, there are several other reasons for putting these scholars in one group. They were all Orientalists in the traditional sense, moving along the old highway of research where values such as objectivity and erudition predominate. The many centuries of German, Russian and English education in their backgrounds had established such criteria and values that paved the way for monumental scholarly achievements. Besides, the subject of their interest is the ancient East, old Arabia, Persia, the Indian sub-continent, and the Levant. Their interest in cultures so remote included a strong emotional attachment, culminating in some cases in personal sagas of fascination and love.

The second group includes a younger generation of scholars who come from diverse Western backgrounds. Though still attached to the East (which transforms in this case into a Third World) with bonds of sympathy and admiration, this group differs in two respects: the main concern of this generation is the contemporary world of power struggle, domination and resistance, as all that reflects on culture in general and on literature in particular; second, the majority of these scholars are deeply involved in the theoretical issues dominating contemporary studies, particularly those related to postcoloniality and gender studies. Indeed the two generations testify to the passage from Orientalism to Postcoloniality and other adjacent fields.

Yet it is the circumstances and the reasons behind this rush Eastward of women scholars that lends such an aura of intrigue to this area of research. Neither Orientalist nor Postcolonial approaches can explain the personal touch and the depth of involvement. Although such a personal touch is not always articulated in a direct manner, it is difficult to make sense of the degree of involvement visible in all those cases without assuming an extraordinary motivation. Annemarie Schimmel, for instance, who at her death in 2003 had written more than a hundred books in studies related to the Orient, was highly articulate when it came to the reasons behind her intellectual and physical journey Eastward. In her autobiography she wrote that her involvement began when at the early age of seven she read a statement by Prophet Muhammad to the effect that people are asleep, but when they die they wake up. "At that moment, I knew where my road began: the East became the goal, the East, where mysterious wisdom resides."[5] Schimmel was to follow a path that the great hero of her life, Goethe, had already struck.

[5] Qtd. by Stefan Weidner, "A New View of Orientalism: Annmarie Schimmel and Cultural Interrelations between Germany and the Islamic World," in *Art and Thought* No. 78 (2003),

Understandably, the impact of Goethe was enormous not only on the lives and careers of scholars such as Schimmel, Hunke, and Mommsen, but on German Orientalism as a whole, which was one of the most brilliant, creative and prodigious of all Western forms of interest in the East. The German writer was, as Mommsen points out in her *Goethe and the Arab World*, a great force behind the establishment of Arabic studies in the West, as he was in drawing the attention of Western nations to the importance of Arabian civilization.[6] That civilization is what someone like Hunke took upon herself to unfold in front of a forgetful West in a book such as *Allah sonne über dem abendland. Unser arabisches Erbe* (1960).[7] It is also, but in a larger context, what Schimmel wanted to uncover. Schimmel's case, however, reminds us that works of scholarship can sometimes be as much driven by personal vision as works of art. According to Stefan Weidner, the Orient Schimmel fell in love with was an Orient that no longer existed, an imagined Orient, one of mystics, spiritual poetry and monumental achievements in various fields. It was also a land that allowed her to sail away from a Germany beset by Nazism and socio-economic difficulties.[8]

Comparable although not identical difficulties seem to have motivated the Russian/Jewish Metlitzki who, like Schimmel and Mommsen, later went to the United States. Born in 1914 in what was then East Prussia, Metlitzki had to roam Europe with her family for some time in flight first from Stalinist then Nazi persecution before settling in London and studying Arabic. In 1948 she migrated to Israel where she worked as a Zionist activist taking part in laying the foundations of Israel. What motivated her in the seventies to research and publish her exceptional *Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (1977) may not relate directly to any specific circumstance in this background. An exceptionally reticent person regarding her personal life and the author of only two books, she may have found in an East remote both in time and space a refuge from a meaningless or painfully meaningful present.[9] Like Clarel, the character in Melville's long poem with the same name discussed in her book on the American writer's relation to the East, she may have sought a spiritual home in an Orient removed in time and space.

59; an article in Arabic: شتيفان فايدنر: "نظرة جديدة إلى الاستشراق: آنا ماري شيمل والتواصل الثقافي بين ألمانيا والعالم الإسلامي"، مجلة "فكر وفن"، ع78 (2003)

[6] *Goethe wa al-alam al-Arabi* (Kuwait: the National Council for Culture and the Arts, 1994), 15. The quotations are from this Arabic translation of *Goethe und Die Arabische Welt* by Katharina Mommsen (1988).

[7] This book exists both in Arabic as well as French translations. In English it reads: "Allah's Sun Shines on the West: Our Arabic Heritage."

[8] See footnote no. 5.

[9] It is certainly unusual, to say the least, that a Zionist Jew would be so much drawn to study the contribution of the Arabs, those whom she had to fight and drive away in order to establish Israel.

Metlitzki's reticence with regard to her motives does not, however, hide the fact that she belonged to a minority both as a Jew and as a woman. The former identity singled her out for a kind of persecution unknown to the other female Orientalists. But it is her other minority affiliation that may offer a possible explanation for the unusual sympathy behind her impressive endeavors. The sense that Oriental cultures were not accorded their due respect or viewed as great contributions to the human heritage, the figuration of such cultures as misunderstood, embattled and at best alien, is likely to invoke sympathy in the hearts of individuals who see themselves in a position not so different. The matter of Araby, writes Metlitzki, is viewed in the West as "an extraordinary phenomenon because extraneous to the tradition of Medieval Europe."[10] This is the case when it comes to the Arabic background to Medieval romance literatures in Europe as Rosa Menocal, a scholar of Cuban origin, discusses it. The offhand dismissal by Romance philologists of the possibility that Troubadour poetry had Arabic origins (as the Arabic word "tarab" or "singing" suggests) was, she tell us, the immediate reason for her writing *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History* (xii).

It would of course be difficult to find in the work of these scholars any direct or professed links between their Orientalist projects and any efforts on behalf of feminism or women's rights. The clearest link that I found was in two articles by Mommsen on Goethe's views of the emancipation of women.[11] Mommsen's interest in what she called "the Scheherazade attribute" in Goethe's narratives provides another clue to her devotion to the patriarch of German Orientalism. As for Schimmel, there is the fact that just like Goethe who identified with the Muslim East, she also emphasized her own closeness to Muslim women.[12]

A feminist perspective is more noticeable in the work of the other group of scholars, the younger American Arabists. Barbara Harlow, who wrote a pioneering study of "resistance literature" (1987) and who authored and co-authored a number of books on Arabic literature, also wrote a book on "women writing and political detention" (1992). Harlow's areas of interest, as stated on her page on the State University of New York web site, include ethnic, third world literature, women, and gender. Obviously, these areas not only coexist comfortably but crisscross and appear to be interchangeable.

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[10] *The Matter of Araby*, 249.

[11] "Goethe as a Precursor of Women's Emancipation." *Goethe Proceedings: Essays Commemorating the Goethe Sesquicentennial at the University of California, Davis.* Ed. Clifford A. Bernd et al. (Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, 1984), 51-66; "Goethe's Views of Women: A Modern Perspective," *Goethe in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Alexej Ugrinsky. Contributions to the Study of World Literature 17 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987, 155-162).

[12] See footnote no. 5. Schimmel's attitude towards Muslim women is comparable to that of Joyce Zonana, an Egyptian/American critic in her "The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of Jane Eyre." *Signs: The Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18.3 (Spring 1993): 592-617.

Harlow's perhaps best known book, *Resistance Literature*, sheds a great deal of light on the plight of women within the various struggle movements in Third World countries. The book considers these issues in the context of theoretical, but highly pertinent issues affecting the literatures of the non-Western world. On the one hand, Harlow deplores the absence up until the 1980s at least of Third World literatures from the curricula of French and English departments in Western universities. On the other hand, she raises, with manifest concern, questions related to the independence of non-Western literatures and whether they can be studied with the critical tools developed in the West. "Can [such theories]," she wonders, "be deployed in analyzing the literary output of geopolitical areas which stand in opposition to the very social and political organizations within which the theories are located and to which they respond?"[13]

Harlow's argument and general critique falls within the well known parameters of postcolonial studies that have reached a high level of complexity in the work of numerous theoreticians among whom women, particularly those with third world backgrounds, constitute an imposing presence. The connection between gender and postcoloniality is the subject of numerous studies by critics such as Spivak, Mohanty, and Suleri.[14] That the marginality and minority status of women played a part in shaping the postcolonial critiques of such scholars is therefore too obvious to require restating or examining here. What I propose to look at, instead, is the opposite situation of non-Western female scholars, who are located outside the West and who in the last two decades or so have initiated their own critiques of Western colonial discourses and postcolonial, Western as well as non-Western literatures. The work of Arab and Muslim women acquires an added significance in this context as a result of the contemporary cultural clash and the unfortunate misunderstanding resulting from various sources of tension. It is these in particular that I would like to pay attention to in the remaining part of this discussion.

These scholars may not be as numerous as their counterparts in the West, nor is their work on the same level of density as that of the Western scholars.They are Occidentalists in so far as Occidentalism means specializing in Western cultures, that is as a counterpart of Orientalism, since most of them specialize in European, particularly Anglo-American literature. Their affiliation, however, to postcolonial theory shifts the theoretical groundwork of their interests away from the kind of views and attitudes one is likely to associate with "Occidentalism" as it stands in a binary opposition to Orientalism. Furthermore, the feminine, and not necessarily feminist, element in the

[13] *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987), xvi.
[14] See for instance the articles in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

works I am referring to, provide further links between them, on the one hand, and postcolonial theory as well as gender studies, on the other.

Among such scholars we encounter the Egyptian Hoda El-Sadda, a professor of English literature at Cairo University. The author of several studies that touch on East-West relations in the context of translation studies, postcolonial theory, and gender issues, El-Sadda proceeds from an awareness that Western Orientalist discourse intersects with the issues raised by gender studies at the point where the language used in portraying, analyzing or judging the dominated peoples of the East is similar to that used when women are discussed or referred to. She points out in an interview that it was in Said's *Orientalism*, that she discovered the link between women on the one hand and overpowered nations, on the other. That similarity, she says, continued to "haunt me as a persistent feeling."[15] Like other female scholars, El-Sadda says, she also became aware of the fact that Said's study sidesteps the plight of Oriental women in his critique of Orientalism.

Along similar, though not identical, lines comes the work of another female scholar. It is that of Rana Kabbani, a Syrian who was born to a Muslim family in Damascus in 1958, and who specialized in English literature at Cambridge. Kabbani is perhaps best known for her book *Europe's Myths of Orient* (1986). It is a study of Western travel literature reflecting on the deeply embedded prejudices and misrepresentations of the Orient as Other and as a colonial subject. It is a work that stands as a counterpart to Harlow's *Resistance Literature* as it maps out "domination literature" in a manner informed by studies such as Said's. Like *Orientalism*, and for that matter like a great deal of postcolonial critiques of colonial discourse, Kabbani's book is a kind of "resistance scholarship" in an empire-strikes-back mode stating that "in order to arrive at a West-East discourse liberated from the obstinacy of the colonial legacy, a serious effort has to be made to review and reject a great many inherited representations" (13).[16] The language of domination that Kabbani examines is most apparent in the way Oriental women are represented by various travelers. Oriental erotica played a prominent role as it attracted Western travelers, translators, and readers alike: "Europe was charmed by an Orient that shimmered with possibilities, that promised a sexual space, a voyage away from the self" (67).

Kabbani's other work bespeaks an abiding interest in exposing the intersection of Orientalism and female representation. She edited the diary of the French traveler Isabelle Eberhardt (1877-1904) in 1987, and published a study of "travel, gender and the politics of postcolonial representation" (1995). Yet she is more forthright on a personal level in a little book she wrote in the aftermath of re-awakened hostilities between Muslims and Westerners. In *Letter to Christendom* (1989), Kabbani explores her own

[15] *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* No. 19 (1999), 211. (This interview is in Arabic).
[16] *Europe's Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule* (London: Pandora Press, 1988).

embattled allegiances as a Muslim woman living in the West and having to defend herself on various fronts. Her feelings for non-Western women are, however, especially keen despite the fact that her life has been so privileged in comparison with most of those women: "Yet I believe that what I have in common with less fortunate women from, say, Morocco or Pakistan or Bradford transcends class difference and is greater than what separates us."[17]

To a great extent, Kabbani's sympathies emanate from such minority concerns, something that brings her closer not just to less fortunate non-Western women but to all of those with whom she shares a range of intellectual concerns. Those intellectuals include young female scholars from the Arab World who started their academic careers with theses that highlight Western Oriental themes or the postcolonial work of figures who are part Western, part third world. One such scholar is the Saudi Hessa Al-Ghadeer who wrote a master's thesis on the Afro-American poet Gwendolyn Brooks focusing on "the impact of urban experience on black females." The study is concerned with women not only on the level of writers, but also on the level of characters in the work of those writers; it highlights the plight of female characters in the work of a female writer who is known to have projected much of her personal suffering on those characters. That Brooks is black and female must have been a major reason behind Al-Ghadeer's choice. For female characters abound in the works of male writers as well,[18] and male writers from similar backgrounds do get Al-Ghadeer's attention later on. In her doctoral thesis, she tackled the more difficult case of Derek Walcott.[19] Although her focus is on the two themes of identity and exile, prominent themes in postcolonial literature, the Saudi scholar is also concerned about the way Walcott along with a number of other English-speaking, non-Western writers are viewed by Western critics. Such critics, she says, "identify [these writers] as isolated national off-shoots of English literature." One task of her study, therefore, "is to correct the false prejudiced attitude by emphasizing the points of originality in the poetry of Derek Walcott" (7).

The scholars discussed in this paper all evince a sense of solidarity that can only come out of personal compassion on personal and cultural levels, a sense one finds in Schimmel, Menocal, and Kabbani, scholars who are not strangers to the predicament of Oriental or a third-world writers, or to the unfair treatment of whole cultures. It is thanks to such passionate and compassionate scholarship that bridges of mutual understanding, respect, and sympathy can be built across cultural and religious chasms.

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[17] *Letter to Christendom* (no place: Virago Press, 1989), ix.

[18] "The Vision of the City in Gwendolyn Brooks' Poetry: A Study of the Impact of the Urban Experience on Black Females" (Riyadh: Girl's College of Education, 1996).

[19] "A Portrait of an Island: Post-Colonial Identity and Exile in the Poetry of Derek Walcott," A doctoral dissertation submitted to the faculty of Girls' College of Education, Department of English Language and Literature (2004). This thesis was done under my supervision, but it was the student's own interest that ultimately drove the research in the path it took.

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Reading *The English Patient*: Teaching and Difference

Elias Schwieler

This paper will highlight post-colonialism and teaching by looking closer at Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient*, Foucault's notion of heterotopia, and Carl Schmitt's political theory. This might seem somewhat far-fetched, but perhaps not. Let's start with the kind of questions that could be asked. For example: What is the relation between colonialism and teaching? Between colonialism and knowledge? The word colony, from Latin *colere*, means to till, to cultivate, or inhabit. From the same Indo-European root, *kwel-*, that gives culture. What is the relation between the will to transfer knowledge and pedagogical methodology? What does it mean to determine the desert, to map it, to draw maps of it, and what is the relation of this to learning? Is learning a way to determine knowledge and to draw a map of that knowledge? Is it to assign a history to a certain event and a certain place? Does a teacher have the sovereign power to decide on the exception? What would that imply for the act of learning? Is there a politics of teaching? This last question might seem self-evident. But considering Carl Schmitt's definition of politics it might gain new relevance. Let me begin with this definition also as a means to address the other questions I have posed.

In *The Concept of the Political*, Carl Schmitt defines the political in terms of what he calls the friend-enemy distinction. For Schmitt, an enemy is always a public enemy, the enemy is never a personal enemy. Moreover, the friend-enemy distinction cannot be reduced, according to Schmitt, to a question of an economical competitor or a polemical adversary in a scholarly debate. The enemy, in the final analysis, Schmitt says, has to threaten my life and the existence of a "we." The friend-enemy distinction is, in other words, an existential distinction; it has nothing to do with the norms and values of a certain group or society. A society that is not defined by the friend-enemy distinction is not political; that is, without the friend-enemy distinction there would be no difference, everything would be reduced to the same.

Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient* circles around the characters at an abandoned villa in Italy at the end of the Second World War. A young nurse stays at the villa to care for a badly burned patient whose identity is unknown, but who is suspected to be a spy by the name Almásy. She

is joined by Caravaggio, an old friend of her father's, and Kip a young Indian Sikh trained as a bomb-defuser in the British army.

Where the friend-enemy distinction is most explicitly articulated in *The English Patient* is when Kip reacts to the use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. From then on the West is the colonial enemy that threatens the existence of the "we" he belongs to, and this event is what makes it evident to him. Before the Hiroshima-Nagasaki bombing Kip could be said to live in an innocently, maybe even naive colonial relationship with Europe, working as a soldier in the British army. In contrast, Almásy, the English patient, views the desert as essentially apolitical. To draw maps of the desert, to determine it, place it, and name it is to politicize it and to make it into a potential theatre of war. Not only his physical ambiguity after being burned, something which together with (perhaps) the trauma of the event itself contributes to his indeterminate identity, but also his values in the stories he tells, reflect the non-political, decolonizing aspect of Almásy as a character, in the novel. But is he really without difference, even if we see him as apolitical? The answer would be no, I suggest, since the English patient (his body, his identity) becomes a site for difference, his very ambiguity counteracting sameness and, instead, disseminating difference. In fact, Caravaggio's obsessive search for the "true" identity of the English patient, his sameness within difference, turns him into an interrogator/analyst/critic trying to determine and secure meaning.

The English patient, I would like to contend, becomes a site comparable to Foucault's notion in "Different Spaces" of what he calls heterotopia. To explain heterotopia Foucault uses the analogy of the mirror. "The mirror," Foucault writes,

> is a utopia after all, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror I see myself where I am not, in an unreal space that opens up virtually behind the surface; I am over there where I am not, a kind of shadow that gives me my own visibility, that enables me to look at myself there where I am absent—a mirror utopia. But it is also a heterotopia in that the mirror really exists, in that it has a sort of return effect on the place that I occupy. Due to the mirror, I discover myself absent at the place where I am, since I see myself over there. From that gaze which settles on me, as it were, I come back to myself and begin once more to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in the sense that it makes this place I occupy at the moment I look at myself in the glass both utterly real, connected with the entire space surrounding it, and utterly unreal—since, to be perceived, it is obliged to go by way of that virtual point which is over there. (179)

How, then, can the English patient be a mirror? How is he heterotopical? Precisely by the fact that he is analyzed, he is a site of difference where identity is at once absent and the place where identity is constituted. The burnt skin of the English patient (making him into a desert), his reluctance to

speak, his Herodotus (filled with notes and pieces of paper pasted in it full of scribbles), becomes a rewriting of history, a re-flection of an-other history, still indeterminate, or rather a history broken up, fragmented, and de-personalized. This book of history has become a palimpsest, writing upon writing, and goes to question not only History with a capital H, but involves the personal, it personalizes history, makes it more specific, and de-generalizes it. Making a mirror of history, it creates what Foucault calls a "return effect." As Foucault notes: "Due to the mirror, I discover myself absent at the place where I am, since I see myself over there." To analyze, then, to interrogate, to interpret is, also, to look oneself in the mirror, it is to face oneself heterotopically; that is, to find oneself absent by seeing oneself in the other, and to find oneself in an-other place.

The English patient in this way becomes the site of the difference of history, he is the reflection of the other, he is history as absence, as difference. He speaks by not speaking of/to/as the subaltern.

But, this does not mean that he stands outside conflict, outside controversy, or outside polemics. That is, he still belongs within Carl Schmitt's friend-enemy distinction. The reason for this is precisely that he exists as the history of absence and difference, as (to take Foucault to the extreme) pure or radical heterotopia. The English patient is the exception, one could perhaps say crisis, where history, politics, the history of politics and the politics of history are decided. The decision takes place in absence, in difference; that is, as soon as there is an exception or crisis there is the friend-enemy distinction—since it, according to Schmitt, is ontologically constituted. (Crisis, from Greek *krinein*, to separate, to judge.) The English patient is the heterotopical site of crisis, where friend and enemy are decided upon.

Now, when we teach we enter, precisely, a heterotopical site of crisis, where friend and enemy are decided upon. But do we know that? Do we know what it means? What happens when I teach Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient*? What type of knowledge is assumed? And how do I handle it? I have come to suspect that I often assume a colonial attitude to teaching and to knowledge. Reflecting on what really happens when I teach and on what kind of attitude I may bring to the teaching situation without being aware of it, I have come to realize that often, but hopefully not always, I assume a position that could be compared to the colonizer-colonized position. There exists what one could perhaps describe as a colonial ideology when it comes to teaching. I am in no way, of course, trying to equal Colonialism with the teaching situation today at Western or Swedish institutions of higher education. But perhaps a similar structure can be discerned? What I am suggesting is that, if we don't already, we need to examine the structures of our teaching. When teaching literature and especially post-colonial literature the method of teaching should be exposed and made clear. And, as I mentioned, after reflecting on my own teaching I have noticed the presence of a structure similar to the one present in colonial discourse.

To elaborate on this, knowledge and the idea of the teaching of a certain type of knowledge—what is at stake here? Consider Said's statement in the "Introduction" to *Orientalism*: "Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she says or does is Orientalism" (2). And he continues:

> Orientalism is a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on [. . .] . But the phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient (the East as career) despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a "real" Orient. (2-3, 5)

I will not analyze Said's work in detail here, but I want to focus on what can, from these quotes, be said about a possible Orientalism of teaching and knowledge. No doubt, teaching literature is teaching a certain type of knowledge, which in turn means generating power. There is, in other words, power in teaching, a teacher possesses the power of power, or rather, what generates power; that is, knowledge. If this is the case, should we not, as teachers, critically reflect on what knowledge we teach, how we teach it, and what structures of power it generates? There is a risk, I would argue, that we carry with us to the teaching situation Orientalism, as in Said's words "a style of thought." In consequence, this style of thought becomes our style of teaching. It is a question of a specific type of knowledge, constructed at a specific time, or even different constructions of knowledge, but still within the same style of thought.

To the English patient, the desert is borderless, without maps; it does not distinguish any difference, it is a site of equality, a place where there is sameness. With knowledge, Western knowledge, comes the will to power, the will to determine meaning, to circumscribe, in order to master, and gain control. What if this figure of the desert can be compared with our teaching situation? What if our style of teaching promotes this type of knowledge—even when we have nothing but good intentions? What if unknowingly, we provide learners with a place where this type of knowledge is expected, where learning means to colonize knowledge, to circumscribe it, and determine it, to map it as an untouched desert, according to an ideology reminis-

cent of if not colonialism, then at least of Orientalism? What if there is such an unconscious structure that governs our teaching and also our research?

If there is even a chance that this is the case, should we not start to critically reflect on our position? Yes. This position from which we speak and teach should be questioned, and it should be questioned by us. If what we want is responsible knowledge, we need to strive for what could perhaps be called a democratic epistemology. A democratic epistemology is an epistemology that continually questions itself, putting its own existence in question and to the test, just as democracy is never certain and should never be taken for granted, but should always be critically examined. In this sense, democracy, as Derrida has it, is always to come. We should perhaps view our teaching and our position within higher education in a similar way; that is, knowledge is something always to come, never a determined category. Responsible knowledge is first and foremost a critical questioning of its own limits, responsible teaching is a critical questioning of the teaching position, its use of knowledge and power, and with what means this power and knowledge is used. Teaching becomes the heterotopical site of crisis, where friend and enemy are decided upon; that is, where difference is creative and inventive—just as teaching and learning should be.

But let's come back to *The English Patient*, the novel. What I see in Ondaatje's novel is an ambivalence when it comes to sameness and difference, and how to come to terms with this. On the one hand, the novel seems built or structured around the apolitical, non-confrontational as the ideal—rationalism, power, and the political lead, according to the text, inevitably to violent confrontation and Orientalism. The novel strives toward sameness at the cost of difference, which it exposes as Orientalist and Eurocentric. Equality becomes the abolition of all difference.

On the other hand, the English patient, I would like to argue, represents the uncertainty of ambiguity, of constitutive difference. In him, in his very physicality, his body, as well as his book, the Herodotus, the physicality of the work upsets and problematizes sameness, self-identity, and equality without difference. The English patient as a mirror of the other, as a heterotopical site, functions in the text as a critical counter-force to a postcolonial discourse that reduces what is different, and also difference itself, into an unreflected sameness that only gives rise to a false equality, the chimera and fantasy of equality.

What *The English Patient* perhaps silently and unconsciously gives voice to is the excluded, the wholly other. And this voice is, precisely, I would like to argue, what would be the foundation of a democratic epistemology.

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